

Postmodernism and Christian Theology (Part 4 Disc 1)

By Dallas Willard

Announcer:

Today it looks like that's what there will be each morning or each day and there are already the first three are over at the duplicating center so they will be available. I know there's a couple of people that had to miss and we'll get those available to them. And also some of you have already asked. These are going to be available at the end of this so they'll be uh what how many days uh 6. Right around 24 tapes if you want to take that much time we'll have those available. And it seems to be picking up pretty well all the questions and discussions also.

Speaker 2:

You can't hear the comments we make under our breath can you?

Announcer:

Yeah yeah. I've been listening over here at the earphones and all of yours. Yeah yeah. Every scene with David David especially we picked up of all his.

Speaker 3:

Great. Am I still in the seminar? [laughter]

[brief jumble of voices]

Announcer:

So let's begin if we could and Dan would you mind opening us with prayer.

Speaker 4:

Father we come this morning. To Learn about you and. How you have conceived this world and given us the freedom to explore. We need your Holy Spirit and take control of our lives... [inaudible] We thank you for your grace... relax... in Christ's name, amen.

Announcer:

Thank you very much Dan. Dallas wanted I uh some of you mentioned you had headaches after yesterday's hours so we'll take a few minutes to address some of the questions and then Dallas will take it right off.

Dallas Willard:

I enjoyed yesterday and I hope that you will help me stay close to you and not just get off on some philosophical flight. So please. Your questions are helpful. June's question this morning and I see she is especially getting into her subject matter with the question. And I'm hoping.

That. You all will. Be able to move in that direction as we go along. Now for next time I'm sure I have a feeling we won't finish with this. So bring this but next time this is the one I want to focus on so if you have any strength left. And you want to review a little bit for Friday then kind of glance through this again. You can read. This man is hopelessly modern postmodern. You can read the sidebars at least these these things are sidebars colored versions you might want to just go through and read those again and refresh yourself and bring that with you. And I think also we won't get done with this today.

Now I would like to try to respond to some of the questions Michael has to do chapel this morning so he asked me not to address his questions until he gets would be here but uh we have some and let me start with one which says Is it irresponsible to define knowledge and I take that to be suggesting that possibly we can't know and be responsible in defining knowledge. That is a major issue and I'm going to have it turns out I'm probably going to lecture more today than I had thought. And I want to address this whole issue of knowing about knowledge. Knowing about knowledge and many people who have certain views of self-reflective reflexivity or self-reference think that you cannot know about knowledge just like you can't be conscious of consciousness. It turns out that this is based upon the assumption of what I call the Midas touch. That when you become conscious of something you modify it and likewise if you were to know knowledge you would modify it and therefore you would be irresponsible.

I think that we often are irresponsible in our definitions of knowledge. That is to say we don't definition in the sense of what is called a real definition. Attempts to tell you what the basic nature of something is and that has to be done on the basis of inquiry and reflection possibly discourse and communication. But I think we often are irresponsible and I think in the later stages of modernism there has been gross irresponsibility in this matter of defining knowledge.

But I don't think just the effort to define knowledge is as such irresponsible. It would depend on how we went about it and really the the work of the seminar will be an attempt to elaborate a concept of knowledge. Now what I wrote of as knowledge I can only beseech you to believe is the effort is the result of a serious effort over many years to try to be responsible about it. Now since human knowledge is not infallible. One could always be wrong and that's crucial. And from Plato on the one of the main problems with understanding knowledge is the suggestion that if you are right you couldn't be wrong and that has been an intolerable burden for human beings to bear.

And so we have to say that even when we do know when this is fulfilled we might still be wrong. We might be to say we might be does not mean that we are and indeed to fulfil this condition you can't actually be wrong. But see for example I am actually in this room today but I might have been somewhere else. You might have been somewhere else you're actually here. Now the fact that you might have been somewhere else doesn't mean that there is something wrong with the idea that you are here and that you don't know that you're here. So it's the subtle plays on possibility and actuality often that get us in trouble. Are we not limiting our knowledge by defining it? Definition always limits. That's the point of definition. If definition does not distinguish what you're defining from what it is not it is not a definition. So the old phrase all determination is negation simply means that if you say what something is you are at the same time saying what is not that.

So now all of knowing works by identifying things distinguishing things and relating them. That's how knowledge works in the simplest phrases like this paper is white. I distinguish this paper from whiteness and relate them. And the reason definition is important is because it enables us to distinguish things. To distinguish things and then once we have distinguished them

we can approach the task of relating them. So now in all of your fields regardless of what it may be I can tell you that you identify things distinguish them and relate to them. That's what you do. Why. How do I know that? Because that's what knowledge does. Of course belief does that and opinion does that also mere representation can do it. But that's how knowledge works. We identify things and that's where a definition comes in is in identifying things that enables us to distinguish things and then we can approach the problem of relating them. So every advance in knowledge involves those moves. Identification distinction relation. Now this is a knowledge grows of course. But when we say that knowledge grows we mean that more things are known not that knowledge itself as knowledge becomes something other than what it was. That's my view. And certainly this has been discussed without end. And we can discuss it here not without end but we can discuss it if you want to.

So. Another question on this one is can we have knowledge without relationship as a matter of fact not. We can't be a human being without relationship. And if we're not human beings we can't know. And this is the fallacy of the Cartesian self. Now Descartes argument doesn't depend upon us treating the human self as if it could exist without there being any other human selves. Descartes' argument is made from the viewpoint of him as an existing human being. He he doesn't deny that he's existing and that he had a mother for example and most of us in order to exist must have mothers. That may change in the future but we're going to have some sort of relationship until we come to the point where some person can concoct can can cocked sperm and ova from chemical products on their own and then we'll have a relationship to them. So of course there are many more relationships that are required. We do learn from our families and our interactions and so on. So this is one of the points of course that postmodernism rightly makes interrupt me at any time of course as we go along.

Let me do a few more questions. In what sense is modernism a departure from a biblical world view. Modernism as such is not a departure from biblical worldview. What it is a departure from is a view of the Bible. The Biblical world that is the world view that is taught in the Bible. Modernism is not necessarily a departure from that world view see that that would be. Again the basic creedal. Let's let's suppose it were the basic creedal content. Only very late reformation and post Reformation do you find statements about the Bible included in the creeds. I think that's right and correct me on any point that I'm wrong on. So you begin to have statements about the Bible included in creeds and catechisms when the Bible steps forward in a position of authority that it did not previously.

Now then modernism is opposed to taking the biblical text simply as authoritative in its own right. For modernism you would have to show the necessity and validity of biblical revelation. You'd have to show that on the basis of the kind of thinking that the Enlightenment prizes and you find some efforts at that. And but this is by the way a major project for the present period it is to develop what I call an epistemology that takes revelation into account that that that authenticates revelation and in particular the sort of revelation that we have in the Bible as a source of knowledge. And in particular as a source of knowledge of God. Now we don't have that at present and we have experts in the room who can correct me on that but we don't have that kind of account of the Bible for example. Question why don't we have the original. Manuscripts. Now if you believe that God is who we believe he is he could certainly have provided us with those couldn't he why didn't he you've got one. Well we're all in real trouble. Actually I have a feeling that that's one of the reasons why we don't have them just like I think there was a problem with the body of Moses. You can just imagine what would have happened with that body if it hadn't disappeared.

So that's just an illustration now of what would have to be done. What we need to do is to show how the Bible as we have it. Is suited to God's purposes in human history and simultaneously can be reliable for those who approach it rightly. There's no. Some people make the assumption that if there were a God he would for example make things plain in a way that no one could be mistaken but apparently the rule is not that at all but rather that anyone who seeks with all their heart will find him. And so then revelation has to be suited to that. What about those who don't. Well that's that has to do with human responsibility what are we responsible for. There's a very famous story in philosophical circles about Bertrand Russell being asked suppose there is a God and you die and you stand in front of him. What are you going to say Bertrand? And his response was I will say to him why didn't you give me more evidence.

Now my thinking is that God is not going to be at a loss for an answer in that situation and he will probably say something like Well Bertrand when I saw what you did with what I had given you I figured there was no point in giving him more. Or possibly. Well Bertrand you know I wanted you to have a large range of choice in this matter. I wanted to consider how badly you wanted me to reveal myself to you. And then we would proceed from there. But in fact it seems like you had other things on your mind and so that's why I didn't run over you with evidence. These things need to be worked out. But I do want to I really want to insist that the way this is stated in what sense is modernism a departure from the biblical worldview not necessarily at all. See one of the things you'll note in the critics of postmodernism they don't distinguish modernism from the way it turned out historically.

And I'm going to talk about that a great deal today. No the post-modern critiques of modernism. Those people often do not distinguish between modernism and the way historically modernism worked out. Now remember I said to you that what modernism does it develops a

method that I've sort of tried to illustrate here with just a quick reference to Descartes but and Condorset [sp] and it develops a method and given that method it sets tradition and authority aside. Now there's no reason why the method couldn't be used to incorporate tradition and authority appropriately. And frankly that's one of the main things that has to be done in the contemporary project of integration of faith and learning.

Speaker 6:

Isn't the idea though that uh we can just use our minds to get at truth and we don't need special revelation.

Dallas Willard:

Now one one of the things we might find out if we used our minds was that we need God's special revelation. That's what I mean when I say we we're going to have to develop an understanding of knowledge that puts revelation in its place but there's nothing in the modern move. That I have sort of tried to describe here looking at Descartes that would say no you have to you have to take a stand against revelation. See that's one of the things that happened in the development of modernity and that's where like when I was a pup we used to talk about rationalists. And rationalist were always bad. Why. Well because rationalists meant people like Bobby Ingersoll and other people in American history who were sort of the traveling atheists show and they would always go around and say you know that the Bible is contrary to reason. There's nothing contrary to reason of the Bible. And I've learned from my contacts. They used to

like to take that passage in first Corinthians 1. When the world by wisdom knew not God. God chose by the foolishness of preaching.

Now that's an interesting phrase the way it was read was essentially by the foolishness of preachers. That the foolishness of preachers isn't necessarily the same thing as the foolishness of preaching. And that passage goes on to talk about Christ being the power of God and the wisdom of God and the concept of the New Testament is not one that is opposed to reason at all. It is one which says reasoning alone is not enough reasoning has to bring you to something else. And what it should bring us to is history and tradition and experience. So now. So you will think about these things you not just take what I say and set down and so please keep thinking about them but my statement is simply that there is nothing in the nature of modernism if you don't confuse it with the way it worked out in specific cases. So that's that's a failure of modernism that isn't modernism that's a failure of modernism. If you don't do that there's nothing in the nature of the case that says now here's what it does do. Modernism says that if we come to revelation we come to it on the basis of reason. And many people find that offensive. But if you don't take that option then you're in a real pickle as to determining how you pick your revelations. Yvonne.

[inaudible question]

Dallas Willard:

Well actually it does to me. I mean especially your point. Why would anyone embrace postmodernism and the general answer is because modernism as it developed historically failed the aspirations which motivated it. See it's one thing to say that you can have this wonderful

method which will solve all human problems. It's another thing to solve all human problems. And of course we know at this point in history that a major part of the problem was moral failure and postmodernists are very alert to this. This is why I said to you I think yesterday that the two words that show up are Auschwitz and Hiroshima and these are regarded as the moral failures of as expressions of the moral failure of modernism. Now I'm going to spend a good bit of time today talking about Husserl and Rorty the selections that you have in here and I'm hopeful that this will become clearer, what I'm saying to you now. But that's a very important question. Are there any critiques of modernism that both postmodern modernist and Christians can agree upon? Yes in general the arrogance of human knowledge was with Tom Wright and some meeting today and he said something like it. It is the call upon postmodernism to preach the fall to the arrogance of human knowledge. I thought that was a wonderful statement to preach the fall to the arrogance of human knowledge. Someone, two someones ha-ha.

Speaker 7:

I'm just concerned about misunderstanding I don't mean to misunderstand your statement about Biblical Christianity. I enthusiastically agree with you statements about [inaudible] needing to be a part of our epistemology... [inaudible]... but my concern is are you understanding... [inaudible]....

Dallas Willard:

Well in some in a way very similar to ordinary sense experience. It provides us with facts that we could not arrive at by reason. But you see what I'm saying is that it is our use of reason in

conjunction with grace. And I think that's a zigzag procedure that you move with what you have and we can have a long discussion of prevenient grace and so on. But I don't want to do that here. Let's just say I think there is an interaction all along between Grace and thought just like there's an interaction between any other human activity and grace. I think reasoning is just a human ability and it has all the flaws and advantages thereof. But as we begin to move in openness to God he meets us. And so for example J.P. who uses in one of his books a story of a guy who sort of hangs around USC, Barry Friedman who is a literary student of literature as well as classics and he was overwhelmed by reading the Gospel of Mark with the sense that no one could have made that up. Now that's a combination you see of trained literary judgment and no doubt. The openness of his heart which called for a movement of grace. That's what we have to include in our epistemology.

See when people in the Protestant traditions especially but I think the Catholics also talk about Grace they're thinking of lightning bolts you know they're not thinking about gentle movements in the feelings and the ideas and the discovering of things that are just there. And so we don't have an adequate account of this. See I'm concerned about that for you and each of your fields. Because my view is that the integration of your field into your creedal understanding will involve precisely those kinds of movements. As well as your energetic research efforts. Your best guesses and wild hypotheses tested by experience and communication with others and so on. Together with probably depths of the self that we don't understand in the creative imagination of a lot of stuff just comes and thus. Ironically mathematics is one of the fields where historically this is most well documented with people who go to bed with a problem on their mind or wake up in the middle of the night and write out the solutions. On their bedside tablet. That has happened over and over in mathematics.

Now is that God or is that just something about the human mind that we don't know. I wouldn't want to have to decide the question but I think there are depths to the human self. That are a part of human nature. And that is that we need to be looking at that. And so that's the kind of question that we're after. I don't know if that helps you because see I don't have a complete answer to this. No one does. This is what we've got to get the answer to. How does this actually work and especially people with what some would regard as a high view of inspiration often treat inspiration as if it were something that were just bolts out of the blue automatic writing of a sort. And so and there is no epistemology that. That's just that just happened to you. Was there someone over here?

Speaker 8:

That's the in some ways I think the first time the unconscious has entered into our discussion so far. I guess this is another area where postmodernism and faith basically flip expectations of the unconscious...

Dallas Willard:

Well I wouldn't say I wouldn't put one to put faith in the position of the conflict. But some people's understanding of how. The divine human relation works certainly cannot accommodate the unconscious and that's but they're primarily bothered with things like you might pick up in Jung and Freud and other people. I think that the general idea of the unconscious is as biblical as anything else you know I mean there's no suggestion in the scripture

that know that I know of no anthropological view in the scripture that says the human being is just the conscious mind.

Speaker 8:

What I meant to suggest is that where we would say that God is moving, in the case of a USC student Go has moved him and certainly a postmodernist would say wait a minute let's talk about what moved him. You say grace...

Dallas Willard:

But now let me point out that is not essential to say. That someone who has moved into postmodern dragging a lot of baggage. If they're going to jump up at that point and say no that's now, how do you know, that couldn't be God. And certainly that's true. And many many many literary departments across the country assume. The old fashioned Freudian idea that anyone who believes in God is simply messed up. And. So but you know you have to Christianity Modernism Post-Modernism all these isms you have to distinguish between what is really essential to them and what gets hung on them historically. And people come running to Christianity with joy because of something they heard and then they import a whole bunch of stuff into it which was no part of what they heard.

See that's a part of the human condition again. So we have to be very careful about that. Let me do just one other question here today and then we'll try to address some others because this is really central to what is foundationalism. As Christians do we have to be foundationalists

well? Answer the second question first. No you don't have to be foundationalist. But you're going to find your life interesting if you aren't and what is foundationalism, well foundationalism is basically is the idea that our. Our beliefs. Are variants

[fumbling to find something to write with]

...Our. Knowledge. Of. These. Divide into those we hold on the basis of other knowledge beliefs. Those which form the basis the basis here is the foundation. So that's the standard way I think of stating it. You have your beliefs or knowledge. And then some of those you hold on the basis of others. And then the others. And of course what's said under your breath is here. Not held on the basis of other beliefs. Now then you have a choice now then foundationalism begins to differentiate itself. Because one might say all right these beliefs. This is the these are the foundations here. These beliefs have no basis at all. That can be. Further finessed. But what they really mean is there's no evidentiary basis of these beliefs. Right. And also Williams ground groundless. Believe. And that's of course very differences you understand how this works...

So foundationalism is a way of thinking about the body of knowledge where you have this distinction. Now then, you can also say that these beliefs have a basis just not other propositions not other beliefs not other judgments. And this is where. The real battle begins right. Because the real issue here as. I. Said about post-modern. Real issue is whether or not we ever manage to grasp something as it is in itself. So on way of taking Foundationalism is to say you have the beliefs that are based on other beliefs then you have those other beliefs. And then you have. The real world. And you can base these beliefs on how the world is for example you're a

musician uh you experience music. And you have beliefs about chords and progressions and instruments and so on. You might say Well I base my. Foundational beliefs on listening to music. Examining music. Patricia is a nurse and I think she is engaged in a practice. And it's a very interesting the nurse Intersects with. Health care in a way that a doctor doesn't. The nurse might very well say. Well. I have an experience of the patient and the process of healing and so on. And that is the basis for my foundational beliefs and then of course I have a superstructure here it's based on that. So now it really isn't. We often postmodernism is generally understood as anti foundationalist. And.

So now you can see how that might come into two levels. It might deny this. It might deny that there's any special set of beliefs on which all the rest is founded and you would say then surely you're not telling me that anything goes. No. Usually some version of coherence or pragmatism. Remember yesterday I spoke over and over about how you just have the flow within the belief system the flow. Of coherence pragmatism aesthetic beauty whatever. Would then determine. Your belief system. Quine's web of belief if you're familiar with that as an illustration. So you might be saying this is authenticated by coherence. Or you might be saying. That while there are some foundational beliefs they are not supported by anything. That. They are just. Posits now Rorty comes very close. It is if he doesn't actually say that that's very close to what he says and leotard and others say much the same thing. So. That's foundationalism.

[inaudible question]

Dallas Willard:

Foundationalism. It helps them by uh they will say that it helps them build reality. Now this is this is the major question. So they think that there's a real world here. I have to come to terms of that real work of the anti foundationalists especially the Rotarian variety will simply say it's pointless to talk about the real world. All you have is your practice including your practice of speaking and communicating with others. And the only question is how well that works. But there isn't. There is no issue of how your beliefs integrate with the real world. So now it goes with this that postmodernists will standardly reject what are called correspondence theories of truth. Correspondence theory of truth says that a belief is true if what it is about is as that belief holds it to be.

And you can easily see that this concept of knowledge that I explained to you probably can't be had without a correspondence theory of truth. Because it talks about representing things as they are strictly speaking. I think you can avoid that but there's no need in my opinion but correspondence theory of truth usually goes with an account of foundationalism which says these basic problems. Hold them on the basis of our experience of what they're about. So if I believe there's a chocolate covered donut over there where or not that is true depends on whether or not there's a chocolate donut over there. That is what is called the reality hook in these discussions. And the problem. Is there a reality. Between language and the world or is there just language.

[inaudible portion]

Speaker 9:

Just to clarify that foundationalism says that number two beliefs are bases on interaction with the real world.

Dallas Willard:

Well you have a choice about that. That's the that's the realist interpretation which I personally hold. And that involves correspondence theory of truth. But you have people who will say well these are just basic beliefs the basic belief is something like a belief I have a right to hold. Given my circumstances.

Speaker 9:

So you can be a foundationalist and say that I just have these number two beliefs based on [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

That's right. That's exactly right. That's exactly right. And then you then that the person who nonfoundationalist there would say no we just have beliefs and they sort of interlock in various ways but none of them are foundational. You see that's the point.

Speaker 10:

...Add here. I think it's important a couple things here. Number one, being foundationalist doesn't mean that you have to be committed to the idea that the foundational views are undoubtable or a hundred percent certain. So if you're doing music perhaps a foundational belief is one that is based on a direct experience of a chord and by experiencing it over and over you understand it and view it as a foundational belief but you wouldn't be committed to the claim that your foundational view is unquestionable and if I may just add one more thing Dallas, this touches on a very deep issue here. Most of us have been trained in universities where the purpose of an education today is not knowledge but rather helping us learn to think or to pursue something and people shy away from the idea that you can gain knowledge- [gap in recording] to. Go. One of the. Red flags that a lot of Christians might have with the idea that you're claiming that knowledge is important to our discipline would be the idea that that might lead to dogmatism in the end of the discussion.

And I think that there are a couple of things we ought to say about this that I'd like to just interject here and one would be suppose you claim you have knowledge of something of music that serves as a foundational belief that serves up, when you have knowledge of that particular belief doesn't mean that you are for closing. Discussion. It's not like I know this. That settles it. I'm not open being wrong or any further discussion I'm going to be a dogmatist in the bad sense of that word. And that's what a lot of people believe foundationalism or claims to have knowledge actually actually generate and since they were taught the purpose of education is really rather gain knowledge that stops enquiry. But it doesn't have to I think you can claim to have knowledge. In a sense have a right to be sure about what you believe in in the sense that now I can use this item of knowledge to do further work in my studies while remaining open to claims that are wrong. So I want to be careful and just add that Dallas' assertion that knowledge

or belief is at the center of what we do as. Is not the way we conclusions dogmatic being so it doesn't fore further interactions. Close.

Dallas Willard:

Yeah. That's why. I hope to the formula I gave you for knowledge I hope allows that But the curious so much of the negative position that's taken today is in response to a mistaken position about the nature of knowledge in particular the idea that you know you couldn't be wrong. Now of course if you couldn't be wrong when you know. That puts you in a very special position. And. On the other hand to say well I could be wrong but I'm not As far as I know I'm not wrong. Perhaps in a certain sense if you want to know whether I know. You will have to either. And maybe you can tell maybe you can't. Know this this is where dogmatic assumptions about the world begin to come in the areas of art for example. Very quickly it turns out. That I can't know anything. Probably in morality More. And.

That's where then you'd have to say no why is it that you will eventually run against some version of the modernist ideal for knowledge. And. then for example you learn things like tones are actually sound waves that what they are and light and color are actually light waves and like. Well I mean. In many respects the game is over at that point. Because. What you have allowed people to do is substitute something which is not what you were talking about. Why did they do that well because they think they can mathematically analyze Wave frequencies? And if that's the test then of course we have to go that way.

Speaker 11:

Would foundationalism sort of. Hang on. Where we are with postmodernism where does it fit in.

Dallas Willard:

Foundationalism is generally thought to characterize modern thought and I think that's appropriate that Foundationalism lies with modernity and postmodernism with some form of anti-foundationalism. Nancy were you going to say something?

Speaker 12: [inaudible question]

Dallas Willard:

Well this is one of the advantages of denying this as you escape hierarchies. Yes indeed. Why worry about hierarchy is well that's where the political side of postmodernism comes in as a basic point. You worry about them because it is inegalitarian. And we we must look at a few passages on these themes as we go along. But that is. For many people the hierarchical nature of foundationalism is enough to dismiss it. See this can't be right because it is inegalitarian we know that there they go. So now let me just point out that if you just take foundationalism where you don't try to have a basis for your foundations your foundations will often turn out to be false. For example a foundational belief for a long period in human history was the world is flat. That was that formed the basis for other beliefs. It was not based upon propositions. By. Perceptions of certain kinds. You live in Kansas it looks flat. So you know there were some.

So now the problem with foundationalism unless you raise the question of the connection between these and the reality is that often your foundations can simply be. That the person who adopts this will and Wittgensteinianism is a Pervasive kind of attitude that shows up in many places a person who adopts this was actually working with the idea that you cannot get outside. That language outside inside inside outside. You will see that showing up you may have noticed it already over and over in the readings that you can see that's a picture of the mind as a container. And now in postmodernism it won't be your mind it will be the culture. The culture is contained and your mind shows up within that. So there's an inversion but in both cases. The idea that there's an inside and outside. That you cannot compare your representations and beliefs. With what they're about. As those things exist independently of your perceptions. That does not compute for all of you see how that goes.

There's an inside and outside and you can't get outside. The mind now wants that based of that's based on some version of Midas touch epistemology. First of all. It's based upon the idea that whenever your mind or your culture or your language or whatever. Touches or presents or. Posits an object it has somehow. Changed it from what it would be if it were possible for it to not in some cases hold fashion to knowledge I would say just wouldn't exist. Like Hume just explicitly said anything other than our representations is nonsense. So now. What is what is really driving some versions of foundationalism as well? And I think that foundation is always and I hope that you find exceptions and that is always this idea of the inside and an outside. And then you get to talk about transcendence. And how you cannot transcend and the transcendent is unknowable and so forth and so. So that that'll apply the God of light to tax those apples and squirrels and everything. This is a very powerful concept. And that's why I'm drawing it out. Yvonne then Brad we'll come back to you.

[inaudible question]

Dallas Willard:

Well you see when you start out Descartes he thinks he can get out. How does he think he gets out? He's got an idea. Which could only be caused by something that was outside, God. And then he sensed that he's since he got out of the mind to God did pretty well get you anything. And that's actually the way it works for him. But it's. None of the none of the followers. I mean you watch Spinoza and laments tie themselves in knots. And in one case you get a great big inside called substance and everything is inside that. So you you recreate the inside actually anyone who's interested in studying Spinoza in comparison to someone like Rorty You. Would find a lot of fascinating parallels. Then in Leibnitz what you get is an infinite number of little insides In addition to the great big inside called God. God manages

God can get outside just because he's big enough to do it. But no other Monet can. It's just fascinating mind-blowing to watch how all of this works out and I'm sure you're not interested in it but if you excuse me It is fascinating watch how the simple point. Just structure whole worldview. But the inside outside stuff is just so fundamental to this whole discussion. That in you're mind you but I mean it is. And that's the way it's been expressed now that postmodernist approach Cartesian self is trying to blow it open. What happens is. They wind up stuck inside culture. Why. Because of their interpretation of that intentional arrow. That intentional arrow only works through a cultural filter. So for Descartes it was an individual filter. For the postmodernist generally it's a cultural filter. That comes out of the same place.

[inaudible question, jumbled]

Dallas Willard:

Let me make a general statement here Todd. No one escapes the foundation and actually if I have time to get into some of these texts. I want to point out how the denial hierarchy. Doesn't actually. Work. It's the same way with Essence you cannot escape an asserting essences unless you just assert nothing. What you can do is assert essences and then say you're not doing. And if you can get enough people to believe what you say about what you're saying. Then you're off the hook. Brad and then Patricia.

Brad:

Yeah if you're going to be a foundationalist hat takes the realist view that your foundations are based on reality, does that mean that your foundational statements have to be falsifiable in the sense that there has to be some sense in which they could be falsified. So one of my foundations is that [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

Well let's start with chocolate donuts on the table. Now suppose I believe that and I want to know whether or not it's true. Well what I would do is I would take my belief over here and I would look and I would examine the table, and then I would say my belief that there were

chocolate donuts on the table was false. [inaudible] Because I had taken my belief, or perhaps your statement that you said that see I can do that with statements too. You can bring your statement over here and then hold against what it is about. And, I can see. Whether they match. The appropriate. Now. Could I have been wrong? In seeing how they match up. Yes you could have been. You know that's the that's the demon and dream story in Descartes Perhaps there's an infinite deceiver. Who makes me walk over and manipulates my mental state so that the donuts are there. I don't see why I can always say that the statement is false when it is actually true. Or perhaps I'm dreaming or perhaps I'm a brain in a vat and some ingenious scientist is manipulating me [inaudible] But. It's a mercy to get out of it. But the idea is the same the brain and the body is basically Descartes' Demon. The idea that someone might be manipulated my mental state.

The idea there is of course that if you were brain in a vat you wouldn't be able to determine that you were. Straight. I myself happened to know where my brain is. And I venture you know where yours is and the suggestion that I might be a brain in a vat as a real possibility is ruled out by that fact. Actually Putnam has his own way of getting around that. But it involves a theory of reference and won't work in the end in my opinion. So I could be wrong. Now in the case of God how do I test that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. How do I test? Well obviously not by sort of looking under the table. But there is a way of testing. That. And perhaps it cannot be demonstrated with the same fullness. But the truth of that statement can be in a manner, brought over against what it's about. See that's the general idea of bringing now the Midas touch says you can't do that. Because when you think about what it's about. You don't get what it's about. You just get what it's about appearing to you. And when you think about how it fits with what it's about you only get the appearance of that relation and that's it see because the

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Midas touch is absolutely relentless. It says everything you think about you change. That means that you cannot ever find out how things are independently of your thinking because in order to find out how they are you have to think about them. So now I don't think I should Badger you further about that you finally wind up really working on this idea that when you think about something you change it. Patricia.

Patricia: [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

Generally speaking. The classic modern the modern classical modern thinkers are foundational even someone like Kant he adopts a correspondence theory of truth

Patricia:

And then I just had a question again of clarification about the text on page 271 they get a little uh in the center of the text they talk about the great surgical problem of contemporary philosophy [inaudible]...

Dallas Willard:

They wouldn't be the same. There is a difference. The antifoundationalist is someone who is going to make a point of attacking foundationalism. Nonfoundationalist, these are people

Rorty is a primary nonfoundationalist in this text. And what it does is to say we want to look at his is his selection is very important I'm going to look at what he was and always is to say that we don't base our beliefs on this foundation. It's not. In. Any view of the world. It's just to say it doesn't matter. Not foundational as one who would basically say the issue is irrelevant it doesn't matter which way you side. The antifoundationalist says it makes a difference. Actually Rorty. In a manner attacks anti-foundationalist he thinks they're misguided. And they then get up a lot of. Issues [inaudible]

Speaker 15:

So just to piggyback on that, I'm aware that there are these theologians [inaudible] who apparently call themselves non foundational theologians but these are also people who hold universal truths by faith.

Dallas Willard:

Yes but they don't want to get you. They don't want to get involved in the issue of whether or not you ground those universal truths.

Speaker 15:

So this is then a nonfoundationalist [inaudible] says we then so this is not like. We actually hold some foundations but we will not admit these in theological discussion because we don't [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

That's right. And normally they won't be talking about knowledge.

Speaker 15:

And Nancy Murphy doesn't believe that she told me.

Dallas Willard:

See that's a typical Rotarian position. And that's where someone like Putnam will Buck and haul at that I mean he will go into the route and Rorty will stand there saying to him what's the point. Why don't you just say what I say? And really the reason is that Putnam has a strong sense of truth. He wants there to be true.

[jumble of overlapping voices]

...Is inside and outside. I could only have. On. All here with ours. Viewers. From. You're direct. Cultural. Ways. Why didn't you take her with us? Just got some. Words. See. What. She. Is all about. Yes this case is going by. Because it's not just. Sidestepping the. Yeah that would be necessary for someone to say something. He said look I can't I can't really argue. I don't want to do that however it was revealed that so that you know that we believe

Dallas Willard:

No that that steps aside from the whole issue of Foundationalism because you're not talking about knowledge at all. You're talking about faith in the sense that she used.

Speaker 15:

Can I within a system seek knowledge and understanding within the system [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

I don't I don't think the people you're talking about would think that was an appropriate thing to do.

Speaker 15:

Well they seem to do it though.

Dallas Willard:

You know what I do hope that you all will remember my distinction between what people say and what people say about what they say. My own view is that you cannot trust what people say especially since the 19th century about their own views. Because very likely in what they say

about their views they will be reflecting. What is proper? On their own epistemology. But if you're going to just talk and deal with reality you normally will not worry as much about what is proper as your subject matter. So you get into that and you start talking. Like Derrida's discussions for example and the text and so on. So. Obviously presupposes the very local centrism that he tries to deny. So that's you really have to listen at those two levels. What are these people saying? Second level what are they saying about what they're saying. And you will find in most cases that what they say about what they're saying is not. An accurate guide to what they're saying. Because see the different commitments are at issue on those two levels.

Speaker 15:

Yeah I wasn't I don't mean to press the matter I'm just trying to understand when we're to just accept the scriptures as revelation and say now within this system I'm going to explore these doctrines and experiences the world through it I'm not going to [inaudible] as Jesus and make connection to the world from Scriptures.

Dallas Willard:

It is a nonfoundationalist theology but it is one in which which really doesn't raise the issue of knowledge at all.

Speaker 15:

Ok so I guess I don't understand what knowledge is. I guess I don't understand I assume that if I'm building from within the system then I'm trying to understand for instance Christology as the scriptures present them, that's not knowledge?

Dallas Willard:

I think knowledge raises the claim to represent things as they really are. OK. And Rotarians sort of. Sorry that could mean something else couldn't it. That that version of foundational something does doesn't refuse to raise these questions. Now my view is they still continue to make claims about how things are. In particular about how knowledge is about how languages is. At least a negative view about the relationship between. The world and the like Nancy's view of reality. And what she's doing whether or not she's claiming she's making claims about how things really are. That's See that's the part where I say well that's what she does and then here's what she says about what she does. See when we get to especially when we are in highly institutionalized settings.

And we get into elaborate interpretations of what it is we are doing. When as in Nancy's case there are a lot of canons sitting over on the other side of the street really blow her away if she says the wrong thing. You want to recognize that there's a tremendous tension that leads to Mis-descriptions of what we're doing. [Inaudible question] Well nonfoundationalist technically it is a reinterpretation of knowledge in such a way that whatever basis. One of the things you will always find in knowledge is a claim to a basis. That's always there. And the difference between the foundationalist and the non foundationalist to speak simply. Is they claim a different type of Basis?

And we're going to look at a few passages in person other people hear the rest of the day to sort of show you what that looks like. But I want to make that statement again the difference between claims of belief or misrepresentation and knowledge is the claim to have a basis. That's essential to knowledge. You never find otherwise. And the reason and that's how that relates to responsible action. See. If you're going to bet. On Beatle Bob in the fifth race. Hollywood part you don't have to have a basis. Right. And in fact if you do have a basis you may be in trouble with the law. [inaudible comment] Well in this case yes. Sorry I forget where I am. But no the point is there you know you're not supposed to have a basis. If you do have a basis other than a bunch of guesses and you think. Then you probably have messed with the race. Or someone messed with it and let you know. See the basis. Now. You can say about your Christian faith I have no basis at all. And actually you have a lot of people that come very close to that. And frankly from what you say. JP It's very hard to distinguish what she would be saying from the most extreme form of idealism. And-

[End]