

Postmodernism & Christian Theology (part 6 disc 2)

By Dallas Willard

Inaudible 0:00-0:10

Speaker 1:

Early, to understand whether this is not all partly due to a rejection of dualism. Who is seen to me that I'm dualistic human ontology, I mean anthropology that does probably not exist because even when you found to be a Christian, right? Then you [inaudible] then you simply postulate the worlds soul of which we are a part of the same stuff as, so that we can. There is not box or the box is easily avoidable. Ah it is part of this and the history of ideas that [inaudible] rejection of ontological dualism and do these people consistently reject dualism and count for mind material [inaudible].

Dallas Willard:

That's ah construction of some sort?

Speaker 1:

Right, because I can't see how you can generate this problem as an un-logical ruler. Suppose I wanted to encounter close modern crisis. I would have to reject my own ontological dualism. It seems to me as a first move to generate some of these problems. Is that, is that right?

Dallas Willard:

Well, this conception of truth has built into it a certain kind of dualism, but now dualism doesn't necessarily mean gaps or walls you can't get over. That's what you have in not only postmodernity, but in a lot of representationalist thinking in the modern period is that you generate a wall that you cannot get over and so you get what is called a epistemological dualism.

And the interplay between an epistemological dualism and an ontological dualism is rather subtle, but I think you could be a materialist and be an epistemological dualist. I think for example Hobbes might be an interesting case of that, because you would be limited at epistemologically to your representations. You could never get to things other than the representations.

Of course. I'm constantly tempted to get into critique, critiques of this. I must resist it. That kind of theory would not imply ontological dualism. All that is required is a dualism between what you can be knowledgeable of and what you can't. That's the, that's the dualism that really hurts here. Now, many people have thought that if you are an ontological dualist, you say the mind and the material world are two radically different kinds of things, then you're penned into epistemological dualism. I think that's a terrible mistake. So in other words materialism doesn't save you from epistemological dualism and dualism doesn't condemn you to epistemological dualism.

It all depends on what you make of that arrow. That's why I put that arrow up the first day to get you thinking about. That arrow of consciousness, you know. Here is your mind or your act of thought and here is the object and what does that arrow do. And if you have a representationalist theory, which by the way of course is a large part of what postmodernists are trying to criticize I think, often quite inept, because you still have to answer the question how does your mind relate to your object even if you say there aren't any representations, but if you have a representationalist theory historically it has always tended to lead to epistemological dualism.

Speaker 2:

Put simply, ontological dualism unique, in at least in some forms of it of not [inaudible]. Aid in escaping indeterminacy of translation for example.

Dallas Willard:

Yes. See what you have open to you. You all understand what you speak of metaphysical or ontological dualism, we're saying the mind and the physical world especially are two radically different kinds of things. If you develop that theory, then you may develop the resources for understanding what the mind is in such a way that you will not only avoid anything like indeterminacy translation, but you will also avoid representationalism. The final question comes now, what's the stuff that makes up the mind? Dualism or appropriately handle gives you a chance to do that and it's just on the level of any other inquiry. What's the stuff that makes up Formica?

The problem is that the mind is exempted from this kind of careful thinking and really to follow back to the previous diagram that the way I've set [inaudible] route is to go back and do this thoroughly. So it can provide the resources for interpret the nature of the human being. And the disadvantage of both idealism, which gets rid of the body in effect, and materialism, which goes through the mind is you're stuck. You'll never understand the human being either way you go.

Speaker 3:

It's a very pedestrian concept I keep coming back to and I just want to see if it is workable [inaudible] and that is. It seems like you go through modernism in practice and postmodernism keep trying to impose on the system and we were working with the concept [inaudible] in other words in engineering otherwise [inaudible] is that, is that useful?

Dallas Willard:

Oh, ah yes, absolutely, absolutely. And, and ah what the way both of them have tended to work is ah to define the method in such a way that it will not consider certain things. So is the

universal physically close system to go to the big end of things here? Well it is if there isn't anything else. So one way of getting a physically close universe is to deny that there is anything else, and that leads to what. Currently in European philosophy especially with the concept of the totality is regarded as a negative term and it is associated with totalitarian. So, the political and social side of things come out very rapidly here and the idea is that we want to leave things open. When you read this, you may have noticed he uses Putnam statement that uh, rations about people who try to interpret rationality in terms of the application of criteria.

Putnam stabs against that in that regard, by the way he's quite authentically postmodernism. Thought what that amounts to is saying that, being rational, like human practices generally are not things that work by applying criteria, you learn how to do them and then you do them. And they have a certain openness and they can grow. This is one reason why Kant's third critique has played important role in postmodernist thinking is because Kant in a third critique gives the concept of the genius as someone who works beyond rules. The rule makers come along after the genius and try to write rules for he or she did, but the genius him or herself has a different kind of principle and it has this openness and creativity about but there's a great tendency to want to master things by closing the system.

Speaker 4:

So the application of the criteria being rational is not necessarily good?

Dallas Willard:

Well the idea is that. Let me give you that quotation in cause it's actually a rather nice quotation about, this maybe a little further in here than you got. This, I'll find it. Hang on just a sec. Yeah.

Student 5:

124

Dallas Willard:

124 That's right. Right here in the middle on 124. Scientism refers to the notion that rationality consists in applying criteria.

Now, what's wrong with that? What's wrong with that is that you will when you start to talk about it, you'll say something like, "Well of course the criteria must be right to." You couldn't be rational if you were applying irrational criteria. So, also they will have to be rationally applied. So rationality cannot consist of applied criteria because you want rationality to govern the application of criteria. Not just any criteria would be rational. So what he's saying here is rationality has a certain openness to it that cannot be spelled out in terms of applying criteria, and of course June then goes back to education very rapidly. The idea that when you when you're train when you're educate in person you don't just educate them to do things by rule. There may be a. There is an important place for that. What you want to see them do is to take all and you want to see them dealing creatively with situations that they've never faced before and then we say now that's rationality. And in fact at a certain point if all they can do is look is try to apply the rule they will become irrational. And that is what lies back morally and spiritually of the critique of legalism. This is why the letter of the law kills. Is because it smothers the creativity and openness of life and. Legalism, in this area, is to be called scientism will not do as an analysis of rationality simply because, now go back to your legalism in the moral area. What you want is someone who has good judgment about how to apply the rules don't you [laughter].

You see this constantly in Jesus. Remember he's always get in trouble over the Sabbath. What was that about? That was about irrational applications of a rule, right? You see how that works and so, if we're going to have an approach to reality that is adequate for knowledge we're

going to have to go beyond to that we're going to have to have this kind of openness. And what governs it. The answer is nothing governs it. It's life. It's how people live, and the question of what governs it is then to misunderstand. See this is, this is one of the areas where postmodernism has been so welcomed by people who were oppressed by rules and they have seen postmodernism as again as liberation. We mentioned earlier remember that liberation is one of the main things that postmodernism stands for. And liberation is not a bad thing. It can be abused, but it is, it's something we really can't live without.

Speaker 6:

Dallas, going back to the concept of the mind. This is where modern thinkers like Noam Chomsky and Steven Pinker are saying that, "God is an illusion of the mind, that he's not real.

Dallas Willard:

What does that mean?

Speaker 6:

He's part of our, well, from there construct, he's part of, he's part of your imagination.

Dallas Willard:

Okay. So then that fits in with the earlier definition of reality and purrs doesn't. There is nothing, which actually has the properties that we assign to God in thinking about. Our Father who art in heaven.

Speaker 7:

That he is, he is that Pegasus.

Dallas Willard:

Exactly. Good. Okay, Sorry. Oh.

Speaker 8:

I was wondering if I can respond briefly to John Marks comment.

Dallas Willard:

Yes by all, you can respond to anything right. No there's no rules on this.

Speaker 8:

There's a different reading and I, and I know a lot of this is going to come down to bring definitions to dualism, but I think a case could be made that it was, especially [inaudible] dualism that led to the common problems that led to kind of giving up on solving them in postmodernism. Then you have a subject an immaterial mind that is perceiving an object, an external world. And so immediately you these two things that in [inaudible] the problem is raised of how you get from one to the other. And, and so it seemed to me that phenomenology was a way to try to avoid that and part through avoiding anthropological dualism, that we are not just mind, we are not just immaterial spirit, but we're embodied person and the concept of the life world or being in the world, coming out of [inaudible] is a way to overcome this, subject object split. So I was just a little uncomfortable with dualism being presented as a way, as um a way out of the problem. My reading, I think this dualism caused the problem. Now you gave the um qualification that not Descartes kind of dualism.

Speaker 9:

Well at least not Descartes kind of dualism as it's usually understood.

Speaker 8:

I think there are certain defenses to be made of Descartes and Descartes as he. Or, as he turned out to be understood, if he was misunderstood, but ah. Yeah, I would agree that certain forms of dualism aren't helpful on logical dualism, but certain other forms will not only be helpful, but would fail to generate the problem. For example, you know platonic forms of

dualism, where you have a world's soul ah and that that sort of thing, I don't think would generated that sort of problem and wouldn't you generate this sort of problem.

Speaker 9:

But Neoplatonic Platonism is a perfect example of the problems that can come out of that kind of dualistic thinking because.