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 **EWS**  
Theological Education

# EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Improving a Difficult  
Relationship



Tom 4 – Monografie

**THEOLOGICA**  
Wrocławensis

**Pavel Hanes**

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# Evangelical Theology and Philosophy:

Improving a Difficult Relationship

# **Evangelical Theology and Philosophy:**

## **Improving a Difficult Relationship**

**Pavel Hanes**

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**Evangelical Theology and Philosophy:  
Improving a Difficult Relationship**



**Wrocław 2020**

# **Evangelical Theology and Philosophy: Improving a Difficult Relationship**

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## A WORD FROM EDITOR

Dear Reader,

It is our pleasure of present you with Volume 4 of the series *Monographs of Theologica Wratislaviensia*. The book *Evangelical Theology and Philosophy. Improving a Difficult Relationship* plays a special role in our collection. The author, professor Pavel Hanes, a renowned Slovak theologian of Baptist provenience and lecturer at the Department of Evangelical Theology and Mission of Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica, aims in the book to defend the role of philosophy in theological studies. In the form of a textbook he seeks to reconcile – as he says – “two enemies” and to show the usefulness of philosophy for theological studies, especially in the context of Evangelical theology. Hanes avoids extreme positions of rejecting or adoring philosophy and shows how a critically constructive approach can be adopted by students of theology towards the philosophical sphere of knowledge.

In a very clear way, with numerous references to the source texts and secondary literature, the author presents mutual relationships between philosophy and theology over the centuries. He refers to selected leading thinkers in the history of Christian theology from various traditions, and examines their attitudes towards philosophy. He effectively shows how influential philosophy was, even in the case of theologians who programmatically separated themselves from philosophical thought. Their methodology, hermeneutics or even theological concepts were frequently influenced by philosophy; they studied it, understood it and

often – even if reluctantly – used it. In this manner Hanes demonstrates that the great theologians were also in a way philosophers. On the other hand, he indicates how important theological reflection has been for the development of philosophy, and the degree to which religious issues have inspired and influenced great European philosophers.

In his analysis, the author of the book is aware of dangers and challenges, but also of opportunities and benefits when theology is used in the area of philosophical studies and philosophy is known to students of theology. Having this in mind, Hanes proposes “twelve gateways” to philosophy, which may lead reluctant theological students to appreciating philosophical thinking and philosophical tradition. By asking fundamental questions, discussing problems and offering additional literature, he offers a very practical introduction to philosophy and shows that at times everybody is a philosopher. It is impossible to avoid philosophical questions, philosophical tools and philosophical solutions even in Evangelical theology.

It is important to understand in the context of the book what is meant by Evangelicalism and Evangelical theological tradition. It suffices to indicate in this introduction that Evangelicalism, which derives its name from the Greek word *euangelion* (good news, gospel), usually refers to a trans-denominational, conservative movement, which grew out of Protestant Christianity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, yet today is present in various theological and ecclesiastical traditions. Evangelicalism particularly stresses the importance of the spiritual conversion of a person, adherence to the divinely inspired Bible, Christ-centered piety and missionary activism. John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Bill Bright, John Stott or Billy Graham are considered the major figures of Evangelical Protestantism.

The Protestant tradition is commonly divided into mainline or historical Protestantism (Ger. *Evangelische*) and Evangelical Protestantism (Ger. *Evangelikalismus, Evangelikal*). Mainline Protestantism traditionally refers to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation of Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli and Calvin. However, the Protestant tradition also includes later, Evangelical churches and denominations. These churches are descendents of the post-Reformation renewal movements of the Church in the 17<sup>th</sup> and later centuries, especially English Puritanism and German Pietism. These movements reached the United States of America at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century together with the waves of European immigrants. They shaped the spirituality of American Protestantism during the so-called Great Awakenings in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and gave momentum to classical Evangelicalism.

Evangelicalism has never been confined to one particular denomination. Contemporary Evangelical Protestantism is very diverse, but still strives to imitate the lifestyle of the first Christians as depicted in the Scriptures and early creeds. It is faithful to the fundamental Protestant principles: *sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone), *sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola fide* (by faith alone), *solus Christus* (through Christ alone) and *soli Deo gloria* (glory to God alone).

The author of the book is right in indicating that the conservative character of Evangelicalism, together with its adherence especially to the *sola Scriptura* principle, may often result in a particular anti-intellectual attitude among Evangelicals. Yet, to exist and effectively operate in the present-day world, Evangelicalism needs to understand contemporary culture, its versatile aspects and its intellectual roots. Hence the importance of philosophy, which lies at the basis of broadly understood European culture. A student who carefully reads the book of Pavel Hanes

will find it a useful guide to the realm of humanities, and will be encouraged to further in-depth studies of the contemporary world, especially in the area of philosophy.

The book is mainly directed to the students and ministers of Evangelical theology. However, we believe that it may be useful for students of theology and philosophy representing other Christian proveniences, including mainline Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. In these traditions the relationship between theology and philosophy is often not clear either, and constant reflection, both from a theological and a philosophical perspective, is required in the contemporary, dynamically changing world. We are very happy that the book by professor Pavel Hanes, *Evangelical Theology and Philosophy. Improving a Difficult Relationship*, may be published by the Evangelical School of Theology in our *Monograph Series of Theologica Wratislaviensia*. On behalf of the whole editorial team, I wish you a pleasant and fruitful reading of the volume.

Wojciech Szczerba

The editor of the volume and editor-in-chief of *Theologica*

Wratislaviensia

Rector of the Evangelical School of Theology

## FOREWORD

Evangelical theology and philosophy are often seen as two irreconcilable enemies. Philosophy tries to explain the world using reason and the latest scientific knowledge while evangelicalism is generally focused on personal spiritual experience based on the message of the Bible. Understandably, an evangelical theologian is suspicious of philosophy whose ultimate authority is common human experience and reason.

To overcome the negative bias toward employment of philosophy in theological inquiry I have prepared a text for students of theology that shows both the negative and positive sides of the relationship between these two areas of thought. The student gets acquainted with leading personalities on both sides of the divide and is guided toward a positive and judicious attitude to philosophy.

For twenty five years I have been teaching at the department of evangelical theology. In my experience, among the students of evangelical theology, two basic approaches to philosophy can be found: there are those who dislike it too much and there are those who love it too much. My goal has been to move away from the extreme positions to a critically constructive approach to the philosophy that is an inevitable part of theology and to the theology that can be found in philosophy.

Pavel Hanes



## INTRODUCTION

“The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind.”<sup>1</sup> This is the first sentence in the book that is an indictment of American evangelicalism written by an evangelical professor of history and Christian thought. We Europeans may think this is not our problem. However, a closer look tells a different story. Anti-intellectualism is quite wide-spread among the European evangelicals as well.

The aim of this book is to argue in favour of philosophy and its usefulness for theology. The first part of the book presents a theory with examples of how the relationship was implemented in the thought of several key thinkers in the history of theology. The second part contains twelve “gateways” to philosophy meant for an evangelical student of theology who has to be persuaded of its usefulness. In each section, an aspect of thought is presented through which the student gets access to the philosophical discourse from the standpoint of some kind of non-philosophical thinking. Besides those aspects that are commonly encountered in the introductions to philosophy (history of philosophy and philosophical problems), the book briefly speaks of other interesting approaches – such as the methods of philosophy, or personal idiosyncrasies of some philosophers.

The theorists of pedagogy insist that in teaching philosophy the thematic scope of the curriculum should be reduced and the “...ability to

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1 NOLL, M. A. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, p. 3.



think through the selected problems critically and creatively”<sup>2</sup> should be accentuated. Creative and critical thinking is aided primarily by the selection of ways in which the student encounters philosophical problems in daily life. Quotations from the works of philosophers present the student with a challenge to read the works of philosophy, not just books *about* philosophy. Even though the student of theology will probably lack the necessary training to understand each quotation fully, such readings are important for the development of students’ first-hand acquaintance with the philosophical discourse.

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2      ŠUCH, J. *Otázničky nad vývojom didaktiky filozofie na Slovensku*. In DARGOVÁ, J. - DARAK, M. (ed.) *Didaktika v dimenziách vedy a praxe*, p. 321.

# I. A THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY

## 1.1 THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY – THE PROBLEM

For clarity, it will be useful to begin with definitions. Any definition of the word “philosophy” is an expression of a *philosophical* viewpoint that is reached through *philosophy*. From this it follows that some kind of “philosophically neutral” definition simply cannot exist.<sup>3</sup> Every definition of philosophy must start with something that is already known. Such a point of departure for the understanding of the unknown is a *philosophical* position concerning reality. Diverse philosophical systems start with diverse initial presuppositions and therefore come to diverse definitions of philosophy: “What is philosophy can be answered only within the context of philosophy itself, only utilising its terms and devices – it is itself, so to speak, its first problem.”<sup>4</sup> The idea is to begin without presuppositions but this ideal is forever eluding philosophy.

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3 For Heidegger “Philosophy is metaphysics” (HEIDEGGER, M. *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, In KRELL, D. F. (ed.) *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings*, New York: HarperCollins, 1993, p. 432), for Wittgenstein “all philosophy is a critique of language” (WITTGENSTEIN, L. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 4.0031), and, e.g., for Deleuze “philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts” (DELEUZE, G. - GUATTARI, F. *What Is Philosophy?*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 2).

4 SIMMEL, G. *Hauptprobleme der Philosophie*, Leipzig: Göschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1910, p. 8. In this vein, Feuerbach wrote: “Philosophy varies from the real sciences in that its subject matter is not given and that it does not possess any principles (*Grundsätze*) or method how to think

To avoid this unsolvable problem, in what immediately follows, philosophy will be taken to be “a social science field of study at university”. At places where the term “philosophy” will have to be distinguished from the term “theology”, by “philosophy” we shall designate a form of rigorous thinking whose ultimate authority is the reason and commonly accessible human experience. By “theology” we shall understand a form of systematic spiritual thinking whose ultimate authority is divine revelation (the word of God, the Bible) and the life in the Holy Spirit. *Doubt* will be considered as the foundational method of philosophy.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the foundational method in theology will be considered to be *faith*. Christian faith, understood in the broadest sense of the term, is critical<sup>6</sup> acceptance of a higher authority. The view and interpretation of this higher authority, in turn, depends on the particular type of theology. For example, evangelical theology traditionally views the Bible as an infallible revelation of God. The more involved questions of inerrancy, hermeneutics, creationism or eschatology will not be discussed. These problems, although important, do not determine the nature of the relationship between theology and philosophy.

### 1.1.1 A Strained Relationship

From Tertullian’s (ca. 160–215) famous rejection of philosophy (*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? quid academiae et ecclesiae? quid*

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about this subject matter. Philosophy does not have any initial presuppositions (*ist voraussetzungslos*). This lack of presuppositions (*Voraussetzungslosigkeit*) is what sets it apart from other sciences (FEUERBACH, L. *Sämtliche Werke II*, Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1846, p. 233).

5 “...doubting everything is once for all a necessary element in the organism of philosophic reflection.” (ROYCE, J. *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913, vii.). Also Descartes and many other philosophers.

6 “Theology ought to be self-critical ... faith ceases to be faith when it is not beware of turning into unbelief, mistaken belief or superstition” (EBELING, G. *Wort und Glaube*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969, p. 192.)

*haereticis et christianis?*)<sup>7</sup> to Tillich's (1886–1965) method of correlation,<sup>8</sup> we can see an immensely diverse spectrum of solutions to the problem of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Some of the Church Fathers believed in the existence of “the ideal Christian philosophy,”<sup>9</sup> and so did some of the scholars of the medieval and Renaissance periods. The church historian Eusebius (ca. 260–340) regarded Christian asceticism as a “philosophic manner of life”<sup>10</sup> and Augustine (354–430) at times refers to the Christian doctrine as “our true philosophy”<sup>11</sup> or a “true philosophy as the only help against the miseries of life.”<sup>12</sup>

The Middle Ages witnessed a still stronger connection between theology and philosophy. The medieval process of harmonization began with Boethius (480–525) and reached its climax in the work of Thomas

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7 “What has Jerusalem to do with Athens, the Church with the Academy, the Christian with the heretic?” (TERTULLIAN, *Liber De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, In [www.tertullian.org](http://www.tertullian.org).)

8 According to Tillich, the method of correlation “...it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions.” (TILlich, P. *Systematic Theology I. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1957, 1963*, p. 62.)

9 E.g., for Justin Martyr, philosophy “is the knowledge of that which exists, and a clear understanding of the truth” (*Dialogue with Trypho* 3), for Tatian “our philosophy is older than Greek practices” (*Address to the Greeks XXXI*), or for Clement of Alexandria philosophy is knowledge given by God (*Stromata* 6/8). In ROBERTS, A. and DONALDSON, J. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers I, II*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913.

10 About Origenes he says: “For a great number of years he continued to live like a philosopher (φιλοσοφῶν διετέλει τὸν τρόπον) in this wise putting aside everything that might lead to youthful lusts...” (EUSEBIUS *The Church History. VI/3/9*. In MIGNE, J.-P. *Patrologiae cursus completus XX*, Paris: 1857, p. 529.

11 *...nostra Christiana, quae una est vera philosophia* (AUGUSTINE *Contra Iulianum Libri Sex*, IV/14/72). In [www.sant-agostino.it](http://www.sant-agostino.it).

12 *datum est verae philosophiae contra miseras huius vitae unicum auxilium* (*De Civitate Dei*, XXII/22/4). In [www.sant-agostino.it](http://www.sant-agostino.it).

Aquinas (1225–1274) through his synthesis of theology with Aristotelian philosophy. Thomism, as this medieval synthesis came to be called, is still influential, particularly in Catholic circles. Some theologians regard it as the *philosophia perennis* – “the eternal philosophy.”<sup>13</sup> The medieval ideal was that philosophy should be subordinated to theology (*ancilla theologiae* – a servant of theology). The final test of every philosophical assertion was church dogma. Those ecclesiastical doctrines that could not be proven by human reason were excluded from the public philosophical discussion. Despite these rather strict rules, in reality, the medieval philosophy was far from just a “servant” of theology. On the contrary, it often determined the division of theologians into various schools of thought and camps. Theologians were quite often led by it to adopt views that had no foundation either in Scripture or in the tradition of the church. Due to the remarkable skills of the scholastic theologian-philosophers, dogmatic theology and speculative philosophy had been worked into a single system. So much so that it became quite difficult to tell where one ended and the other began.

Because of the medieval influences of Aristotelianism on Christian theology,<sup>14</sup> the initial attitude of Reformation theology to philosophy was very negative. Luther (1483–1546) sharply criticised the enslavement of

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13 “Scholasticism is not quite dead at the present day: it is still the philosophy most countenanced by authority in the schools of the Catholic Church.” (RICKABY, J. *Scholasticism*, London: Constable & Co., 1911.)

14 The overall picture of the medieval philosophy is rather complex and often purposefully simplified to stress the historical role of the Reformation. Apart from Aristotelianism, another influential school of thought was Platonism, even though the former was more typical of the Middle Ages, which can also be gathered from Erasmus’ remark concerning theology and rituals of the medieval church: “For who would comprehend these things if he had not consumed all of thirty-six years upon the physics and metaphysics of Aristotle and the Scotists?” (*Quis enim haec percipiat, nisi triginta sex annos totos in physicis, et ultramundanis Aristotelis et Scoticis contriverit?* ERASMI ROTERODAMI *Morias encomion id est: stultitiae lavis* 53.)

the Christian faith by philosophical concepts.<sup>15</sup> The reason, as it is used by philosophy, scholastic theology, enthusiasts and the heretics, is called by Luther a prostitute.<sup>16</sup> He declared that “the Holy Spirit is greater than Aristotle”<sup>17</sup> and “philosophy does not understand anything divine.”<sup>18</sup> At other times, however, he did acknowledge that even philosophy has its place in Christian thought:

Philosophy does not understand anything about holy matters and its mingling with theology worries me. I do not reject its use, but it must be used a silhouette, as a comedy, and in the same way as secular justice is used. But to make it the centre of theology, that does not work.<sup>19</sup>

Calvin’s attitude to philosophy was not as negative as that of Luther, but his work also contains critical remarks against mixing philosophy with theology. Theologians “in order to avoid teaching something which most of humanity (*communi hominum iudicio*) might regard as absurd ... attempted to dilute the doctrine of Scripture with church dogmas (*Scripturae doctrinam cum*

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15 “...is it not true that the treacherous metaphysics of Aristotle and traditional philosophy have deceived our theologians?” (LUTHER, M. *Lectures on Romans*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, p. 211.)

16 ALTHAUS, P. *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1966, p. 69-70.

17 “Maior est Spiritus Sanctus quam Aristoteles.” (LUTHER, M. *De Captivitate Babylonica Ecclesiae*, Wittenberg: 1520, p. 16.)

18 LUTHER, M. *Tischreden*. In ALAND, K. (ed.) *Luther Deutsch 9*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983, p. 42.

19 “Die Philosophie versteht nichts von heiligen Dingen, und ich habe Sorge, man werde sie zu sehr mit der Theologie vermischen. Ihren Gebrauch verwerfe ich nicht, aber man soll sich ihrer wie eines Schattenbildes, einer Komödie bedienen und wie man sonst weltliche Gerechtigkeit gebraucht. Aber sie zum Zentrum der Theologie zu machen, das geht nicht an.” (LUTHER, M. *Tischreden*, p. 42)

*philosophiae dogmatibus dimidia ex parte conciliare*).<sup>20</sup> Philosophers “submit to the reign of human reason alone ... but Christian philosophy (*Christiana philosophia*) commands it to yield and submit to the Holy Spirit.”<sup>21</sup>

Despite this initially negative attitude to philosophy, later Protestant theology returned to philosophical methods in defining and explaining theological concepts. The source and authority for Protestant theology was solely the revelation of God in Scripture. The Church Fathers were no longer accepted as authorities comparable to the Bible.<sup>22</sup>

After the Reformation, Protestant Christianity began to split still further into a countless number of churches and splinter groups. Now the question of genuine certainty about what is the meaning of the revealed truth became exceedingly pressing. The situation was further complicated by the revival of the study of Greek and Roman philosophy. The study of the classics had in fact already been revived during the Renaissance period. New contacts with Greek scholars (especially after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453) and intensified questionings of the scholastics led to a renewal of the ancient philosophical schools. There was a renewed interest in the study of Platonism (Plethon ca. 1355–1450, Ficino 1433–1499), authentic Aristotelianism,<sup>23</sup> scepticism (Montaigne 1533–1592, Charron 1541–1603), Stoicism (Lipsius 1547–1606), as well as Epicureanism (Gassendi 1592–1655). These Renaissance philosophical schools did not have a decisive impact on the history of philosophy, but their importance lies primarily in the diversion from

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20 CALVIN, J. *Institutio christianae religionis*, Berlin: Gustav Eichler, 1834, p. 173.

21 Ibid, p. 445.

22 “Philosophical thought can ... provide dogmatics with formal notions, but not with their content.” (LIGUŠ, J. *Propedeutické systematicko-teologické reflexie o kresťanskej viere v Bohu*, p. 19.)

23 At that particular time, it was studied from the Arabic translations rather than from the Greek texts brought from Byzantium. The discovery of philosophical opinions of Thomas “the Philosopher” considerably weakened the church’s position as the infallible defender of truth.

theological thought and authority towards nature, from belief to doubt, from dogmas to free investigation.

The Renaissance return to ancient philosophy, along with religious scepticism, created favourable conditions for the beginnings of modern philosophy in the person of René Descartes (1596–1650), the founder of rationalism. For the rationalists, the source of epistemological certainty cannot be found outside of reason, in divine revelation. The knowledge that is indubitably certain comes from within – from the certainty of one’s own existence (*cogito, ergo sum*). For the empiricists who followed John Locke (1632–1704), the origin of all philosophical certainty is in sensory perception.<sup>24</sup> There are no ideas that could be found in the mind at birth (innate ideas) – all knowledge has its origin in our senses.

With the increased philosophical emphasis on reason (rationalism) and/or experience, some theologians try to remodel Christian theology on these new principles (e.g. deism).<sup>25</sup> The accommodation of theology to the so-called “scientific thinking” goes hand in hand with the increasing secularisation of European society, and with the successes of the scientific and industrial revolution. As time goes on, the “scientific theology” follows every fashionable philosophical trend: rationalism and empiricism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; romanticism and absolute idealism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; existentialism, process philosophy, Marxism, structuralism and postmodernism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and now. In the name of “science”, the Bible, church doctrines and the church tradition are subjected to a ruthless criticism and exchanged for more plausible modes of thought.

As could have been expected, this process of modernization met with a strong conservative reaction. Within Protestantism, comparatively much greater emphasis was placed on personal piety than on rational

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24 “My purpose – to inquire into the original, certainty, and extent of human knowledge.” (LOCKE, J. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* I,1,2, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894.)

25 Toland (1670–1722) appealed to Locke’s philosophy despite the latter’s protestations, and Collins’ (1676–1727) views were also derived from Locke’s empiricism.



understanding of the doctrines of the scientific<sup>26</sup> theology. Pietism, evangelicalism, revivalism, or fundamentalism are just few terms that, notwithstanding their positive conservative programme, express a negative reaction to the scientific emptying of religion. These movements emphasise religious sentiment, zeal, spirituality or eternal validity of the revealed truth at the expense of the rational understanding of Christian doctrines.<sup>27</sup> Scientific thinking, as could have been foreseen, issued into naturalistic and atheistic worldviews. This development, in turn, led to the alienation of conservative Christian theology from science and from the philosophy<sup>28</sup> that incorporated naturalistic and atheistic presuppositions as the unquestionable truths of ontology.

Emil Brunner (1889–1966) summarised the modern mentality in these words:

Ever since the Renaissance period, at first only in the heads of a few daring people, then in ever broader social strata, a new mentality gradually emerged: a radical worldliness (*Diesseitigkeit*) and a radical immanence-consciousness. For the first time in the history of the world, mass atheism and a culture without religion appear. They are closely followed by certain kind of worldly religion (*Diesseitsreligion*), in which the notion of revelation has no place. It stems from the conviction that this universe, accessible to us through senses and reason, is the only reality. If something divine should exist, it is only a mystery of this world. Maybe we would be willing to admit that those who think and

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26 The term “scientific theology” is very problematic, but it is most often used to denote such a theology whose basic premises and research method do not reckon with supernatural phenomena like miracles or divine revelation.

27 Naturally, these movements were not only a *reaction* to the process of secularisation. For our purposes, however, this (negative) side of the problem is more interesting addressing the relationship between conservative theology and philosophy. The positive sides of these conservative movements may be found in any work on the history of Christianity.

28 We could say “philosophies” in plural, but my aim is to deal with philosophy as a discipline rather than with its various versions.

feel more deeply might be privileged to unveil the world mystery for a moment, but no one talks about revelation anymore – neither in the sense of the ancient religions nor in the Christian sense.<sup>29</sup>

This is the situation, in which we find ourselves today – the situation of separation and alienation of scientific philosophy from theology.<sup>30</sup> Fifty years ago, Brunner was already able to capture not only the problem of atheism but also the problem of spirituality that is currently in vogue. The new spirituality (or rather “spiritualities”) knows nothing of true transcendence and hence has very little in common with Christian spirituality or Christian historical theology. “The transcendence of the human mind is always a rational-immanent transcendence,”<sup>31</sup> which means, however, that any endeavour to talk about “real” transcendence brings us to the end of the possibilities of language and philosophy.

By definition, true transcendence is beyond description. To speak about it we have to strain our language and find ways that point beyond it. Perhaps we can make use of Tillich’s expression that he used to answer a similar problem. Tillich spoke of “the content of the absolute faith”. In his words, the content of such faith is “the God above God”.<sup>32</sup> The absolute

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29 BRUNNER, E. *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1941, p. 5. (Thinking of the unexpected surge of interest in spirituality in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this analysis might seem outdated. However, if we take a closer look at the character of the spirituality that is currently popular, we find out that it is a spirituality that is focused on the *mystery of this world*, as Brunner put it.)

30 We should keep in mind, however, the words of Ebeling who says that in spite of the “...tendencies toward the sharpest separation (*schärfste Diastase*) in theology, and in spite of the inclinations toward anti-theological attitudes in philosophy, the relationship cannot be dissolved (*aufösen*).” (EBELING, G. *Studium der Theologie*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck.) 1977, pp. 56-57)

31 LIGUŠ, J. *Víra a teologie Dietricha Bonhoeffera*, Banská Bystrica: PF UMB, 1994, p. 26.

32 TILLICH, P. *The Courage to Be*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 15, 182.

transcendence could be analogically described as “the transcendence above transcendence”.<sup>33</sup>

The evangelical student of theology, being aware of these problems, may intuitively dislike philosophy. Philosophy not only does not know anything about the living God, the Creator and the Father of Jesus Christ, it also rejects the very conception of an epistemology that would recognise the existence of divine revelation and of a personal communion with God.

### **1.1.2 Philosophy and Theology – Separation or Integration?**

The struggle for the acceptance of a philosophically (and non-philosophically, or anti-philosophically) formulated theology is a complicated story with no sharply defined contours. Nevertheless, in an introductory discussion we have to schematise, despite the danger of distortions coming with simplification.

Remembering this, we may proceed to begin with our first simplification involving the terms “separation” and “integration.” Is separation or integration possible at all? First of all, it is important to realise that every philosophy may be viewed as a certain type of theology (as evidenced, e.g., in the “death of God theology”<sup>34</sup> or “process theology”<sup>35</sup>). On the other hand, every theology can be interpreted as a certain type of philosophy (e.g. the revivalist theology of Jonathan Edwards that can be construed as stoic-ramist Renaissance semiotics). So in every philosophy there are themes that are strictly speaking theological, and in every theology there are themes that are strictly

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33 The problem of the possibilities of language to express transcendence is very much present in the relationship between theology and philosophy. It should be noted that it is one of the major causes of the rift between them.

34 The expression “Death of God” is borrowed from Nietzsche.

35 It is a theologically modified process philosophy of N. A. Whitehead, in which “the Perfection of God must be the absoluteness of his relativity”. (<http://www.anthonysflood.com/hartshornemodality.htm> 9. 4. 2008).

speaking philosophical. The important difference lies in how the theological and the philosophical themes are treated. In a theological discourse, the themes of philosophy will be subjected to a theological critique while in a philosophical discourse it will be the other way round. So much for the possibility of describing the relationship between theology and philosophy as a “separation” or an “integration”.

To illustrate the problem, we are going to examine how some of the well-known theologians worked out this complicated issue. For convenience, their names are put on two sides of a table. One group stands for the integration (or fusion) of theology with philosophy the other stands for the separation of the two. Of course, as we shall see, it does not mean that the group rejecting philosophy was not influenced by it or that they rejected philosophy as such. On the contrary, some of them were accomplished philosophers and that led them to separate their theological arguments from philosophy. In their opinion, divine revelation cannot be conveyed in human language. The word of God is *above* or *beyond* human words. That is why philosophy (a result of human reason and human knowledge) cannot be integrated with theology which is a result of a divine supra-linguistic communication.

Integration	Separation
Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834)	Karl Barth (1886–1968)
Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889)	Emil Brunner (1889–1966)
Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930)	Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976)
Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955)	Karl Rahner (1904–1984)
Paul Tillich (1886–1965)	Jürgen Moltmann (1926–)

1.1.2.1      *Integrating Theology and Philosophy*

Kant’s critique of metaphysics ushered in a new period in speculative theology. From now on it was impossible to ignore the epistemological differences between theology built on divine supernatural revelation and theology built on the natural abilities of human reason. Rationalism and deism lost its ground. We have seen how the nineteenth century brought

about much sharper tension into the relationship between theology and philosophy. From the time of Kant their integration meant a radical accommodation on the one side or the other. Their separation meant a radical “no” to the other side. The line of demarcation has been drawn more clearly and transgressing it has become much more difficult.

The problem of selecting theologians typically representing integration or separation of the two sides is quite complex. On both sides of the divide there are numerous significant names that could serve as excellent examples of solving the problem. Our selection follows the guiding principle of clarity and long-term influence.

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the field of theology was dominated by Hegel’s philosophy. Hegelianism was considered as the highest form of Christian theology. “Today, a theologian does not move out of his own sphere when he deals with philosophy,”<sup>36</sup> wrote the Hegelian theologian Marheineke in 1842. However, a few years later theological Hegelianism “went out of fashion.” The scholars that I mention below seem to have a more permanent influence and are not subject to fashions of the day.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Friedrich Schleiermacher***

Schleiermacher spent ten years “without ceasing and almost exclusively”<sup>38</sup> studying Kant’s philosophy. Influenced by Kant’s questioning of reason’s possibilities in the field of metaphysics and, also, by romantic philosophy, he turned instead to religious *sentiment* for answers. In his view, sentiment (emotions) is both the source and the certainty of religious knowledge. The truth of religion cannot be exhaustively expressed in human language and it also changes with the

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36 MARHEINEKE, P. *Einleitung in die öffentlichen Vorlesungen über die Bedeutung der hegelschen Philosophie in der christlichen Theologie*, Berlin: Th. Chr. Fr. Enslin, 1842, p. 9.

37 As regards scholars of our own day, only time will tell to what extent their influence will be limited to the time period in which they were active.

38 DILTHEY, W. *Leben Schleiermachers*, Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1870, p. 129.

times.<sup>39</sup> Schleiermacher does not construct his theological system as a set of theological doctrines. For him “Christianity is to be interpreted in such a way as to find a place in the thought of contemporary thinkers (considered as authoritative) without friction.”<sup>40</sup> According to Schleiermacher, God can be found in the religious consciousness of every human being. This is not a rationalist approach from the previous period but a romantic idea of human soul that comes to know God through the religious feeling:

The piety which forms the basis of all ecclesiastical communions is, considered purely in itself, neither a Knowing nor a Doing, but a modification of Feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness. ...the self-identical essence of piety is this: the consciousness of our absolute dependence or, which is the same thing, of our relation with God.<sup>41</sup>

In this way theology is turned into anthropology and the study of dogma into the study of human religious feeling.

On the surface it might seem that Schleiermacher does not integrate his theological system with philosophy. He does not formulate rational faith-propositions in the form of definitions, and his system is not founded on the arguments of logic. But we must keep in mind that the philosophy of romanticism did not always take a strictly logical form<sup>42</sup> (as was the case in Hegelianism). A rational or strictly logically constructed system is not absolutely necessary for it to be possible to observe a fusion

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39 “Dogmatic Theology is the science which systematizes the doctrine prevalent in a Christian Church at a given time.” (SCHLEIERMACHER, F. D. E. *The Christian Faith*, London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016, p. 88.)

40 BARTH, K. *Protestantská teologie v XIX. století II*, Praha: Kalich, 1988, p. 433.

41 SCHLEIERMACHER, F.D.E. *The Christian Faith*, Edinburgh: Henderson, 1922, p. 7.

42 “Thinking is only a dream of feeling.” (“Das Denken ist nur ein Traum des Fühlens.” Novalis *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, In *Novalis Gesammelte Schriften* 1, Zürich: Bühl-Verlag, 1945, p. 382.)

of romantic philosophy with theology here. What is more relevant, is the question whether theology is subordinated to the demands of some other authority than divine revelation. In the case of Schleiermacher such authority is romanticism.

### ***Albrecht Ritschl***

Ritschl was active in the period of reaction against the grand, speculative theological-philosophical system that had been created by Hegel. The reaction adopted the motto “Back to Kant!” Philosophers put their hope in experimental sciences that had great and unprecedented success. And, as usual, the general tendencies of philosophy were reflected in theology. This time the mainstream was anti-metaphysical. In the universal bias against metaphysics, Ritschl’s theology worked as a sort of magic wand. It offered a Christianity without metaphysics and with its totalitarian focus on ethics it promised a very practical shift from the never-ending theological disagreements and disputes.

Ritschl founded his theological method on Kant and Lotze.<sup>43</sup> In keeping with Kant, he rejected any metaphysical speculations concerning “things-in-themselves” (*Ding-an-sich*) and subjected theology to the epistemological theory of Lotze.<sup>44</sup> In Lotze’s view the existence of ideas is non-spatial. Nevertheless, it is a real existence that is independent of our

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43 Rudolph Hermann Lotze (1817–1881) – a German philosopher, scientist, and physician. An important figure in German philosophy between the absolute idealism of Hegel and neo-Kantianism of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

44 “...every theologian, *qua* scientist, is under the necessity or duty to proceed in accordance with a definite theory of cognition, of the nature of which he is distinctly aware, and which he has to be prepared to justify.” (“Aber in dieser Hinsicht ist jeder Theolog als wissenschaftlicher Mann genöthigt oder verpflichtet, nach einer bestimmten Theorie der Erkenntniss zu verfahren deren er sich bewusst sein und deren Recht er nachweisen muss.” RITSCHL, A. *Theologie und Metaphysik*, Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1881, p. 38. The English translation in STÄHLIN, L. *Kant, Lotze and Ritschl*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1889, p. 157.)

thinking them. Lotze identified Kantian phenomena with psychological perceptions.<sup>45</sup> Ritschl refers to Lotze explicitly but it does not mean, however, that his theology is some sort of copy or parallel to Lotze's philosophy. Ritschl dresses Lotze's epistemology in theological terms:

Theology has to do, not with natural objects, but with states and movements of man's spiritual life; in our arrangement of the conceptions which belong to theology, accordingly, we must leave a place for psychology. ...We know nothing of a self-existence of the soul, of a self-enclosed life of the spirit above or behind those functions in which it is active, living, and present to itself as a being of special worth.<sup>46</sup>

According to Ritschl, religion does not lie in cognition of objects, but in our subjective attitudes toward them – in the so called value judgements (*Werturteile*).

Ritschl's theology constitutes a thoroughly developed dogmatic system founded on large historical studies so it cannot be described in greater detail. For the relationship between theology and philosophy, it is important to reiterate that in Ritschlian theology the decisive role is played by philosophy. It is the philosophical method that controls the theological discourse in the form of an epistemological method. All of its theological assertions have to be understood within the schema constructed by means of neo-Kantian philosophy.

### ***Adolf von Harnack***

*Latet dolus in generalibus.*<sup>47</sup> With these words, Harnack dismisses the

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45 "Sensations are phenomena in us which, although they are the consequences of external stimuli, are not copies of them." (LOTZE, H. *Outlines of Psychology*, Boston: Ginn and Company, 1886, p. 26.)

46 RITSCHL, A. *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902, p. 20, 21.

47 "Deception lurks in generalities." (HARNACK, A. *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1901, p. 6.)



philosophical approach to the gospel in his series of lectures under the title *What is Christianity?* Does it mean that this significant representative of Ritschl's school of thought rejects philosophy? Yes, if by philosophy we understand metaphysical (Hegelian) speculation. No, if we regard it as a usage of philosophical presuppositions to which biblical theology is subordinated. "Without doubt miracles do not occur .... nothing like 'miracles' can exist."<sup>48</sup> Harnack's description of the historical development of Christianity clearly shows what he considers to be a false addition:

A living faith, as it seems, is transformed into a confession of faith; a personal surrender to Christ into Christology; earnest expectation of the Kingdom into a belief in immortality and doctrine of deification; prophecy into learned exegesis and theological science; carriers of the Spirit into clergy; brothers into subject laity; miracles and wonders into nothing or priestly pieces of art; zealous prayers into festive hymns and litanies...<sup>49</sup>

From this list it is clear what Harnack regards as essential elements of Christianity and what in his view is a foreign appendage. Confession of faith, Christology, immortality, exegesis, clergy, liturgy – all of that was added later and therefore is not genuine and not Christian. What is the source of such a certainty on Harnack's part? His authority is historical knowledge sifted through the anti-metaphysical neo-Kantian sieve. Christianity is thus reduced into three essentials: (1) God is the Father of humanity (2) the human soul has an infinite value (3) we are commanded to love our neighbour.

Here again philosophy dictates what theology may or may not affirm. It is not an integration in which theology is being articulated in certain philosophical categories. It is a fusion in which philosophy is viewed as a higher norm of truth than divine revelation, Christian dogma, orthodox theology or historical confessions. Theology gives pride of place to philosophy.

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48 HARNACK, A. *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 18.

49 Ibid, p. 121.

### ***Teilhard de Chardin***

Teilhard de Chardin was a Jesuit geologist, palaeontologist, theologian and philosopher. Although “he wants to have nothing in common with metaphysics ... his thinking still cannot avoid grand, demonstrably philosophical categories.”<sup>50</sup> Teilhard regards himself primarily as a natural scientist, who wishes to develop scientific categories in accordance with the Christian faith. For this reason, he does not address the reader in the role of “...a convinced believer, but as a naturalist who asks to be heard (*qui demande à être entendu*).”<sup>51</sup> Yet this “naturalist” is, at the same time, also a mystic, who sees the goal of biological evolution as “mankind's collective entry into God.”<sup>52</sup> He was among the first scientists who used terms like “biosphere” or “noosphere” (along with the Russian biochemist Vernadsky and the French mathematician Le Roy). These terms integrate the idea of the total physical reality with the idea of the collective knowledge of all humankind. According to Teilhard the processes that may be observed there (cosmogenesis, noogenesis, Christogenesis) foreshadow the future convergence of humanity into Christ (the Omega Point).

Teilhard completely subordinated Christian faith to his specific understanding of science and historical progress. He selected some basic Christian concepts (e.g. personalism, incarnation, love), which he, in turn, transformed according to his distinct philosophical schema, resulting in a particular philosophical theology (*Teilhardism*) characterised by evolutionism and universalism.

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50 RIDEAU, É. *Myšlení Teilharda de Chardin*, Velehrad: Refugium, 2001, p. 62.

51 TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, P. *Le phénomène humaine*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1956, p. 325.

52 TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, P. *On Love and Happiness*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984, p. 15.

### ***Paul Tillich***

The German-American “philosophising theologian” or “theologising philosopher” Paul Tillich, is considered to be one of the most important theologians of the 20th century. His theology is one of the most salient examples of the fusion of theology with philosophy. He accomplished it using the method of correlation, which he developed and applied in his *Systematic Theology*.<sup>53</sup> This method lies in assigning (correlating) of theological answers to philosophical questions, because “[p]hilosophy cannot answer ultimate or existential questions *qua* philosophy.”<sup>54</sup> Theological answers invite further questions, and so the work continues. Despite the fact that Tillich wanted to provide theological answers to philosophical questions, his answers seem more philosophical than theological. For Tillich the words reason, being, existence, and being are correlative to the theological notions of revelation, God, Christ and Spirit. The definition of faith is “the state of being ultimately concerned”<sup>55</sup> and God is “being-itself.”<sup>56</sup>

With his philosophical reformulation of Christian theology, Tillich helped theology gain esteem among the intellectuals who struggled with the “naive” biblical expression of faith in the age of scientific thought and advancing secularisation but still wanted to see themselves and be known to others as Christians.

An acute criticism of Tillich’s theology is that in it “...the line is breached between what has always separated Christianity’s attitude toward time and history from the ontological speculations of Western

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53 TILlich, P. *Systematic Theology*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1957, 1963.

54 TILlich, P. *The Protestant Era*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948, p. xxvi.

55 TILlich, P. *Dynamics of Faith*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958, p. 1.

56 “The being of God is being-itself” (TILlich, P. *Systematic Theology I*, p. 235.)

classical thought and Oriental mysticism.”<sup>57</sup> For an evangelical theologian, this is too high a price to pay for making faith respectable in the circles of modernist thinkers.

### 1.1.2.2      *Separating Theology from Philosophy*

To separate theology from philosophy is much more problematic than to fuse them into one whole. The reason is simple – theological thinking cannot be separated from thinking in the other areas of human existence. Theological scholars or the “great theologians”, whom we use as examples here, are always very well versed in their contemporary philosophy.<sup>58</sup> This also applies to the theologians whom we are going to discuss here as examples of the separation of theology from philosophy. Each of them had not only deep knowledge of philosophy but their theology was also demonstrably influenced by this or that philosophical tradition. If we nonetheless speak of separation of theology from philosophy, we are dealing with their *theological programme* rather than the absence of philosophical analysis in their theology.

In the following list, no pietist, revivalist, or fundamentalist theologian is included. The reason is that if theologians of such persuasion

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57      NIEBUHR, R. *Biblical Thought and Ontological Speculation in Tillich's Theology*. In KEGLEY, C. W. - BRETALL, R. W. (ed.) *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952, p. 225.

58      It could be objected that someone who is an influential evangelist or successful missionary but is not schooled in philosophy can still be regarded as an “important theologian”. (Karl Barth liked the motto *pectus facit theologum* – the heart makes a theologian.) We may agree with this, provided that we define theology broadly as *religious influence* or *spiritual activity*. In some evangelical circles such an understanding is popular, although not always explicitly so. But such understanding does not fit in the more rigorous analysis which makes a distinction between *religiosity* (= piety, spirituality), *charisma* (= spiritual gift) and *theology* (= conceptual articulation of faith). Throughout church history such scholarly theology always included an apologetic dimension as well. And apologetics in theology makes its points of contact with philosophy.

openly reject philosophy, their rejection is seldom supported by the necessary rigorous arguments. Their call is to address “the average person in the pew” who is hardly conversant with philosophy. No wonder they do not use philosophical arguments in their preaching or teaching against the dangers of philosophy. (By “philosophy” an average evangelical Christian understands some sort of godless system.) As we shall see the theological rejection of philosophy does not oppose just the philosophies that deny Christian revelation – the “godless” thought systems. It includes a rejection of natural theology as well.

### ***Karl Barth***

“Theology of the Word,” “theology of crisis,” “dialectical theology,” “neorthodoxy” or “Barthianism” – these are the terms and labels of the great movement in early 20th-century theology. Barth, whose *Römerbrief* (1918; 1922) set this movement in motion, studied under important representatives of liberal theology (so called “Ritschlianism”). Such luminaries as Adolf von Harnack and Wilhelm Herrmann were among his teachers. Liberal theology made a big deal of the optimistic prognosis of the coming of the Kingdom of God to earth through Christian culture. But it dismally failed to explain the catastrophe of the World War I. Barth experienced the horrors of the war as a local church minister in Safenwil, Switzerland. He found adequate help and hope in the place that liberals had rejected – in the Bible.

Barth’s mentor, Herrmann, posed a rhetorical question: “For where lives the Christian who could with truth presume to say that he treasures the thoughts of a Paul as his very own?”<sup>59</sup> The expected answer should be “Nowhere”. Barth (Herrmann’s student) later replies, “Paul speaks as a prophet and apostle of the Kingdom of God to all people of all times.”<sup>60</sup> The point being that the Word of God is a timeless authority for modern people in 20<sup>th</sup> century as well.

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59 HERRMANN, W. *The Communion of the Christian with God*, New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1906, p. 239.

60 BARTH, K. *Der Römerbrief*, Zürich: TVZ Theologischer Verlag, 1995, p. XI.

It might seem that this could be a return to the traditional belief in the Bible, but this is not the case. The Word of God is, first and foremost, the person of Jesus Christ himself, to whom the Bible bears witness.<sup>61</sup>

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle. Here is no 'genius rejoicing in his own creative ability' (Zündel). The man who is now speaking is an emissary, bound to perform his duty; the minister of his King; a servant, not a master. However great and important a man Paul may have been, the essential theme of his mission is not within him but above him unapproachably distant and unutterably strange.<sup>62</sup>

According to Barth the truth of the Word of God is subject to no human criteria,<sup>63</sup> hence it is not important whether the Bible is objectively and historically true. It is precisely this independence of the Word of God from human word or words that represents Barth's rejection of natural theology and with it also a rejection of all philosophy. There is no analogy to be found between the Word of God and human word ("I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of Antichrist").<sup>64</sup> Philosophy can be employed in exegesis, but it must always be subordinated to the text and follow where it leads.<sup>65</sup>

Barth's rejection of philosophy is, strictly speaking, not a theological

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61 "Jesus Christ, as he is himself attested in Holy Scriptures, is the one Word of God (*ist das eine Wort Gottes*) which we hear and which we ought to trust and obey in life and death" (BARTH, K. *Klärung und Wirkung*, Berlin: Union-Verlag, 1966, p. 409).

62 BARTH, K. *The Epistle to the Romans*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 27.

63 "This criterion which is recollected and expected, though not at our disposal in our own or any present, is the Word of God. We cannot "handle" this criterion. It is the criterion which handles itself and is in no other hands." (BARTH, K. *Church Dogmatics I.1*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975, p. 93.)

64 The *analogy of being* is the foundation of the very possibility of speaking about God. (BARTH, K. *Church Dogmatics I.1*, p. xiii.)

65 BARTH, K. *Church Dogmatics I.2*, pp. 727–736.

but a *philosophical* decision. The Apostle Paul did not hesitate to cite Greek pagan ideas during his address in Athens and the Bible provides plenty of support for natural revelation. Besides, Barth's analysis of human condition has too much in common with that of Kierkegaard to be considered completely "non-philosophical."

Even so, Barth's programme of separating theology from philosophy must be taken seriously, because by rejecting natural theology he has created a theological system that avoids philosophical vocabulary, looks back to historical Christian dogmatics and, most importantly, attempts to understand the divine revelation recorded in Scripture on its own terms rather than on the basis of superimposed external presuppositions.

### ***Emil Brunner***

"Through God alone can God be known"<sup>66</sup> is a statement by which Brunner endorses dialectical theology based solely on the divine *revelation*. Such revelation does not consist of two degrees – first the natural and then the special revelation: "What the 'natural man' knows apart from Christ is not half the truth but distorted truth."<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, Brunner did not accept Barth's complete rejection of natural theology.<sup>68</sup> He critically referred to the absolute limitation of God's revelation to the Bible as *pan-biblicism*, and pointed out the internal impossibility of such a theology.<sup>69</sup>

Brunner's rejection of philosophy lies primarily in his negative attitude to the use of abstract philosophical concepts explaining biblical revelation. Theology, in his view, cannot get rid of the *mythical* form of Scriptural language. "The mythical form of expression is simply the necessary consequence of the incommensurability of the Creator and the

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66 BRUNNER, E. *The Mediator*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947, p. 21.

67 BRUNNER, E. *The Mediator*, p. 33.

68 One may recall Barth's famous response "Nein!" to Brunner's treatise defending natural revelation.

69 BRUNNER, E. *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, p. 411.

creature..."<sup>70</sup> Like Barth, however, Brunner does not completely escape the influence of philosophy when it comes to his analysis of human condition. In his case, it is Buber's "I and Thou" philosophy that inspired Brunner's existential understanding of truth, which is best articulated not in words but rather in personal encounter:

Truth as encounter is not truth about something, not even truth about something mental, about ideas. Rather, it is that truth which breaks in pieces the impersonal concept of truth and mind, truth that can be adequately expressed only in the I-Thou form.<sup>71</sup>

Brunner represents, like Barth, dialectical theology but, in applying its principles, is more perceptive and positive towards human culture and civilisation. That does not mean, however, that he is less faithful to the "pure theory" of the dialectical theology or less radical than Barth.

### ***Rudolf Bultmann***

"Philosophical theology is here [in Bultmann's work] labeled as proclamation of Antichrist and satanology,"<sup>72</sup> observes the German philosopher Wilhelm Weischedel. This may seem rather odd, as Bultmann is inseparably linked with the notion of "demythologising" and the radical questioning of historical veracity of the New Testament, as well as of the whole Bible. "...modern science does not believe that the course of nature can be interrupted or, so to speak, perforated, by

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70 BRUNNER, E. *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952, s. 406–7.

71 BRUNNER, E. *Truth as Encounter*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964, p. 24.

72 WEISCHEDEL, W. *Der Gott der Philosophen II*, Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1998, p. 4. Bultmann himself said "Heidegger's analysis of existence has become for me fruitful for hermeneutics, that is for the interpretation of the New Testament." (THISELTON, A. C. *The Two Horizons*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980, p. 4.)



supernatural powers.”<sup>73</sup> is a claim by which he unashamably adheres to the so-called “scientific worldview”. Bultmann says, however, that even a modern person, who cannot believe in the mythological picture of the world found in the Bible, needs the message (*kerygma*) of the New Testament. This message, however, must be stripped off the mythological elements (“demythologised”). Demythologising means that the miracles and other supernatural interventions in the Bible are not cut out, as liberal theology suggested, but correctly interpreted. To this end, Bultmann utilises Heidegger’s existential analysis, especially in the form in which we find it in his *Being and Time*.<sup>74</sup> Further specifics are outside of our purview, but it is clear that Bultmann in some sense *subscribes to philosophy*. How is it possible, then, that we regard Bultmann as an example of the *separation* of theology from philosophy?

In Bultmann’s theology once again, we do not come across a complete absence of philosophical analysis or philosophical reasoning as such – quite the contrary. Nevertheless, in his theological discourse faith is not based on philosophical explanations but rather on a *personal event* having its source in the hearing of the word of the Bible. For instance, Bultmann points out that “Paul’s certainty rests on the innermost experience, not on philosophical statements...”<sup>75</sup>

In Bultmann’s theology the meaning of history cannot “...be discovered by the researches of a philosophy of history. The meaning is given by God, according to whose will the history of sin has the paradoxical meaning of being the relevant preparation for his grace.”<sup>76</sup>

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73 BULTMANN, R. *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958, p. 15.

74 HEIDEGGER, M. *Being and Time*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.

75 “Die Gewißheit des Paulus beruht auf dem innersten Erlebnis, nicht auf philosophischen Sätzen...” (BULTMANN, R. *Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910, p. 101.)

76 BULTMANN, R. *History and Eschatology*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1955, pp. 40-41.

Faith can thus exist only where a personal event (*Geschehen*) of hearing the word of Scripture takes place, the word that “is addressed to me as *kerygma*.”<sup>77</sup>

...by what sign the cross of Christ is recognizable as salvation-event. Not by preparatory instruction concerning the Crucified. He cannot first be recognized in his divine quality in order that one may then advance to faith in the significance of the cross – for that would rob the “word of the cross” of its scandal-and-folly character. It gets that character by the fact that a crucified one is proclaimed as Lord; and only in the fact that this proclamation occurs is the cross recognizable as salvation-event. But that means such recognition takes place only as acknowledgment. This is the decision-question which the “word of the cross” thrusts upon the hearer...<sup>78</sup>

Bultmann agrees that the questions are formulated by philosophy (specifically Heidegger’s existential philosophy). Nevertheless, the answers (personal calling, faith) come independently of it. Faith is thus not rooted in philosophical arguments but in the action of God.

### ***Karl Rahner***

“The greatest Catholic theologian of the twentieth century” is an epithet often connected with the name of Karl Rahner. A breakthrough in Catholic theology, a far-reaching influence on ecumenical relationships, or a dialogue with non-Christian religions (“anonymous Christian”) – all of this may be found and researched in his theological work.

The philosophical method of Rahner’s theology is *transcendental reflection* derived primarily from such the works of such philosophers as Maréchal or Heidegger. Using this method, Rahner reached the conclusion that anthropocentrism and theocentrism are not polar

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77 BULTMANN, R. *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, p. 83.

78 BULTMANN, R. *Theology of the New Testament I*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951, p. 303.

opposites in theology but rather two aspects of the same thing.<sup>79</sup> Yet, this is a statement with epistemological consequences that show that Rahner considered philosophy to be part of his theological thought. This is confirmed by another of his assertions, namely that “...only then is a question philosophically formulated when it is a formal question concerning a certain object as such in the *entire* reality and truth ... A genuinely *theological* question can be posed only in such a way that is to be understood (in a demonstrated sense) also as philosophical.”<sup>80</sup> This philosophical method is used in the transcendental turn in theology, which no longer uses traditional theological terms but abstract terms of transcendental spirituality.

Where in all this is the *separation* of theology from philosophy? Rahner’s understanding of revelation is philosophical but at the same time theoretically separated from natural theology:

...the Christian faith must not and cannot owe anything to non-Christian religion and speculation; clearly its content and its formulations can appear nowhere else, either in principle or in fact. If similarities can be traced, they are purely a posteriori in character, matters of fact.<sup>81</sup>

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79 “The moment man is understood as an essence of absolute transcendence toward God, the *anthropocentrism* and *theocentrism* are no longer theological opposites, but they are strongly one and the same thing (as seen from two sides).” – “Sobald der Mensch begriffen wird als das Wesen der absoluten Transzendenz auf Gott hin, sind ‘Anthropozentrik’ und ‘Theozentrik; der Theologie keine Gegensätze, sondern streng ein und dasselbe (von zwei Seiten ausgesagt).” (RAHNER, K. *Theologie und Anthropologie*. In: *Beiträge zur Christologie*, Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag, 1974, p. 159.)

80 RAHNER, K. *Theologie und Anthropologie*. In: *Beiträge zur Christologie*, p. 165.

81 RAHNER, K. *Theological Investigations I*, Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1963, p. 81.

In this way, Rahner makes a sharp distinction between non-Christian as well as pre-Christian philosophical reflections and Christian revelation, which can be known only through the self-revelation of God.

Rahner's separation of theology and philosophy is ambiguous. Rahner philosophises but his philosophising takes place "within theology". In his system, God is, on the one hand, practically a part of human nature (dogmatic theology is, in fact, anthropology), but, on the other hand, the knowledge of God is unattainable without revelation. God is present in a human being, but this only denotes his or her openness for revelation not the presence of revelation itself, which comes by grace alone and hence supernaturally.

### *Jürgen Moltmann*

The name of Moltmann and the concept of the *theology of hope* are virtually synonymous. The central theme of this theology is eschatology. Thus eschatology, the part of Christian dogmatics which often used to appear only at the end as something of an addendum to all the other Christian doctrines, became Moltmann's "permanent program of work."<sup>82</sup> For Moltmann the future becomes an ontological principle that has priority over the present and the past. "Theological concepts do not give a fixed form to reality, but they are expanded by hope and anticipate future being."<sup>83</sup> The current world is not analogical to the future world,<sup>84</sup> whereas the eschatological future is ontologically *novum ultimum*, which is connected to Christ's resurrection. "The resurrection of Christ does not mean a possibility within the world and its history, but a new possibility altogether for the world, for existence and for history. Only when the

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82 MOLTSMANN, J. *Bůh ve stvoření*, Praha: Vyšehrad, 1999, p. 5.

83 "Theologische Begriffe fixieren die Wirklichkeit nicht, sondern sie werden von der Hoffnung expandiert und antizipieren zukünftiges Sein." (MOLTSMANN, J. *Theologie der Hoffnung*, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1966, p. 30.)

84 E. Troeltsch described historical analogy as a correlation between all the historical processes.

world can be understood as contingent creation out of the freedom of God and ex nihilo - only on the basis of this *contingentia mundi* - does the raising of Christ become intelligible as *nova creatio*.<sup>85</sup> Based on this fundamental difference between the eschatological future and the current world in time, Moltmann rejects the possibility of divine revelation in natural theology and philosophy in theology with it.

Moltmann's rejection of philosophy is not based on ontological but on eschatological distinction. The distinctiveness of the eschatological future is...

...not for that reason totally separate from the reality which we can now experience and have now to live in, but, as the future that is really outstanding, it works upon the present by awaking hopes and establishing resistance. The eschaton of the *parousia* of Christ, as a result of its eschatological promise, causes the present that can be experienced at any given moment to become historic by breaking away (*Abbruch*) from the past and breaking out (*Aufbruch*) towards the things that are to come.<sup>86</sup>

Yet the eschatological future is so different from anything known to us that it cannot be expressed by the terms of traditional philosophical-theological dogmatics.

In Moltmann's case once more, the separation of theology and philosophy does not mean that he did not use philosophical analysis. In the postscript to his book, he discusses the relationship of theological hope with the philosophical *principle of hope* of the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch.<sup>87</sup> Bloch, though an atheist, pointed out the "divine" attribute of the future as a new quality of being, undertook to propound a new

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85 MOLTSMANN, J. *Theologie der Hoffnung*, p. 162. (Translated in MOLTSMANN, J. *Theology of Hope*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1967.)

86 MOLTSMANN, J. *Theologie der Hoffnung*, p. 207.

87 The Polish Marxist scholar Leszek Kolakowski characterised Bloch's philosophy as "...certainly the most extravagant of the peripheral manifestations of Marxism." (KOLAKOWSKI, L. *Main Currents of Marxism III*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 421.)

understanding of logic and rehabilitated the term “utopia” as an object of human desire as well as an expression of hope in a genuinely new future. Moltmann critically built his theology on Bloch’s philosophy as on a “meta-religion” whose essence is the eschatological hope based on an ontological distinction between that “which is” and that “which will be.” For Moltmann, the separation of theology from philosophy is, as with the aforementioned theologians, directed specifically against natural theology rather than against the use of philosophical analysis as a point of departure for theological work.

### ***Summary***

Let us make a short summary of the characteristic features of the theologies we have discussed above. The results seem quite clear. All the theologians who had a wider impact on theological thinking were adherents to some kind of philosophical system. This comes as no surprise in the case of those theologians who openly proclaimed the necessity of integrating theology with philosophy. However, matters are different in the case of those who subscribed to the programme of separating theology from philosophy. Not only was this separation construed rather narrowly (typically directed only against *natural theology*) but even the very *decision to separate theology from philosophy* may be regarded as a *philosophical decision*. It is *philosophical* because it does not have its source either in an *internal* condition originating in theology or in an interpretation of the Bible.

On the contrary, it seems that if theology is to say something about the *Creator*, it should follow that something about him might be understood from his *creation*. Declaring that natural theology is impossible presupposes either an *internal* contradiction in the subject matter or an *external* intervention in the form of prohibition or divine revelation. That it is impossible to derive Christian Trinitarian dogma or soteriology from natural theology does not imply that philosophy has no place in systematic theology. “Is humanity in such a state as to lack any

other source between revelation and scepticism?”<sup>88</sup> asks one author of a work on natural theology. It seems that the answer cannot be an unequivocal “Yes” or “No.” God cannot become captive of his own creation in such a way as to be found there and described fully. Yet God cannot be expelled from his creation. He will always have a place in either scientific or philosophical investigation.

### 1.1.3 Difficulties on Both Sides

Both solutions to the problem of a relationship between philosophy and theology (i.e. separation and integration) involve serious problems and deficiencies that are best illustrated by excerpts from the letters exchanged between Adolf von Harnack and Karl Barth. Adolf von Harnack (a proponent of fusion) writes:

... are the biblical revelations ... something so incomprehensible (*Unfaßlich*) and indescribable that we cannot but wait until they glow in the heart, since no human mental or spiritual faculties can reach them? ... is an experience of God (*Gotteserlebnis*) contradictory to or disparate from every other experience ...? ... If God and the world are in absolute contradiction ... how can one be brought up towards God, i.e. towards the good? ... Is there any another kind of theology – acknowledging its awkwardness, short-sightedness and many an ailment – but that which is in firm connection and blood relation with *science as such*? If such a theology exists, how convincing and worthwhile is it?<sup>89</sup>

Karl Barth (a proponent of separation) replies:

... object of theology was, *firstly, the Subject* and must be such again and always – this has nothing to do with “experience” or “personal involvement” ... between the truth of God (which, of course, can also be expressed by human language) and *our* truth exists *only* a contradiction, only *either-or*.<sup>90</sup>

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88 SIMON, J. *La Religion Naturelle*, Paris : Hachette, 1856, p. ii.

89 BARTH, K. *Klärung und Wirkung*, pp. 339-342.

90 Ibid, p. 342 (*italics in the original*).

Barth obviously does not deny that we can speak of God using human language, but that language is always something other than the word of God. An integration of philosophical or scientific knowledge with the theology of the word is for Barth absolutely out of question.

### 1.1.3.1 *Deficiencies of the Integration*

What speaks in favour of the fusion of theology with philosophy is the fact that often both of them answer the same or very similar set of questions (e.g. existence, meaning of life, goodness, etc.). Integrating them into one system ought to be not only possible but also both ways enriching. The idea was alive right from the beginning of Church history. In the Middle Ages Thomas Aquinas built an impressive system based on this opinion. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century his teaching was declared to be the foundation of Christian philosophy.<sup>91</sup>

From the very beginning, Christian theology had to cope with competing systems of thought. Some of them were religious – such as rabbinic tradition and Greek mysteries, others were philosophical – such as the Greek philosophical schools. Despite the obvious influences some of these systems had on the formulation of Christian doctrines, we can say that Christian theology retained its independence and kept its distance from philosophy.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, it can be said of some patristic authors that they “replaced religious thought with philosophical.”<sup>93</sup> It was not until the complex medieval confrontation with the re-discovered Aristotelianism<sup>94</sup> (despite some initial reluctance) that an “official” alliance of philosophy and theology was worked out – especially in the

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91 In Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879).

92 Harnack's claim that *Paulinism* is a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel, is in its consequences a rejection of Paul's apostleship. This is one of the results of the modern rejection of the possibility of divine revelation.

93 GILSON, É. *Le thomisme*, Paris: Librairie Philosophique, 1922, p. 14.

94 At that point, theologians got hold of Aristotle's hitherto unknown works *Metaphysics* and *Poetics*.



above mentioned theological system of Thomas Aquinas. Many observers considered the 19<sup>th</sup>-century renewal of Thomism to be a return to the medieval papal political power. But in fact, the return to this theological-philosophical system was meant to recover the medieval grand worldview synthesis. The *eternal* philosophy, the *philosophia perennis*, based upon the knowledge of the eternal and unchangeable truth had to become the basis of a unified Christian thought system again.

Thomism made a significant contribution to the rediscovery of medieval philosophy and science. Its foundational thesis, namely that “[t]he truth for which Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle sought, is the same as that pursued by St. Augustine and St. Thomas...”<sup>95</sup> stands for the fusion of theology with philosophy. The problem is that in the Bible the knowledge of truth is inseparably linked to the personal relationship with the Redeemer. To “know the truth” is more than to be well acquainted with the content of the revelation. It is being a practicing disciple that leads to a liberating knowledge of the truth (John 8:31-32). It is true that Plato speaks of God as a “Creator and Father of all”.<sup>96</sup> However, this Platonic “Creator” and “Father” is very different and too far remote to be identified with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or to be identified with the Father of Jesus Christ. In making such identifications, theology runs the risk of falling into soulless rationalism or, worse, contaminating Christianity with pagan ideas.

Thomism is mainly a Roman Catholic phenomenon although it is not completely confined to Catholic circles. Within Protestantism there were several schools of thought that tried to work out a perfect synthesis of theology and philosophy. Some of them have been discussed above. The most impressive of such theological-philosophical systems had been developed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). In the case of Hegelianism, or absolute idealism, the problems of integration come through perhaps most clearly because Hegel attempted a fusion in a really

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95 DE WULF, M. *Scholasticism Old and New*, Dublin: M. H. Gill & Son, 1910, p. 161.

96 ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντός (PLATO, *Timaios* 28 C.)

*absolute* sense.<sup>97</sup> For Hegel, philosophy is both theology and worship (*Gottesdienst*). “...what distinguishes them [philosophy and theology] from each other is merely the kind and manner of religion we find in each. It is in the particular way in which they both occupy themselves with God that the distinction comes out.”<sup>98</sup>

Hegelianism is a form of monism. Hegel was strongly influenced by Spinoza’s pantheism and his idealism shows pantheistic leanings. He holds that “What is rational is real; and what is real is rational. Upon this conviction stand not philosophy only but even every unsophisticated consciousness.”<sup>99</sup> There is no unbridgeable gap between the human and the divine reality. Human reason is prepared to grasp all the mysteries of the universe,<sup>100</sup> because in it God’s self-awareness is being realised.<sup>101</sup> It is

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97 “Philosophical theology reaches its highest peak ... in the work of G. W. F. Hegel. ... Hegel’s philosophy of religion (*Religionsphilosophie*) is, at the same time, a philosophical theology (*philosophische Theologie*).” (WEISCHEDEL, W. *Der Gott der Philosophen*, pp. 283, 287.)

98 HEGEL, G. W. F. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & CO. 1895, p. 20.

99 “Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig ... das was ist, ist die Vernunft.” (HEGEL, G. W. F. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1843, p. 17.)

100 “...das verschlossene Wesen des Universums hat keine Kraft in sich, welche dem Mute des Erkennens Widerstand leisten könnte; es muß sich vor ihm aufthun und seinen Reichtum und seine Tiefen ihm vor Augen legen und zum Genusse bringen.” (HEGEL, G. W. F. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse I*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1840, XL) “...the closed essence of the universe contains no force which could withstand the courage of cognition; it must open up before it, and afford it the spectacle and enjoyment of its riches and its depths.” (HEGEL, G. W. F. *Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 185.)

101 “God is God only so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, his self-consciousness in man, and man’s knowledge of God, which proceeds to man’s self-knowledge in God.” (HEGEL, G. W. F. *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894, p. 176. (“Gott ist nur

no wonder that, in the case of such a total trust in the capabilities of human reason, philosophy and theology are regarded as identical and the entire system has some characteristic traits of pantheism.

For the Church and for the Christian theology in particular, Hegelianism was a source of hope about how to stop the surge of atheism and materialism in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They saw in it "...a sword wherewith to smite the three-headed monster of anarchy in politics, traditionalism in religion, and naturalism in science..."<sup>102</sup> This was written by an Englishman despite the fact that this precise hope failed to materialise in Germany.

It became clear that the boundless trust in the capabilities of human reason – even in its ingenious Hegelian version – would not lead to a renewal of religious faith but rather to atheism. This proved to be true and very obvious the success of Marx's interpretation of Hegel. The close link between pantheism and atheism may not be immediately suspected. The truth is that "[a]theism is the necessary consequence of pantheism. ... Atheism is pantheism in reverse (*umgekehrte*)".<sup>103</sup> The development of Hegelianism proved the validity of this assertion by Feuerbach.

At the peak of its popularity, Hegel's philosophy seemed to promise a final and eternal philosophical-theological synthesis. However, soon after Hegel's death, his followers split into three groups: theistic, pantheistic, and atheistic.<sup>104</sup>

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- Gott, insofern er sich selber weiß; sein Sichwissen ist ferner sein Selbstbewußtsein im Menschen und das Wissen des Menschen von Gott, das fortgeht zum Sichwissen des Menschen in Gott." (HEGEL, G. W. F. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, § 564.)
- 102 MUIRHEAD, J. H. *Platonic Tradition*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931, p. 322.
- 103 FEUERBACH, L. *Sämtliche Werke II*, Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1846, p. 244, 246. (Likewise, JACOBI stated that "Spinosism is atheism". JACOBI, F. H. *O Spinozově učení v dopisech panu Mojžíši Medelsohnovi*, Praha: Oikúmené, 1997, p. 133.)
- 104 "His followers divided into a Right and Left, into Hegelians and Young Hegelites, and in the middle remained a feeble centre, which was in good

Hegelianism induced a strong reaction from the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard (1813–1855). His criticism, namely that “[t]he Hegelian philosophy assumes no justified hiddenness, no justified incommensurability,”<sup>105</sup> is an incisive condemnation of every philosophical (but also theological) system, which “can explain everything.” Endeavours to integrate Christian theology with philosophical thought and common human religious sentiment in the end leads to elimination of all of the former’s distinctive elements.

“What Schleiermacher calls 'Religion' and the Hegelians 'Faith' is at the bottom nothing but the first immediate condition for everything, the vital fluidum and the spiritual atmosphere we breathe in and which cannot therefore with justice be designated by those words.”<sup>106</sup>

For Kierkegaard, “[p]hilosophy cannot and must not give faith...,” since “[f]aith is namely this paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal...”<sup>107</sup> Theology cannot avoid being unrepeatable, historically unique and incommensurable. Not only are these characteristic traits of Christian theology not undesirable, but they constitute the basis for its very existence, because they are the proper objects of faith.

Indeed, it is precisely such efforts to “explain everything” that had motivated movements trying to produce a synthesis of theology and philosophy. In a similar way, earlier than Kierkegaard, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) warned against this danger, when he argued against Spinoza (1639–1677). Jacobi stressed that “[e]very avenue of

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truth only the εἰδωλον of Hegel, the body of his posthumous and collective works.” (CHALYBÄUS, H. M. *Historical Survey of Speculative Philosophy from Kant to Hegel*, London: Longman, 1854, p. 365.)

105 KIERKEGAARD, S. *Fear and Trembling*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 82.

106 DRU, A. (ed.) *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958, p. 52.

107 KIERKEGAARD, S. *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 33, 55.

demonstration ends up in fatalism.”<sup>108</sup> Jacobi shows that an exclusive application of the laws of reason to the subject of theology necessarily subordinates the “subject” of theology (God!) to the laws of nature.<sup>109</sup> An explained God ceases to be a supra-rational God, as he fits the expectation of explicability. Explaining God leads to the loss of God.

The problems of integrating philosophy with theology with regard to the gospel are well captured by the following remarks of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “It does not say: ‘God became an idea, principle, programme, universal truth (*Allgemeingültigkeit*), or law,’ but that ‘God became human.’”<sup>110</sup> Idea, principle, programme, law – all of these are notions and concepts that concern philosophy. The primary goal of the gospel is not to find a theoretical explanation of universally valid world principles. The gospel is here to teach us how to return to God in repentance and then how to live with the risen Christ in our daily life.

It is a hard lesson, but a true one, that the gospel, unlike an ideology, reckons with impossibilities. The Word is weaker than any ideology, and this means that with only the gospel at their command the witnesses are weaker than the propagandists of an opinion.<sup>111</sup>

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108 *“Jeder Weg der Demonstration geht in den Fatalismus aus”* (JACOBI, F. H. *O Spinozově učení v dopisech panu Mojžiši Medelssohnovi*, Praha: Oikúmené, 1997, p. 206; JACOBI, F. H. *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, p. 234)

109 “For us, only such an idea is possible that may be created in accordance with the laws of our reason. The laws of reason are related, subjectively and objectively, to the laws of nature, so that we cannot create any concepts apart from the concepts of the natural, and what cannot be carried out by nature we also cannot make possible in the sphere of ideas, i.e. make it thinkable.” (JACOBI, F. H. *O Spinozově učení v dopisech panu Mojžiši Medelssohnovi*, p. 218.)

110 BONHOEFFER, D. *Ethik*, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1992, p. 86.

111 “Es ist eine harte Erkenntnis: für die Idee gibt es nichts Unmögliches, für das Evangelium aber gibt es Unmöglichkeiten. Das Wort ist schwächer als die Idee. So sind auch die Zeugen des Wortes mit diesem Wort schwächer

The temptation to integrate theology with philosophy is a temptation to gain power, an attempt to take control over the Gospel and reach rational arguments that no one could reject. Theology should not try to reach for such power...

Finally, one more warning against the fusion: the Lutheran systematic theologian Helmut Thielicke (1908–1986) observed that “in any attempt to join theology with philosophy, philosophy always wins.” As examples he cites Melancthon with his Aristotelianism, Herrmann with his Kantianism and Gogarten in his relation to *Volksnomos*. The power of autonomous laws (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*) always comes through. “In Christian ethics it is a repeated occurrence that every time it is based on efforts to improve this world and builds on the ideals of virtue, it loses its specific content.”<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, Thielicke does not endorse a return to formal conservative traditionalism. He also insists that the old confessions have to be retold in modern language. We may consider such “...linguistic re-presentation as both an opportunity and also a temptation.”<sup>113</sup> These two words – opportunity and temptation – wrap up very well the problem of cooperation between these two realms of thought.

The critical discussion of the fusion of philosophy with theology has brought to light several ideas that are incompatible with Christian historical or conservative theology: (1) the idea of monism –which means an elimination of true transcendence and consequently of the Biblical God; (2) the idea of unlimited human reason – which means that nothing is beyond human reason and Biblical faith becomes superfluous; and (3) the idea of God as a part of the natural order – which means a re-

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als die Propagandisten einer Idee.” (BONHOEFFER, D. *Nachfolge*, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1952, p. 121.)

112 THIELICKE, H. *Theologische Ethik I*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1958, p. 13, 19.

113 THIELICKE, H. *Evangelical Faith I*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977, p. 127.

definition of the notion of God according to the reigning plausibility structure.

### 1.1.3.2 Deficiencies of the Separation

If it is problematic to make a unified system from philosophy and theology, the best thing may seem to be to separate them as strictly as possible. If the foundational method of philosophy is scepticism<sup>114</sup> and absence of authority,<sup>115</sup> and if theology is thinking based on faith<sup>116</sup> and yielding to authority – how could such opposite principles ever have been brought together with positive results?

I have already mentioned an attempt to separate theology from philosophy in the early Reformation period. As we have seen, in the 20th century a radical separation of theology and philosophy was advocated by Karl Barth. In the introduction to his *Dogmatics*, he severely criticised the concept of *analogia entis* (it is “the invention of Antichrist”).<sup>117</sup> But natural theology without it is unthinkable. He parted ways with Brunner (1886–1966), who sought a link (*Anknüpfungspunkt*) between the two as well as an opportunity to address secular people, in his polemical tractate *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner* (1934). In *Philosophie und Theologie* (1960), he writes that a philosopher and a theologian enter into an “inevitable conflict of their thought and language.”<sup>118</sup> In his commentary on Romans (*Römerbrief*, p. XX) he refers to Kierkegaard, who wrote: “God and man are two qualities separated by an infinite qualitative difference. Humanly speaking, any teaching that disregards this difference is demented — divinely understood, it is blasphemy.”<sup>119</sup> If God, in his infinite otherness, is

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114 WEISCHEDEL, W. *Skeptická etika*, Praha: Oikúmené, 1999, p. 19–34.

115 “Philosophy appeals to no revelation nor to any authority.” (JASPERS, K. *Filosofická víra*, Praha: Oikúmené, 1994, p. 21.)

116 See Anselm’s *fides quarens intellectum* – faith seeking understanding.

117 BARTH, K. *Church Dogmatics I/1*, p. xiii.

118 BARTH, K. *Philosophie und Theologie*. In: WEISCHEDEL, W. *Der Gott der Philosophen II*, p. 10–11.

119 KIERKEGAARD, S. *The Sickness unto Death*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, p. 159.

the subject of theology, it naturally follows that human thought and speech about him are bound to be questionable or rather impossible. In that case we must “cleanse” theology from every philosophical influence and abide by the dialectically viewed Word of God, which is *beyond* the human words of the Bible.<sup>120</sup>

It might seem that such “pure” theology would be free of philosophical speculations and of problems about how to prove the truth of faith to unbelievers. But its impracticality may be seen in the fact that even Barth himself gradually abandoned his strict position.<sup>121</sup> In his *Dogmatics*, Brunner ruefully says that Barth “...owing to the one-sided way in which he has defended his cause, ...has injured the legitimate claims of Biblical theology, and has thus created unnecessary hindrances for the promulgation of his ideas.”<sup>122</sup> Barth’s separation of God’s self-revelation from all linguistic formulations (also in Scripture) according to Pannenberg (1928–2014) amounts to “...excluding everything purely miraculous”.<sup>123</sup> Barth admits that a total exclusion of philosophy from theology is impossible: “It is no more true of anyone that he does not

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120 ““What stands there,” in the pages of the Bible, is the witness to the Word of God, the Word of God in this testimony of the Bible. Just how far it stands there, however, is a fact that demands unceasing discovery, interpretation, and recognition. It demands untiring effort – effort, moreover, which is not unaccompanied by blood and tears. The biblical witnesses and the Holy Scriptures confront theology as the object of this effort.” (BARTH, K. *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963, p. 36.)

121 For example, in the third volume of his *Church Dogmatics*, he uses the term *analogia relationis*, by which he explains the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. (BARTH, K. *Church Dogmatics III/1*, p. 195.)

122 BRUNNER, E. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, Philadelphia : Westminster Press, 1962, pp. 235–236.

123 PANNENBERG, W. *Revelation as History*. London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1969, p. 4.



mingle the Gospel with some philosophy, than that here and now he is free from all sin except through faith.”<sup>124</sup>

A radical attempt to create a theology absolutely separated from theology leads to two fundamental problems: (1) the problem the relationship between God and nature and (2) the problem of communicating the word of God to non-believers.

### **The Problem of Natural Theology**

Barth’s definition of natural theology, which will be used in the following discussion, is this:

...there does exist a knowledge of God and His connection with the world and men, apart from any special and supernatural revelation.<sup>125</sup>

Natural theology is as old as humanity itself. Aristotle says: “A tradition has been handed down by the ancient thinkers of very early times, and bequeathed to posterity in the form of a myth, to the effect that these heavenly bodies are gods, and that the Divine pervades the whole of nature.”<sup>126</sup> Kant’s ideas on the subject go along similar lines:

The cosmological proof is, it seems to me, as old as human reason itself. It is so natural, so persuasive, and extends its reflections so far, as it keeps pace with the progress of our understanding, that it must endure as long as rational beings wish to engage in that noble contemplation, the aim of which is to come to know God from his works.<sup>127</sup>

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124 BARTH, K. *Church Dogmatics I/2*, p. 728.

125 BARTH, K. *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955, p. 4.

126 περιέχει τὸ θεῖον τὴν ὅλην φύσιν (ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* 1074b.)

127 “Dieser kosmologische Beweis ist, wie mich dünkt, so alt wie die menschliche Vernunft. Er ist so natürlich, so einnehmend und erweitert sein Nachdenken auch so sehr mit dem Fortgang unserer Einsichten, daß er so lange dauern muß, als es irgend ein vernünftig Geschöpf geben wird,

This is in agreement with the Apostle Paul's statements in the first chapter of Romans. Nevertheless, natural theology fell out of favour during the Reformation, chiefly due to its relation to the Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>128</sup> Barth observes that the Reformers did not avoid a cautious as well as incautious use of natural theology, even though their desire was "...to see both the church and human salvation founded on the Word of God *alone*, on God's *revelation in Jesus Christ*, as it is attested in the Scripture, and on faith in that Word."<sup>129</sup> The key message they left for the posterity was the Reformation motto *sola scriptura*.

In deism and rationalism natural theology (and with it philosophy) became the centre of attention. For the adherents of these philosophical theologies the light of reason was sufficient and no special revelation (Bible, Jesus Christ) was necessary. "Natural Theology (*theologia naturalis*) is also rightly called Divine Philosophy (*philosophia divina*)."<sup>130</sup> wrote Francis Bacon in 1622 but his words can be taken as a confession of "faith" of deism as well as rationalism of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Catholic attitude is somewhere in the middle. On the one hand, it says that "[i]f anyone shall say that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be certainly known by the natural light of human reason through created things: let him be anathema." On the other hand, it also insists that "[i]f any one shall say that it is impossible or inexpedient that man should be taught by divine revelation concerning God and the worship to be paid to him: let him be anathema."<sup>131</sup>

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welches an der edlen Betrachtung Theil zu nehmen wünscht, Gott aus seinen Werken zu erkennen"(KANT, I. *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes*, In *Akademie-Ausgabe* II. Bonn: IKP, 2007, p. 160; KANT, I. *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1790*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.)

128 See chapter 1.1.1.

129 BARTH, K. *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, p. 8.

130 BACON, F. *Works Vol. 2*, New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1864, p. 259.

131 *Dei Filius, First Vatican Council*, canons 1 & 2, *Of Revelations*.

The problems of integration, or in Bacon's words – of their "identification", have been discussed in the previous section. However, an absolute separation would mean that no such thing as natural theology could exist, as we have already heard Barth to say.<sup>132</sup> Here we have to point out a slight misunderstanding. Barth is right when he says that natural theology cannot exist *if* the subject of theology is "God in the *history of his deeds*".<sup>133</sup> It must be obvious that natural theology cannot presume that by looking at *the history of God's deeds* all the attributes of God could be deduced, to say nothing of the doctrines of soteriology. So what Barth says is only partially true.

The doctrine of *peccatum originale* is an important biblical doctrine that speaks against the possibility of natural theology. Noetic effects of sinfulness mean that human mind is unable to know God without first receiving the grace of God. Human reason is darkened by sin and Scripture gives examples how we may look and not see or how we may listen and not hear. However clear and persuasive the sources of natural theology may be, the assumption that they will be correctly understood is questionable. At the same time, we read that such blindness and deafness is not a *necessary* condition of human existence. It is possible also to speak of *partial* knowledge, a vague idea of God, that should lead to *seeking* God and his special revelation (Acts 17:27).

So on the one hand, there is an absolute rejection of natural theology, a rejection of any possibility of perceiving features of the Author from his works. This view reinforces the importance of special revelation (in Barth's theology it is sometimes labeled *Christomonism*). However, it also totally secularises the knowledge acquired by natural sciences and abandons it to the fate of Humean skepticism.

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132 "I certainly see with astonishment that such a science ...does exist, but I do not see how it is possible for it to exist. " (BARTH, K. *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, p. 5.).

133 BARTH, K. *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, p. 9.

## The Problem of Presuppositional Apologetics

An analogical problem related to the efforts to radically separate theology from philosophy is an evangelical dispute between classical and presuppositional apologetics. The classical (evidence-based) apologetics begins communication with rational arguments and builds on the natural abilities of humans to know truth. In discussions with non-believers, it presupposes common epistemological points of departure (ie. natural theology). Such an approach to the defence of the Christian faith was already in use by the early apologists, by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. In the early modern period, typical examples of such apologetics are Joseph Butler's (1692–1752) work *The Analogy of Religion* and William Paley's (1743–1805) *Natural Theology*. Modern authors include C. S. Lewis (*Mere Christianity*, 1952 among others), Josh McDowell (*Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 1972), R. C. Sproul - J. Gerstner - A. Lindsley (*Classical Apologetics*, 1984). There are a great many works of apologetics dealing with the knowledge acquired by modern science aiming to prove that scientific knowledge does not contradict the Christian faith. The method of classical apologetics is aptly described by Jonathan Edwards:

We first ascend, and prove a posteriori, or from effects, that there must be an eternal Cause ; and then secondly, prove by argumentation, not intuition, that this Being must be necessarily existent; and then thirdly, from the proved necessity of his existence, we may descend, and prove many of his perfections a priori.<sup>134</sup>

Presuppositional apologetics denies the possibility of a common epistemological point of departure and considers the *imago dei* within a person as the sole “common ground”.<sup>135</sup> Any effective apologetic

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134 EDWARDS, J. *Works Vol. 5*, Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1808, p. 56.

135 “Man is created in *God's image*. He is therefore like God in everything in which a creature can be like God. ...the only method that will lead to the truth in any field is that method which recognizes that man is a creature of God, that he must therefore seek to think God's thoughts after him.: (VAN TIL, C. *The Defense of the Faith*, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1967, pp. 13, 102.)

communication between the believer and the non-believer requires (presupposes) the acknowledgement of the veracity of divine revelation in the Bible. This presupposition, which is not unlike scientific hypothesis, is then proved to be true by confirming the image of God in human beings.

The method of presuppositional apologetics has been developed by Cornelius van Til (1895–1987), an American Reformed theologian of Dutch origin.<sup>136</sup> However, a similar defence of the faith had been used earlier in history. We can find presupposing faith to be true before it is proved in Tertullian<sup>137</sup> and Anselm.<sup>138</sup> The presuppositionalist approach to faith had been present before, even if not under this name.<sup>139</sup> Van Til radically rejected the notion that one might think neutrally concerning God without God:

The natural man at bottom knows that he is the creature of God. He knows also that he is responsible to God. He knows that he should live to the glory of God. He knows that in all that he does he should stress that the field of reality which he investigates has the stamp of God's ownership upon it. But he suppresses his knowledge of himself as he truly is. He is the man with the iron mask. A true method of apologetics must seek to tear off that iron mask.<sup>140</sup>

Since there is no such thing as a neutrality of thought concerning God, every apologetic contact must presuppose human enmity toward God. The first demand must be that the non-believer gives up independence

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136 It must be kept in mind, however, that principles of this method are, in some form, present in every theology that rejects natural theology.

137 With his famous saying *credibile est, quia ineptum est*. (It is to be believed because it is absurd. )

138 *Credo ut intelligam*. (I believe so that I may understand.)

139 In 1740, Henry Dodwell published a book with a fitting “presuppositionalist” title *Christianity not Founded on Argument*, in which he argues that “...to sit down to examine, seems to me to be absolutely giving up the cause of religion, and desiring me to dispute, to be begging the question.” (DODWELL, H. *Christianity not Founded on Argument*, London: M. Cooper, 1746, p. 5.).

140 VAN TIL, C. *The Defense of the Faith*, p. 101.

from God and autonomy in pursuit of truth. “Autonomy and understanding are mutually exclusive.”<sup>141</sup> However convincing the evidence and however perfect the logic might be, the non-believer cannot come to faith because of his fallen nature. A correct understanding of truth is possible only after divine intervention. The only thing by which the unbeliever can be transformed is spiritual regeneration. This can be realised only by the change of presuppositions so as to make them agree with the biblical revelation.

Objections raised against Van Til's radical assertions about non-believers and their absolute inability to know the truth about God without God, led him to moderate his position. He admitted that a common ground does indeed exist, even if it is not neutral as the non-believers would have it. So presuppositional apologetics presupposes the result at the beginning of a debate and uses it as a reference point for reasoning. In the words of Van Til again:

The method of reasoning by presupposition may be said to be indirect rather than direct. The issue between believers and non-believers in Christian theism cannot be settled by a direct appeal to 'fact' whose nature and significance is already agreed upon by both parties to the debate. The question is rather as to what is the final reference point required to make the 'facts' and 'laws' intelligible.<sup>142</sup>

Other well-known presuppositionalists are Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921), Edward J. Carnell (1919-1967),<sup>143</sup> Gordon Clark (1902-1985)<sup>144</sup> and Francis Schaeffer. However, probably none of them employed the “pure” presuppositionalist method. The problem of the pure method is obvious when we try to describe the

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141 BAHNSEN, G. L. *Always Ready*, Nacogdoches: Covenant Media Foundation, 2000, p. 84.

142 VAN TIL, C. *The Defense of the Faith*, p. 100.

143 The author of *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950.

144 The author of *A Christian View of Men and Things*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981.

characteristic traits of the apologetic method of Francis Schaeffer. Since Schaeffer was a pupil of Van Til he is usually counted with the presuppositionalists. But his works include references to the partial knowledge of truth even in non-Christian philosophy. Norman Geisler calls it a “pragmatic element” in evangelical apologetics<sup>145</sup> and David Clark refers to Schaeffer’s apologetics as a “milder form of presuppositionalism.”<sup>146</sup> The genuine character of knowledge in non-Christian worldviews is viewed as “a third live option”. Notwithstanding their rejection of the Creator, people can never completely get rid of their “mannishness” and thus can encounter the reality of God’s world (truth). This reality “...is neither nothing, nor is it God ...but the objective reality of the external world and the “mannishness” of man that God has created.”<sup>147</sup> The “third live option” helpfully illuminates the problem of the total disjunction between the evidence-based (classical) and the presuppositional apologetics.

The problem on the other side of the divide is well captured by C. S. Lewis: “Apologetic work is so dangerous to one’s own faith. A doctrine never seems dimmer to me than when I have just successfully defended it.”<sup>148</sup> To master a doctrine by explaining it, is a temptation to lose or discard the sense of wonder and to exchange an attitude of worship for a sense of power and control.

Unfortunately, a heated debate is going on between the “evidentialists” and the “presuppositionalists,” The evidentialists accuse the presuppositionalists of fideism, irrationalism, a denial of the importance of traditional proofs concerning God’s existence, and even of

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145 CLARK, D. K. *Dialogical Apologetics*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 105.

146 CLARK, D. K. *Dialogical Apologetics*, p. 105.

147 SCHAEFFER, F. *The God Who Is There*. In: SCHAEFFER, F. *The Complete Works I*, Westchester: Crossway books, 1988, pp. 23,24.

148 LEWIS, C.S. *Letters of C. S. Lewis*. In: MARTINDALE, W. - ROOT, J. *The Quotable Lewis*, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1989, p. 59.

undermining the Christian religion itself.<sup>149</sup> In return the presuppositionalists accuse the evidentialists of rationalism, inconsistency, unbelief or defeatism. It appears that the pure positions of both camps are simply impossible to apply. They seem to be more of a background method in apologetic discussions than a thoroughgoing and perfect application of a single existing principle.

### ***The Continuing Dialogue***

It looks like there is no satisfying solution to this dilemma. The problem is analogical to that addressed by H. R. Niebuhr (1894–1962) in his book *Christ and Culture* (1951). He comes to the conclusion that “[y]et it must be evident that neither extension nor refinement of study could bring us to the conclusive result that would enable us to say, ‘This is the Christian answer’.”<sup>150</sup> An analogical conclusion applies to the relationship between theology and philosophy – we cannot hope for a single “clean” solution. Accepting such conclusion should not mean that we stop looking for a *modus operandi*, a way to receive, study and use philosophy in theology. We may postulate some kind of “unity-in-tension” (*Spannungseinheit*),<sup>151</sup> a term coined by Pannenberg to depict the relationship between reason and belief.

Before we proceed further, we take a look at some important evangelical thinkers and their attitude to philosophy.

## **1.2 EVANGELICALISM AND PHILOSOPHY**

Evangelical attitudes toward philosophy are by no means uniform. Taking some well-known evangelicals as examples, I am going to show possibilities for a constructive relationship between an evangelical believer and theologian and philosophy. Hopefully, the resulting attitude

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149 SPROUL, R.C. - GERSTNER, J. - LINDSLEY, A. *Classical Apologetics*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984, p. 184.

150 NIEBUHR, H. R. *Christ and Culture*, New York: Harper & Row, 1975, p. 231.

151 PANNENBERG, W. *Basic Questions in Theology II*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972, p. 46.



will be a critical balanced appraisal of both positive and negative sides of the problem.

### **1.2.1 Philosophy in Puritanism and Pietism**

In Evangelicalism the tension that had already existed during the Reformation continued. We have seen how it was manifested in Luther's and Melancthon's different attitudes to Aristotelian philosophy. Immediate historical forerunners of evangelicalism were English Puritanism and the German Pietism. Both of these movements saw their mission as bringing the aims of the Reformation to completion. They tried to accomplish it under the different conditions of their countries of origin.

To put things simply, while Puritanism positively incorporated philosophical ideas and methods into its Christian worldview, the attitude of pietism towards philosophy was that of suspicion and sometimes outright rejection. These contrasting positions may be observed in contemporary evangelicalism. It can especially be seen in the different ways in which evangelicals understand the significance of a Christian worldview. There is a strong trend, focused on the rational reasons in favour of Christianity, which strives to incorporate the whole of human knowledge into a Christian worldview. But there is another strong stream influenced by the pietist's exclusive focus on individual piety (primarily religious feelings). This sort of negative evangelical attitude to philosophy underestimates or even rejects any effort at theological reflection on philosophical problems. Understanding the roots of this tension is important for explaining the relationship between evangelical theology and philosophy. Evangelicalism is far from being a coherent religious movement. Instead of "evangelical theology" we might speak of "evangelical theologies" plural. But that would lead us into further complications. Despite the differences in attitude to philosophy the term "evangelical theology" is useful as a *terminus technicus* to denote this theology's distinctive emphasis on soteriology and personal experience.

### 1.2.1.1 *Philosophy in Puritanism*

Puritanism originated in England in the last third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was strongly influenced by the Geneva Reformation and its theologians rigorously engaged with the questions of science, logic, as well as philosophy and their relation to the word of God. Their conviction was that God must be glorified in every area of human activity – practical and academic alike. The Scripture has its origins in God, therefore it must be in harmony with reason and science. For the Christian believer it is mandatory to follow Scripture in all areas of life. Scripture as the Word of God is the truth that informs both reason and feelings. Natural theology played an important role in Puritan theology.<sup>152</sup> Despite their conviction of the total inability of the unaided human mind to recognise the divine truth, the Puritans used arguments not only from Scripture but from science and philosophy as well.

For the Puritans, the main theoretical starting point was Calvinism. Calvinism as a thought system gives answers to every sort of philosophical inquiry – ontology, cosmology or epistemology.<sup>153</sup> Calvinist philosophical concepts came to the fore most clearly in American evangelicalism. In America the Pilgrims who had sailed in from England could not only think freely but also apply their beliefs in the rules of colonial life.<sup>154</sup> Their application of Christian principles in politics elicited strong negative reaction that continues to this day. (Tagging someone as a “Puritan” is usually derogatory). Nevertheless, negative views of our contemporaries do not change the fact that in many ways the Puritan worldview can serve

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152 “Faith supposeth natural knowledge, as grace supposeth nature.” (CHARNOCK, S. *The Existence and Attributes of God*, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849, p. 8.)

153 WOODBRIDGE, R. *American Thought*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1915, p. 8.

154 The Puritans that emigrated to the American colonies decided “...to build in America a purified counterpart of the society they had left at home. For three decades their objectives shaped the destiny of New England”. (HANDLIN, O. *The American People*, Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1966, p. 48)

us as a model of how to approach the task. They rejected the division between the sacral and the secular and did not separate theological thinking from philosophy.

The Puritan worldview, and the place philosophy had in it, can be fruitfully studied in the first decades of the history of English colonies in America.

Congregationalism was at one time more than a sect; it was a social reform movement with a complete ideology. Though this branch of Puritan philosophy was imported ready made into New England and was soon corrupted, it is well to begin the study of American philosophy with it, partly because it deserves a place among wellconstructed and technically erudite systems and partly because it continued to pervade the institutions of New England and haunt its imagination long after it ceased to be believed literally and practically.<sup>155</sup>

As regards the philosophical method, the Puritans were strongly influenced by *Ramism*, the anti-Aristotelian and anti-scholastic teaching of Pierre de la Ramée (Petrus Ramus 1515–1572).<sup>156</sup> Unlike medieval scholastic Aristotelianism, Ramism placed stronger emphasis on the pedagogical rather than merely ontological (metaphysical) significance of philosophy. In Ramism the logic was not a mere *means* of knowing (as with Aristotle) but the very *knowledge of being*. Although some modern historians do not credit Ramism with much progress in philosophy or logic, it became a symbol of the transition from the medieval to the modern world, owing mainly to its considerable popularity in the Protestant countries.<sup>157</sup>

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155 SCHNEIDER, H. W. A *History of American Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1947, p. 3.

156 Pierre de la Ramée, a French polymath, university professor and philosopher, convert to Protestantism (became Huguenot in 1560), who died during the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre (1572). He wrote works in the field of grammar, logic, rhetoric, physics, mathematics, ethics, as well as theology.

157 "He at least freed the human spirit from the dungeon of Aristotle, and drew it forth from the medieval twilight." (GRAVES. F. P. *Peter Ramus and*

Ramism is probably most conspicuous in the many and voluminous works of Puritan writers. In their writings, they used the Ramist simplified logic whose characteristic feature is linking logic with rhetoric and poetry. Another important feature of Ramism is a method of proceeding from general ideas to more specific points. Knowledge thus structured is *natural* (ie. in agreement with the nature) and in addition it has metaphysical validity. Furthermore, it means that the relations between notions may be regarded as the very laws of God's creation. The structured division of ideas into a so-called *Ramist tree* (chart) is another frequently used tool of the Ramist logic in Puritanism.

The Calvinist worldview and the Ramist methodology became typical features of Puritanism. In the best works of Puritan theology evangelicals can find examples of theological employment of philosophy. After making allowances for the passage of time and the accretion of knowledge they can be successfully imitated today.

#### 1.2.1.2 *Philosophy in Pietism*

Just like the term Puritanism, "Pietism" has become a pejorative and even derogatory word of abuse. So even more, the study of pietism has to be a careful and judicious research into its strengths and weaknesses to understand them without bias.<sup>158</sup> Pietism, unlike Puritanism, is distinctive by its generally negative attitude to philosophy. A historian must be very cautious in making comparisons between Puritanism and Pietism. The latter, as a movement, arrived on the scene some hundred years later than Puritanism. It means that it was responding not only to a different cultural environment but also to a different philosophical situation. The economical and moral circumstances in Germany after the Thirty Years

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*the Educational Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912, p. 218.)

158 Bismarck in his memoirs quotes an opinion that a pietist is "...a man who plays the hypocrite in religion in order to advance in his career." (BISMARCK, O. *Bismarck, the Man & the Statesman II*, New York, London: Harper and Brothers, 1899, p. 306.)

War also have to be considered.

Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), in the work *De impedimentis studii theologici* (Impediments to Study Theology, 1680), lamented a philosophical methods exert too great an influence on the study of theology, and argued that greater attention should have been paid to the study of philology.<sup>159</sup> Another important Pietist, Zinzendorf (1700-1760) wrote in his diary:

Philosophy has a wonderful shine on the outside and often can shine as brightly as Christianity. It is like an imitation of a watch that has all the mechanical components but lacks the balance wheel and with it lacks the movement. But when the grace of God comes into it then the wind of life comes into the wheels and so something useful comes about to the glory of God. Philosophy creates beautiful statues that look like living men on the outside, but when you touch them they fall and must be carried away.<sup>160</sup>

In response to dull and very often exclusively polemically-minded orthodoxy, pietism stressed the importance of personal piety. Religious feelings and spiritual experience were accented at the expense of intellectual rigours of theological study. Philosophical training, which had been a basic prerequisite for theological studies, was pushed back into the background.<sup>161</sup>

Downplaying the rational side of theology with an excessive accent on the emotional and spiritual side of faith may easily lead to intuitive, even naïve, thinking that is plausible to individual pious feelings. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the plausibility structure was modelled on the principles of rationalism. For something to be plausible it had to be rational. Today, the

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159 SPENER, P. J. *De impedimentis studii theologici*. In: ERB, P. C. (ed.) *Pietists, Selected Writings*, New York: Paulist Press, 1983, p. 67.

160 ZINZENDORF, N. L. *Handschriften*. In: ALAND, K. (ed.) *Pietismus und moderne Welt*, Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1974, p. 18.

161 In this regard, the history of the Halle University interest is a good illustration. It was founded in 1694 on the pietistic principles (including a pushback against philosophy), but later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century became a centre of rationalism and neology.

philosophy determining the plausibility structure is different, but for the pietistically-minded evangelical, plausibility hidden behind religious feelings tends to be authoritative.

It is well to remember that pietism influenced theology also through the development of theoretical pedagogy. The theory of education is closely related to the developmental psychology and also to philosophy. Nevertheless, the negative attitude of pietism towards philosophy in theological studies became more influential.

The legacy of Puritanism and Pietism in the evangelical theology still very much determines the relationship between evangelicalism and philosophy. On the one hand, in evangelicalism, there are intellectual trends in theology that emphasise rational apologetics and the importance of a Christian worldview in the life of the believer. They also place stress on logically structured theological system. On the other hand, there are anti-intellectual trends that point out the limited capabilities of human reason. They call for zeal in a life of faith and love and they soft pedal hard thinking.

We are going to look into the works of the evangelical thinkers who aptly joined these two emphases of biblical religion. One of the most important was John Wesley who may be considered the first evangelical theologian in the modern sense of the word.

### **1.2.2 John Wesley**

The history and theology of modern evangelicalism trace their origin to the 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelical revival in Britain. This fact naturally leads to seeking the origins of its specific theological accents in the work of its founder John Wesley (1703–1791). Although Wesley, by sheer virtue of his education, could have been a paradigm of a positive attitude to reason and knowledge,<sup>162</sup> he was accused that he despised education and that the

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162 “This evangelical Oxford don was a practiced classic linguist who read Latin and Greek as quickly as he read English.” (ODEN, T. C. *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, p. 75.)

Methodist movement, that he founded, rejected human reason. All this despite the fact that “when writing about authorities for religion, Wesley mentioned reason more than any authority except Scripture.”<sup>163</sup> His view of philosophy can be seen in his notes on Colossians 2:8.<sup>164</sup>

Through philosophy and empty deceit – That is, through the empty deceit of philosophy blended with Christianity. This the apostle condemns, 1. Because it was empty and deceitful, promising happiness, but giving none. 2. Because it was grounded, not on solid reason, but the traditions of men, Zeno, Epicurus, and the rest. And, 3. Because it was so shallow and superficial, not advancing beyond the knowledge of sensible things; no, not beyond the first rudiments of them.<sup>165</sup>

From what Wesley says we can collect following observations:<sup>166</sup> (1) we have to distinguish philosophy from Christianity and separate them, (2) philosophy promises something it cannot deliver, (3) philosophy is not based on reason but on the traditions of men and (4) philosophy should contribute to the knowledge of human environment. Wesley in his notes does not attack philosophy if it is properly used, he rather sets boundaries that philosophy must not cross. Philosophy should not cross the boundaries that limit its usefulness to the world of space and time.

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163 THORSEN, D. *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology*. Quoted in MILES, R. *The Instrumental Role of Reason*. In GUNTER, S. - JONES, S. J. - CAMPBELL, T. A. - MILES, R. L. - MADDOX, R. L. *Wesley and the Quadrilateral*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997, p. 79.

164 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit – μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης

165 WESLEY, J. *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, New York: Lane & Scott, 1850, p. 520.

166 According to the Czech New Testament scholar Souček what was being addressed in Colossae was not philosophy as it was known in Athens. In his view it was “...some other, much less thought-through and less coherent branch of human wisdom mingled with many features of superstition” (SOUČEK, J. B. *Epištola Pavlova Kolosenským*, Praha: Kalich, 1947, p. 50.)

When philosophy transgresses these boundaries, it becomes *bad philosophy* that “...has by insensible degrees paved the way for bad divinity.” This statement comes from Wesley’s letter to Mr. Law in which he severely criticized his blending of philosophy with religion: “You would have a philosophical religion; but there can be no such thing”.<sup>167</sup>

Wesley’s interest in philosophy was naturally connected to the study of what we today call “natural sciences”. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century all of the currently specialized sciences were called by the common title of *natural philosophy*. Not only did Wesley show keen interest in philosophy thus conceived, but he made considerable efforts to popularise it. He published a translation of Franz Buddeus’ Latin work in five volumes entitled *Compendium of Natural Philosophy*. Wesley modified and supplemented every chapter by passages from the works of various other authors.<sup>168</sup> He wrote in the introduction: “The text is in great measure translated from the Latin work of John Francis Buddeus, the late celebrated professor of philosophy in the University of Jena, in Germany. But I have found occasion to retrench, enlarge, or alter every chapter, and almost every section...”<sup>169</sup> The work begins with a brief history of philosophy ranging from Hebrew, Egyptian and Greek thought, through the period of Middle Ages up to contemporary Europe. Buddeus deals with scientific knowledge in the fields of physics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, zoology, entomology, botanics, mineralogy, geology, vulcanology, meteorology, biology, psychology... Wesley published all this under the title *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*. The book begins with the following words: “Natural philosophy treats both of God himself, and of his creatures, visible and invisible. ...speculative philosophy ascends from man to God; practical, descends from God to

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167 WESLEY, J. *Works* 9, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979 (1872), pp. 466, 478.

168 The work was first published in two volumes in 1763 and in five volumes in 1777.

169 WESLEY, J. *A Compendium of Natural Philosophy I*, London: W. Flint, 1809, pp. v-vi.



man.”<sup>170</sup> The statement suggests that Wesley considered philosophical reflection to be an inseparable part of theological thinking. Comparing his understanding of philosophy with that of Buddeus, we find a slight difference. Buddeus saw philosophy as the “knowledge of the things of God and human in precisely such a way as they can be known through a correct use of reason.”<sup>171</sup> Wesley expressed a stronger view against the fusion of religion and philosophy. For him religion is the only reliable authority in divine revelation.

For the purposes of our further discussion, it is important to keep in mind that Wesley “...rejected ...reason as a source of knowledge ...[but he] championed ...reason as a tool or capacity for understanding.”<sup>172</sup> Today, such a position may seem to be far too accommodating towards the secular philosophy. Nevertheless, for secular philosopher it may still prove to be unacceptable and offensive. In pursuing philosophical thought, the philosopher undertakes to comprehend and to explain the universe in its totality by the sole means of human reason. In contrast, Wesley says:

But in the mean time I bless God, that there is a more excellent gift than either the knowledge of languages or philosophy. For tongues, and knowledge, and learning, will vanish away; but love never faileth.<sup>173</sup>

This declaration of Wesley’s puts a very clear emphasis on the subordination of reason to divine revelation and Christian love. Wesley is known for making agape love into the central doctrine of the Christian religion. In Wesley’s work, reason is always “subjected to Scripture as the source of the knowledge of God, but it is never the source of knowledge

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170 WESLEY, J. *A Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, p. vi.

171 ...*notitia rerum divinarum humanarumque, prout ductu rectae rationis cognosci possunt* (BUDDEUS, F. *Elementa Philosophiae Instrumentalis I*, Halle: Orphanotrophia, 1722, p. 4.)

172 MILES, R. *The Instrumental Role of Reason*. In: GUNTER, S. [et. al.] *Wesley and the Quadrilateral*. pp. 85-86.

173 WESLEY, J. *Works* 9, p. 105.

on its own.”<sup>174</sup> This position is the basic starting point for the attitude of an evangelical student of theology to philosophy. Reason is an important *means* of knowing God and his work, but it cannot be regarded as a *source* of theological knowledge.

As we have seen, in Wesley’s times the term *philosophy* covered also what we call *natural sciences* today. Nevertheless, under this title he also discussed topics that are studied as philosophy proper today. For Wesley, all true knowledge is equally valuable and *speculative* philosophy is also one of the means through which God can be known. It surely cannot be placed on the same level as the *practical* philosophy, which is based on divine revelation. But it should be used with confidence that human reason is a good and useful gift of God.

For the relationship of theology and philosophy two conclusions can be drawn: (1) The knowledge of God and truth about God can be found in all human pursuits of knowledge – not only in theology. (2) The reliability or certainty of knowledge differs according to its source – whether the source is common human experience or whether it is the special divine revelation.

### 1.2.3 Jonathan Edwards

“Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) is widely recognised as the most important and original American philosophical theologian.”<sup>175</sup> Although Edwards is known primarily as a Calvinist revivalist preacher and author of works about evangelical revival, his philosophical work is distinguished for its originality and logical consistency. This makes him a philosopher in his own right. One historian wrote of Edwards: “He was a great philosophical thinker, and he might have made important contributions to metaphysics had he continued the speculations recorded in his early

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174 PROCHÁZKA, P. *Duchovná skúsenosť a komunikácia evanjelia*. Banská Bystrica: ZEC vo vydavateľstve TRIAN, 1999, p. 71.

175 <http://www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/archives/fall2007/entries/edwards/> (22. 5. 2009).

Notes on the Mind; but he preferred to give himself to religious work..."<sup>176</sup> And despite the fact that Edwards devoted his attention mainly to theology, his treatise *Freedom of the Will* (1754)<sup>177</sup> is also a philosophical work in which he, among other things, responds to the then popular philosopher John Locke. Today it is highly valued as a contribution to Calvinist theology (it was aimed against Arminianism), but it is more than a mere rehash of the traditional Calvinist arguments. In an original way Edwards also treats the philosophy of freedom and necessity, going well beyond the boundaries of a dogmatic theological discussion.

Nevertheless, Edwards as a theologian knew that without the knowledge of God philosophical thinking is defective:

Hence it appears that those schemes of religion or moral philosophy, which – however well in some respects they may treat of benevolence to mankind and other virtues depending on it, yet – have not a supreme regard to God, and love to him laid as the foundation, and all other virtues handled in a connection with this, and in subordination to it, are not true schemes of philosophy, but are fundamentally and essentially defective.<sup>178</sup>

Scholars cannot agree on which philosopher had the greatest impact on Edwards (Locke or Malebranche, etc.), but from the standpoint of the relationship between theology and philosophy, it is important to note that Edwards can be both rigorously supranaturalistic (in his Calvinist emphasis on the sovereignty of God) and rigorously empiricist (in his modern emphasis on experience). His theological thought integrates theological and philosophical arguments into one whole. In his work revivalist piety meets with rigorous argumentation, deep sentiment with

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176 MCGIFFERT, A. C. *Protestant Thought Before Kant*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911, p. 177.

177 Some saw it as "...one of the literary sensations of the last century". (ALLEN, A. V. G. *Jonathan Edwards*, Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889, p. 283.)

178 EDWARDS, J. *The Nature of True Virtue*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960, p. 26.

philosophical and theological rationality. Indeed, a particularly important message for contemporary students of theology!

#### 1.2.4 C. G. Finney

Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875) is known as a pioneer of the currently widespread evangelistic practice of giving “altar calls”, a practice common in many evangelical churches and communities. Notwithstanding the fact that his theology and preaching methods laid a special emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, his attitude to theological thinking was almost modernist. This came to the fore especially in his critique of Calvinism which he rejected, using relentless legal argumentation (he was a lawyer by profession). In his view, God’s law must presuppose natural ability in every human being to fulfil its duties stipulated by the law of God. (No wonder that Finney was repeatedly accused of Pelagianism.) Preaching of the gospel involves the use of all *philosophical* (in the sense of *natural* or *logical*) means of addressing and persuading the listeners:

If we are unwise, illogical, unphilosophical, and out of all natural order in presenting the gospel, we have no warrant for expecting divine cooperation. ... We must present those truths and in that order adapted to the natural laws of mind, of thought and mental action. A false mental philosophy will greatly mislead us, and we shall often be found ignorantly working against the agency of the Holy Spirit.<sup>179</sup>

Besides paying an implicit tribute to logical reasoning and rationality of Christian theology, Finney was convinced that the correct philosophy

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179 FINNEY, C. G. *Power from on High*, Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1984, pp. 54–55.

(*mental philosophy*)<sup>180</sup> agrees with all the doctrines of Scripture:<sup>181</sup> “although the Bible was not given to teach us mental philosophy, yet we may rest assured, that all its declarations are in accordance with the true philosophy of mind.”<sup>182</sup> In his lectures on systematic theology, (*Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures*, 1840), explaining the doctrine of the Trinity, Finney does not hesitate to quote Pythagoras, Plato, or even Parmenides, if he finds in them statements implying tripartite understanding of unity in deity. In expounding the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement, he even referred to the convictions of pagan philosophers concerning the necessity of reconciliation.<sup>183</sup>

Finney’s legacy for contemporary evangelical theology is important for its use of logical and philosophical means of persuasion. To persuade listeners of the truth of the Gospel the preacher proceeds as a prosecutor or an attorney in the courtroom with the aim of laying out convincing arguments, which would convict the accused or vindicate the innocent.

Finney significantly influenced not only revivalist practice, but also the view concerning the human ability, which is much more optimistic and, through spiritual revivals, prepares the society for the coming of Christ. For Finney, rational abilities, and hence also philosophy (in its popular version), are an integral part not only of theology but also of evangelism. The Holy Spirit, who works in evangelism, does not reject but rather uses rationality. Truth cannot be classified separately as theological

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180 Finney also lived in the time period when the term *natural philosophy* was still used to designate natural sciences. By *mental philosophy* he meant the natural workings of the mind and emotions. Some of his arguments would come under the label of epistemology or psychology today.

181 “There is a marvelous internal correspondence, between these writings and all known facts of history, and philosophy, natural, mental, and moral.” (FINNEY, C. G. *Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures*, Oberlin: James Steele, 1840, p. 49.

182 FINNEY, C. G. *Sermons on Important Subjects*, New York: John S. Taylor, 1836, p. 4.

183 FINNEY, C. G. *Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures*, p. 212.

and philosophical. A preacher or a student of theology is obligated to use arguments of all kinds in such a way as to convince every person concerning the necessity of being reconciled with God.

### 1.2.5 Oswald Chambers

Chambers' (1874–1917) influence in evangelical circles is ensured by his continually published selection from his lectures and sermons *My Utmost for His Highest*.<sup>184</sup> These practical spiritual reflections, structured as daily readings for every day of the year, come from his lectures edited on the basis of his wife's stenographic records. Chambers integrates his Christian worldview with philosophy and aesthetics.<sup>185</sup> He demands that every Christian worker *think*: "The reason why the average Christian worker is only the average Christian worker, is that he or she will remain grossly ignorant about what he does not see any need for. All of you have intelligence, and you must use it for God."<sup>186</sup>

It comes as no surprise that a conservative evangelical student of theology should criticise philosophy, and, indeed, Chambers does so, too:

One of the great crimes of intellectual philosophy is that it destroys a man as a human being and turns him into a supercilious spectator; he cuts himself off from relationship with human stuff as it is and becomes a statue.<sup>187</sup>

Chambers wrote these words during the World War I. Since then, new philosophical movements have occurred (e.g. existentialism) which

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184 It was first published in 1927 by Oswald Chambers Publications Association in the UK.

185 There were some 30 titles published under his name. Later, some have been published under new titles, others are being revised and published in modern English. In 2000, his complete works were published, spanning ca. 1,500 pages.

186 CHAMBERS, O. *If Thou Wilt Be Perfect*. In *The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers*, Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 2000, p. 568.

187 CHAMBERS, O. *Baffled to Fight Better*. In *The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers*, p. 80.

seemingly do not deserve this assessment. They make a serious attempt to regard thinking (philosophy) as an integral part of “human material.” However, the student of theology might react that, without divine revelation no one can penetrate the surface of human existence using any philosophy. Chambers confirms it:

No man can get at God as Jesus Christ presents Him by philosophy. ... there is a gap between God and man, and knows that the only way that gap can be bridged is by Jesus Christ making the divine and the human one. The goal of human life is to be one with God, and in Jesus Christ we see what that oneness means.<sup>188</sup>

And yet, Chambers does content himself merely with a critique of philosophy, let alone some cheap wholesale obscurantist rejection of philosophical thought. On the contrary, he comes up with the principal method that a theologian should use to think philosophically:

We have not to bring God into our system of philosophy, but to found our philosophy on God. The source and support of all abiding exposition is a man’s personal relationship to God. If we base our philosophy on reason, we shall produce a false philosophy; but if we base it on faith in God, we can begin to expound life rightly. Actual conditions come into account, but underneath lies the Redemption.<sup>189</sup>

For Chambers, theology and philosophy constitute the Christian’s unified and integrated system of thinking. The problem of philosophy is not that it utilises reason but that it is not radically subject to the relationship of a thinking person with Christ: “The method of thinking for the saint is not to think along the line of Christian principles, but after he has become rightly related to Jesus Christ to see that he allows nothing to corrupt the profound simplicity of that relationship.”<sup>190</sup> Although

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188 CHAMBERS, O. *Biblical Ethics*. In *The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers*, p. 106.

189 CHAMBERS, O. *Baffled to Fight Better*. In *The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers*, p. 83.

190 CHAMBERS, O. *Bringing Sons into Glory*. In *The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers*, p. 240.

Christians proceed from the experience of their *heart*, this in no way means that their *brain* should remain inactive. They must take heed, however, that their thought are always under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Contemporary evangelical piety, with its leanings towards anti-intellectualism, would do well to take note of Chambers' emphasis on the personal relationship with Jesus which does not exclude philosophical thinking. His call for rigorous thinking is far removed from the fear of philosophical argumentation that is prevalent amongst pietistically minded evangelicals. Piety as a loving commitment and personal relationship with Jesus is a *sine qua non* for salvation, but from Chambers we also hear a demand to grow in our Christian philosophy.

#### 1.2.6 Francis Schaeffer

We have already encountered Schaeffer's name in our discussion of pre-suppositional apologetics. Here we shall consider more closely his attitude to philosophy.

Francis August Schaeffer (1912–1984) was a theologian, missionary, apologist and a preacher of the gospel. Some regard him as a fundamentalist, while others accuse him of falsifying the biblical message by the use of modern philosophical categories. "Academics criticised him, but many young thinkers and artists found in Schaeffer's analyses a safety-belt of common sense, without which they, literally, could not survive."<sup>191</sup> In his apologetic works which extensively analysed ideas, philosophy and culture, Schaeffer mostly refrained from using direct citations from the works of the authors he criticized and often simplified the philosophical positions of his opponents. However, this does not diminish the compelling force of his work.

Schaeffer remoulded the fundamentalist-modernist disputes of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into a challenge to *understand* the thinking of

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191 MAĎAR, J. *Francis August Schaeffer*. In MASARIK, A. - MAĎAR, J. (ed.) *Významní evanjelickí teológovia druhej polovice 20. storočia*. Banská Bystrica: ZEC, TRIAN, 2004, p. 36.



modern humans and to preach the gospel in such a way that they might understand it.<sup>192</sup> His apologetical method puts emphasis on the necessity to demonstrate the logical conclusion of a non-Christian worldview. This approach is sometimes referred to as “Schaeffer’s apologetics”. He calls it a principle of “taking the roof off”, i.e. removing the protection that man has built as a shelter from the “logical conclusion of his non-Christian presuppositions.”<sup>193</sup> Taking the roof off is very risky, as it may lead even to suicide, but Schaeffer strongly recommends it as a biblical way of finding the “true truth” and meaning of life.

Schaeffer’s basic answers and proposals can be found in three important books that are also known as “Schaeffer’s Trilogy”. These are often published under the title *A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*. Their titles are *The God Who Is There*, *Escape from Reason* and *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. In them Schaeffer offers a Christian analysis of the history of Western thought from the standpoint of the historic Christian faith and theology. He presents not only a Christian critique of the history of ideas and of philosophy, but also of fine arts, literature and music. He shows how both high culture and popular culture reflect thoughts which had first been formulated by some philosophy and how later they became accessible through arts and music to the wider public. The understanding of the historical development of Western philosophy provides a student of theology and pastor with an insight into the attitudes of modern individuals to truth and rationality. With dramatic and often tragic examples, it shows the search for logical answers to the questions concerning the meaning of life. Schaeffer paints with a broad brush the panorama of philosophy, culture and theology, all of which have given up on their search for rationality and have become accustomed to the possibility that mutually exclusive propositions may

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192 “Each generation of the Church in each setting has the responsibility of communicating the gospel in understandable terms, considering the language and thought-forms of that setting.” (SCHAEFFER, F. *Escape from Reason*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1971, p. 93.)

193 SCHAEFFER, F. *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer I*, pp. 140-141.

be true. Indeed, tracing this process, its influence on the popular culture and the (in)ability of modern people to believe the Gospel is one of the most important Schaeffer's contributions to evangelical theology.

To think in a genuine Christian way, we have to begin from the correct starting points. On the Christian system of thinking Schaeffer says:

If one begins to consider the Christian system as a total system, one must begin with the infinite-personal triune God who is there, and who was communicating and loving before anything else was. If one begins to consider how sinful man can return to fellowship with God, one must begin with Christ, His person and work. But if one begins to consider the differences between Christianity and rationalistic philosophy's answers, one must begin by understanding that man and history are now abnormal. It is not that philosophy and Christianity deal with completely different questions, but that historic Christianity and rationalistic philosophy differ in their answers — including the important point as to whether man and history are now normal or abnormal. They also differ in that rationalistic thinking starts with only the knowledge finite man can glean for himself.<sup>194</sup>

The challenge to understand the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of contemporary people based on the study of history of philosophy and culture is really difficult. It presupposes not only good knowledge of current philosophical trends, art, and popular culture, but also ability to critique them from a biblical and theological standpoint.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophical methods have become very complex and they demand a lot of study. When we as Christians try to understand and respond to the terminological complexity of the contemporary philosophical discourse we realise we have to continue building on the programme Schaeffer initiated. His legacy is alive in the L'Abri movement that provides opportunities for residential study in a community of young seekers for truth.

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194 SCHAEFFER, F. *The God Who Is There*. In: SCHAEFFER, F. *The Complete Works I*, p. 113.

### 1.2.7 Carl F. H. Henry

Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry (1913–2003) is often regarded as the “father of modern evangelicalism” owing to the changes in attitude of some evangelical fundamentalists that were brought about by his book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947). Complex relationships between the historical evangelicalism of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, fundamentalism, and neo-evangelicalism would require a more detailed historical and theological study.<sup>195</sup> For our purpose, that is the study of philosophy from a theological standpoint, the most important is his *magnum opus* published in six volumes under the title *God, Revelation and Authority*. Henry sets out to provide evangelical theology with a firm, rationally communicable foundation that would stand its ground when faced by the questions of modern scepticism.<sup>196</sup> Henry himself defined his aim thus:

Theology, we shall insist, sets out not simply with God as a speculative presupposition but with God known in his revelation. But the appeal to God and to revelation cannot stand alone, if it is to be significant; it must embrace also some agreement on rational methods of inquiry, ways of argument, and criteria for verification. For the critical question today is not simply, 'What are the data of theology?' but 'How does one proceed from these data to conclusions that commend themselves to rational reflection?'<sup>197</sup>

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195 The term “evangelical” is becoming a less and less precise descriptive label within theological, cultural, and moral discourse. Most often, the “apple of discord” among evangelicals tends to be the doctrine of inerrancy of the Bible as well as its precise definition.

196 “Henry’s primary theology consists of apologetic responses to both secular objections and issues raised within the evangelical camp.” (PURDY, R. A. Carl F. H. Henry. In Elwell, W. A. *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 269.)

197 HENRY, C. F. H. *God, Revelation and Authority I*, Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999, p. 14.

For the theological study of philosophy, his remarks concerning “rational reflection” are of particular importance. Theology must think and speak in a way that is rationally communicable – and that requires acquaintance with philosophy.

One of the teachers that made the most significant impact on Henry was Gordon Haddon Clark. Clark’s philosophical-theological views may be summarised as follows: (1) every form of philosophical and religious empiricism has gone bankrupt; (2) divine revelation is necessary for human knowledge as a whole; (3) every attempt to strip the divine revelation of its cognitive and propositional content fails; (4) we cannot allow for a separation of faith and reason, whether it is due to the assault on faith, existentialist critique of reason, or Thomist division of two spheres of knowledge; (5) Calvinist theology as formulated in the Westminster Confession is still relevant. The aforementioned *magnum opus* integrates these theological axioms of evangelical theology into 15 theses (*God, Revelation and Authority II, God Who Speaks and Shows*):

(1) Revelation is a divinely initiated activity, God’s free communication by which he alone turns his personal privacy into a deliberate disclosure of his reality. (2) Divine revelation is given for human benefit, offering us privileged communion with our Creator in the kingdom of God. (3) Divine revelation does not completely erase God’s transcendent mystery, inasmuch as God the Revealer transcends his own revelation. (4) The very fact of disclosure by the one living God assures the comprehensive unity of divine revelation. (5) Not only the occurrence of divine revelation, but also its very nature, content, and variety are exclusively God’s determination. (6) God’s revelation is uniquely personal both in content and form. (7) God reveals himself not only universally in the history of the cosmos and of the nations, but also redemptively within this external history in unique saving acts. (8) The climax of God’s special revelation is Jesus of Nazareth, the personal incarnation of God in the flesh; in Jesus Christ the source and content of revelation converge and coincide. (9) The mediating agent in all divine revelation is the Eternal Logos—preexistent, incarnate, and now glorified. (10) God’s revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible ideas and meaningful words, that is, in

conceptual-verbal form. **(11)** The Bible is the reservoir and conduit of divine truth. **(12)** The Holy Spirit superintends the communication of divine revelation, first, by inspiring the prophetic-apostolic writings, and second, by illuminating and interpreting the scripturally given Word of God. **(13)** As bestower of spiritual life the Holy Spirit enables individuals to appropriate God's revelation savingly, and thereby attests the redemptive power of the revealed truth of God in the personal experience of reborn sinners. **(14)** The church approximates the kingdom of God in miniature; as such she is to mirror to each successive generation the power and joy of the appropriated realities of divine revelation. **(15)** The self-manifesting God will unveil his glory in a crowning revelation of power and judgment; in this disclosure at the consummation of the ages, God will vindicate righteousness and justice, finally subdue and subordinate evil, and bring into being a new heaven and earth.

Henry is often accused of scholasticism and excessive rationalism, because of his attempts to prove the inerrancy of Scripture and the propositional nature of revelation. In the modern sceptic climate, it is easy to pronounce such accusations whilst avoiding an honest discussion of his arguments.

After the World War II, evangelicalism – in a reaction to fundamentalism – began to pay much greater attention to the formation of a coherent Christian worldview and apologetics. It should not only refute the arguments of secular philosophy but also offer its own theological-philosophical answers that respect the authority of the Bible. Naturally, not all evangelicals consider this philosophising evangelicalism to be “the true evangelicalism.”<sup>198</sup> This is a source of intra-evangelical strife and conflicts – chiefly regarding the question of inerrancy or infallibility of Scripture. In turn this affects theological epistemology and hermeneutics of the Bible. The discussion what really is “evangelical” continues. But as far as the philosophical thinking questions are

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198 Some authors even speak of a “post-conservative evangelicalism”. (DORRIEN, G. *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998, p. 185ff)

concerned, evangelicalism once again became a partner in the theological-philosophical dialogue and contemporary evangelical authors write on all current philosophical topics. Evangelical students of theology are helped in their theological endeavour by evangelical organizations devoted to study of philosophy (e.g. Evangelical Philosophical society founded in 1977), internationally recognized philosophers of evangelical convictions (e.g. Alvin Plantinga, born 1932) or philosophical journals (e.g. *Philosophia Christi*, a peer-reviewed journal published by the Evangelical Philosophical Society since 1999).

### 1.3 PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

From what has been said above, it could be argued that conservative evangelical theology in its relationship to philosophy may easily become bogged down in a Moltmannian double crisis: if it ignores philosophy, it loses *relevance* (relevance crisis); if it integrates philosophy uncritically, it loses *identity* (identity crisis).<sup>199</sup> It probably is no exaggeration to say that current evangelicalism prioritises identity over relevance. But we are not going to discuss this problem. Our task in what follows is to address the problem of a “correct” (if there is such) biblical attitude and use of philosophical thinking in theological research.

#### 1.3.1 A Student of Theology Engaging Philosophy

##### 1.3.1.1 *A Call for Caution*

From the nature of the matter it follows that both the starting point and the basic attitude of a student of theology to natural reason and philosophy should be that of *caution*. Reason never operates in some kind of pure, logical vacuum but always is under the influence of some “obvious”, undefined and unexplained presuppositions that escape attention. Reason uses such presuppositions as irrefutable axioms, while they are in fact results of cultural, psychological, historical or some other factors. Reason, if it is to be used correctly, must reckon with its

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199 Moltmann describes these two complementary crises in the relationship of Christianity with the world. If Christians become involved and their religious answers become relevant, it is at the expense of Christian identity – and vice versa. (MOLTMANN, J. *The Crucified God*, London: SCM Press, 2001, p. 1ff.)

insufficiency, because it *understands* that it does *not* understand everything – just as Pascal put it:

Reason's final step is to recognize that there is an infinity of things beyond it. It is merely feeble if it does not go as far as realizing this. — But if natural things are beyond it, what will we say of supernatural ones?<sup>200</sup>

In a similar vein, Augustine, in discussing interpretation of uncertain scriptural passages in *De Doctrina Christiana*, came to a conclusion that where we cannot interpret Scripture with Scripture, we are left to use reason even though it is *dangerous*.<sup>201</sup> Augustine understands very well the perils of unsupported speculation. A theological attitude to purely rational reasoning and argumentation based on common sense and logic should always be very circumspect and tentative. The result of Scriptural interpretation in such cases has to be a *cautious* formulation of a doctrine or an opinion, especially if other Christians (or experts) differ.

Caution in use of reason, naturally, does not imply total rejection of reason or natural ability to think. It must not be a cover for laziness in learning necessary philosophical knowledge, developing logical

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200 PASCAL, B. *Pensées*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004, p. 55. (S220/L188 “La dernière démarche de la raison est de reconnaître qu’ il y a une infinité de choses qui la surpassent. Elle n’ est que faible si elle ne va jusqu’à connaître cela. Que si les choses naturelles la surpassent, que dira (-t-) on des surnaturelles?”)

201 “When one unearths an equivocal meaning which cannot be verified by unequivocal support from the holy scriptures it remains for the meaning to be brought into the open by a process of reasoning, even if the writer Whose words we are seeking to understand perhaps did not perceive it. But this practice is dangerous; it is much safer to operate within the divine scriptures. “ (‘‘Ubi autem talis sensus eruitur, cuius incertum certis sanctarum Scripturarum testimoniis non possit aperiri, restat ut ratione reddita manifestus appareat, ...Sed haec consuetudo periculosa est’’ AUGUSTINUS *De Doctrina Christiana*, III/28, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 171)



arguments or applying critical discernment. The first step in the theological study of philosophy is recognition that reason has its limits. Reason itself discovers it if it is used with rigour.

### 1.3.1.2 *Reason and Scripture*

The subordination of reason to Scripture should not mean soulless “bibliolatry,” i.e. some sort of wooden backing of every proposition with a Bible verse. In fact, it is the sectarian movements that often arise in this manner, as they do not consider Scripture as a whole, but only pick and choose passages or verses that suit them at a given moment. The student of theology has to make every effort to understand the *spirit of Scripture*,<sup>202</sup> which is more than an arithmetic sum total of all of its affirmations. The spirit of Scripture is an expression of the value system of the Bible as a whole and as a unity. Understanding the spirit of Scripture requires acquaintance with the biblical literary genres and also recognition of its hierarchically structured content. (These demands are surely difficult, but a student of theology was never promised to have it easy.)

“The *authority of Scripture* can be none other but that which we ourselves are trying to live,”<sup>203</sup> says a theologian who does not share evangelical convictions. We should understand it as an foundational principle that Scripture does not force itself upon us. The authority of the Bible that is formally acknowledged in the church confessions is insufficient to model our thinking in confrontation with philosophical scepticism. Calvin said that neither human nor ecclesiastical arguments

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202 Here I am not referring to the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture, but am using the word “spirit” in according to a definition in the Oxford English Dictionary. *Spirit* = “the prevailing or typical quality, mood, or attitude.” See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/spirit>.

203 FUCHS, E. *Hermeneutik*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1970, p. 47.

for the authority of Scripture are sufficient; it must be founded on the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit.<sup>204</sup>

Unless this certainty, higher and stronger than any human judgment, be present, it will be vain to fortify the authority of Scripture by arguments, to establish it by common agreement of the church, or to confirm it with other helps. For unless this foundation is laid, its authority will always remain in doubt. ...Therefore Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit. (*Institutes I/VIII/1,13*)

For a successful use of Scripture in studying philosophy, the student of theology has to admire, love and know Scripture to such a degree that it becomes a constant partner in all areas of his thinking. It has become a channel through which God himself speaks to all problems and questions of life.

### 1.3.1.3 Reason and the Spirit of God

Besides seeking to know the “spirit of Scripture,” a student of theology, as a Christian individual, is in life and thought led by the Spirit of God. (Of course, this criterion does not apply only to theologians as some kind of a “higher caste,” but to every Christian.<sup>205</sup>) Calvin teaches that “a Christian

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204 CALVIN, J. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, pp. 81, 92. (“Haec nisi certitudo adsit quolibet humano iudicio et superior et validior, frustra Scripturae auctoritas vel argumentis munietur, vel ecclesiae consensu stabilietur, vel aliis praesidiis confirmabitur: siquidem nisi hoc iacto fundamento, suspensa semper manet. ...ad salvificam Dei cognitionem Scriptura satisfaciet, ubi interiori Spiritus sancti persuasione fundata fuerit eius certitudo.” CALVIN, I. *Institutio Christianae Religionis I*, pp. 62, 69.)

205 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. (ἄσσοι γὰρ πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται, οὗτοιοι υἱοὶ θεοῦ εἰσιν. Rom 8:14)

philosophy ... commands one to submit to the Holy Spirit.”<sup>206</sup> For Calvin, too, the term “philosophy” meant something else than it does for us today; he was concerned with the entire Christian worldview including natural knowledge attained through reason, which is accessible to all people. In this regard, his emphasis on the total submission of thought and life to the Holy Spirit becomes even more important. Returning back to Wesley – who, on the one hand, referred to himself as a *homo unius libri*,<sup>207</sup> but all the time studied all sorts of literature and wrote popular treatises on practical themes – Wesley as the pioneer of the distinctive emphases of evangelical theology spoke of “perceptible inspiration” of the Holy Spirit.<sup>208</sup> Although Wesley often (and effectively) defended himself against accusations of enthusiasm (at that time it amounted to accusations of irrationality and chiliasm) claiming that the work of the Spirit in Methodism was the same as in the life of any Christian. He could not concede that the work of the Holy Spirit ought to be imperceptible.

Therefore the distinguishing doctrines on which I do insist in all my writings, and in all my preaching, will lie in a very narrow compass. You sum them all up in perceptible inspiration. For this I earnestly contend; and so do all who are called Methodist Preachers.<sup>209</sup>

Peace, joy and love amount to nothing if they are not perceptible in human experience. An evangelical student of theology cannot afford to expect this *perceptible* work of the Spirit only in *religious* experiences and in *theological* meditation separated from anything “worldly.” Classical Christian theology knows of the activity of the Holy Spirit in creation and

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206 “...Christiana philosophia... Spiritui Sancto subiici ac subiugari iubet...” (CALVIN, I. *Institutio Christianae Religionis I*, p. 445)

207 WESLEY, J. *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. London: Paramore, 1785, p. 12.

208 “...by “perceiving” or ‘feeling the operations of the Spirit,’ I mean being inwardly conscious of them.” (WESLEY, J. *The Complete Works of John Wesley 12*, Albany: AGES Software, 1997, p. 102.)

209 WESLEY, J. *Works 12*, p. 70.

in the wisdom of the all humankind (even though such wisdom is not considered to be sufficient for salvation). We find it in the Biblical wisdom books, e.g. Job 32:8, where Wisdom (*chokhma*) is ascribed to the *breath of the Almighty* (*nishmat Shaddai*). Also in Ex 31:2-3, where the Spirit of God gives artistic and technological skills to Bezalel for the construction of the tent of meeting. In this vein, Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315–386) calls the Holy Spirit “the Spirit that sanctifies every rational nature”.<sup>210</sup> Cyril explains it further using the position of Daniel at the court of Nebuchadnezzar as an example (Dan 4:9). Also Thomas Aquinas was convinced that many pagan nations had a revelation of Christ.<sup>211</sup> To support this argument he cites not only the Bible (Job’s conviction concerning the Redeemer – Job 19:25), but also the Sibylline Oracles. The idea of a Mediator between humankind and a deity means that pagans had implicit faith given by God.

The main emphasis of the Reformers had been on natural man’s inability to understand the things of the Holy Spirit. This meant especially the revelation of the Spirit in the Scripture,<sup>212</sup> but later both Lutheran and Reformed dogmaticians professed the doctrines of *revelatio generalis* and *theologia naturalis*,<sup>213</sup> which stemmed from their conviction that God reveals himself, in some measure, to all people. Calvin’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit can be illustrated by the following diagram:

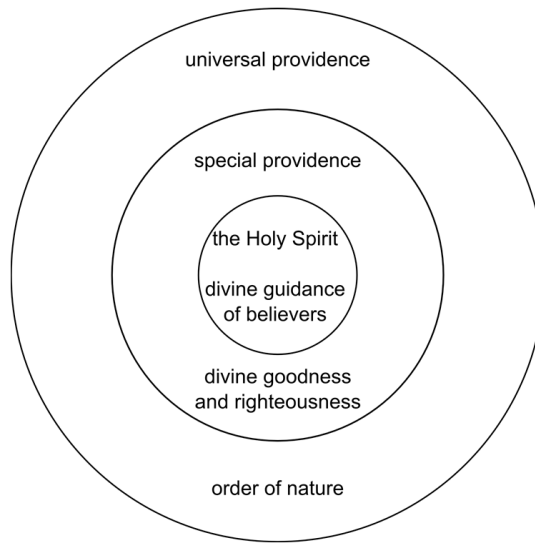
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210 τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιάζον πᾶσαν νοητὴν φύσιν (S. CYRIL *Catechetical Lectures* XVI. In SCHAFF, P. - WACE, H. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 7, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, p. 123.)

211 “...multis gentilium facta fuit revelatio de Christo” (AQUINO, T. *Summa Theologiae* IIa-IIae q.2 a.7 ad 3, In [www.corpusthomisticum.org](http://www.corpusthomisticum.org), 16.6.2005).

212 However, the reformed dogmatician O. WEBER, points out that the same works of the Reformers were later used in support of the arguments for the *theologia naturalis*. (WEBER, O. *Grundlagen der Dogmatik I*, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965, p. 221.)

213 WEBER, O. *Grundlagen der Dogmatik I*, pp. 220. 202.



*Diagram based on Institutes 1.16–18.*

(BATTLES, F. L. *Interpreting John Calvin*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996, p. 168)

The evangelical theologian Charles Hodge (1797–1878) calls the Holy Spirit “The Source of all Intellectual Life (Job 35:11).”<sup>214</sup> This characterization is based on the study of several passages of the Scripture. As an example of the non-soteriological activity of the Spirit, he mentions Samson and Saul, both of whom had special abilities when under the Spirit’s influence but lost them when the Spirit departed from them.

A. W. Tozer (1897–1963), one of the influential evangelical authors of the twentieth century, writes:

It is my own belief (and here I shall not feel bad if no one follows me) that every good and beautiful thing which man has produced in the world has been the result of his faulty and sin-blocked response to the creative Voice sounding over the earth. The moral philosophers who dreamed their high dreams of virtue, the religious thinkers who

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<sup>214</sup> HODGE, C. *Systematic theology I*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, p. 530.

speculated about God and immortality, the poets and artists who created out of common stuff pure and lasting beauty: how can we explain them? It is not enough to say simply, "It was genius." What then is genius? Could it be that a genius is a man haunted by the speaking Voice, laboring and striving like one possessed to achieve ends which he only vaguely understands?<sup>215</sup>

An evangelical theologian studying philosophy will do well to realise that study of secular works requires the light of the Spirit of God if they are to be understood correctly. In studying philosophy, we need the Spirit to guide our mind so as to comprehend the truth that it contains and enable us to discern and avoid deception. Such a process is laborious, risky, and necessitates more than mere passive attitude of waiting:

Seeking God's will is indeed a matter of thinking, which lies in the use of "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16b); it is the act of "thinking in God's presence," thinking in prayer. It is the subject of prayer, rather than a mere pursuit of thought-orientation.<sup>216</sup>

For some Christians, "guidance of the Holy Spirit in reading philosophical texts" may seem like a radical idea, but what else can Christ's lordship over all the principalities and powers mean? If an evangelical student of theology is not to remain in some kind of artificial isolation, or in a religious ghetto, but respond to the current questions, he or she must be able to work effectively with texts and views in all areas of thought. If we limit the work of the Spirit to the reading of Scripture, prayer, preaching and the study of spiritual works, we shall never be safe contacting secular thought and sceptical worldviews. Naturally, the Spirit of God does not work like the vending machine, but it is good that we have

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215 TOZER, A. W. *The Pursuit of God*, Bromley: STL books, 1984, p. 79.

216 MASARIK, A. *Spoznávanie Božej vôle v pavlovských listoch*, Banská Bystrica: Univerzita Mateja Bela, 2006, p. 89.

the following assurance of Jesus: how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!.<sup>217</sup>

#### 1.3.1.4 *Engaging Philosophy in the Spirit*

Now we are better prepared to answer the question whether the relationship between theology and philosophy is preferably realised in integration or in separation. If we consistently apply the principle of “perceptible inspiration” of the Holy Spirit (John Wesley), the answer must be: *everything depends on guidance of the Holy Spirit*. Maybe this deserves a new term that can be derived from the Greek words in Rom 8:14 (“led by the Spirit“) *pneumagomenic*<sup>218</sup> – life and thinking led or guided by the Spirit. A student of theology (like all Christians, after all) must seek the guidance of the Spirit for any activity. This should be especially so in such a sensitive area as philosophy, in which deep truths, that even non-believers receive from the Spirit of God, are intermingled with plausible errors and idolatry.

The *pneumagomenic* approach to the study of philosophy implies that, in principle, we cannot say how exactly it is going to be applied in every given situation. The foundational criterion of correctness will not be based so much on the content of the activity as in the relation of the activity to the Spirit of God in the living connection. We might remind ourselves of the well-known proverb: “when two people do the same thing, it is not the same thing.” Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it can happen that the same truth will take a philosophical expression in one case and a theological expression in another case. A decisive factor here will not be the problem of integration or separation, but whether God actively speaks in it through his Spirit. Theology should always keep

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217 πόσω μάλλον ὁ πατήρ [ὁ] ἐξ οὐρανοῦ δώσει πνεῦμα ἅγιον τοῖς αἰτοῦσιν αὐτόν (Luke 11:13)

218 From πνεῦμα and ἄγω in the passive participial form ἀγόμενος – led, brought.

in mind that “in theology, it is God who speaks”.<sup>219</sup> And who can give orders to God how he should speak?

### 1.3.2 From the Negative Attitude to a Positive Use

In philosophy we will always encounter “...human wisdom, which is neither *despised* nor *rejected* by theology, nevertheless theology’s focus is on the divine wisdom contained in the Scripture.”<sup>220</sup> Taking the correct “theological” attitude to philosophy cannot be determined once and for all. It has to be decided “on the run” for each person in each situation anew, depending on how the Spirit of God leads – in a *pneumagomenic* way (see above).

We have offered a proposition concerning *how* evangelical theology could read philosophy. Now we may proceed to discuss some reasons *why* a student of theology may find it important and interesting to do so.

#### 1.3.2.1 *Philosophy’s Search for Truth*

As we have seen, the pursuit of truth in theology often means a radical rejection of philosophy as an erroneous way lacking revelation from the absolute source of truth – from God. Seeing it in this way, theology and philosophy are two mutually exclusive alternatives. The search for truth means the exclusion of philosophy and for theology “Christ or nihilism” is the only alternative. Jaspers’ reaction to this dilemma is: “If this were the case, there would be no philosophy”.<sup>221</sup> His problem is that “Christ” in his view is just a *theological object* that is found in religion and has little, if anything, in common with philosophy. But the Christian knows Christ as the risen Lord of all life and of all wisdom (Col 2:2-3). He the one who gives

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219 WALDENFELS, H. *Kontextová fundamentální teologie*, Praha: Vyšehrad, 2000, p. 37.

220 LIGUŠ, J. *Propedeutické systematicko-teologické reflexie o kresťanskej viere v Boha*, Banská Bystrica: Trian, 2006, pp. 17-18 (italics added).

221 JASPERS, K. *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950, p. 7.



light to every human being (John 1:9) and as the personified Truth (John 14:6) he participates in every sincere search for truth. The problem of the philosophical search for truth is not in that it would take place *apart from* Christ but when it *refuses* the gospel of Christ as the answer to its search (as Jaspers (1883–1969), who came up with the above statement, does himself). The disjunction “Christ alone or nihilism” need not necessarily apply to all people. A person seeking for truth in philosophy is still on the way and still undecided. Such a seeker is not Christ’s yet, but is not a nihilist either. A Christian led by the Holy Spirit need not fear philosophy. Thielicke, a Lutheran theologian and ethicist, captured it in the following statement: “Even in a mistaken effort at obedience and love the human element always comes through and that which is bound with the *imago dei* in man – in just the same way as the remembrance of the Creator is disclosed in idolatry. And it is so despite the fact that both – the goal as well as God – are sought after in a wrong direction.”<sup>222</sup> Even if we regard philosophy as a part of idolatry (and it undoubtedly very often is), we cannot deny that it contains some genuine truth. In this vein the Epimenides is referred to as *prophet* (Tit 1:12). So on the one hand we find errors concerning truth on the part of theology, on the other hand we find truth in philosophy. This, of course, requires careful discernment. Even though *solus Christus* – Christ alone – is an indisputable Reformation motto, a student of theology must understand it not only from the perspective of Christ’s position in soteriology, but also from the perspective of Christ’s lordship over the entire creation. A theologian – precisely because he or she is a theologian – should be able to recognise genuine truth in philosophy. If a student of theology regards philosophy or philosophers only as the enemies of faith his or her study of it will be

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222 *Auch in der verfehlten Bemühung um Gehorsam und Liebe zeigt sich immerhin das Menschliche und Imagohafte, genau so wie sich im Götzendienst noch eine Anamnese und den Schöpfer verrät, auch wenn beides – sowohl die Bestimmung wie Gott – in der falschen Richtung gesucht werden.* (THIELICKE, H. *Theologische Ethik I*, p. 403.)

marked by deep aversion. Therefore it is important to show that philosophy is more than just one closed godless worldview. There are cases where philosophy is a genuine and sincere search for truth. Just as one definition goes: "Philosophy is that central life-form and attitude that characteristic of a person seeking and following (gr. *philia*) wisdom (*sophia*) as the supreme criterion of value."<sup>223</sup> (Although let us keep in mind that we cannot assert that everyone who pursues philosophy seeks truth, just like it does not necessarily hold true that everyone who studies theology also seeks God.)

The philosopher has vision, so has the poet, but neither of them has any memory; the preacher of the Gospel has vision and memory; he realises there is a gap between God and man, and knows that the only way that gap can be bridged is by Jesus Christ making the Divine and the human one.<sup>224</sup> ...Beware of philosophies. It is much more satisfactory to listen to a philosopher than to a proclaimer of the Gospel, because the latter talks with the gibes and the cuts of God, and they go straight to that in man which hates the revelation of the gap there is between man and God.<sup>225</sup>

There is a description of theology that says that it "...is a discipline concerned with God's relationship with man..." and "...a believing way of thinking about God who gave signs to humankind, who spoke to them and revealed himself to them".<sup>226</sup> Such actions of God should motivate every Christian and especially professional theologians to establish an intelligent and loving bidirectional communication between God and man.

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223 WALDENFELS, H. *Kontextová fundamentální teologie*, p. 85.

224 CHAMBERS, O. *Biblical ethics*. In *The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers*, p. 106.

225 CHAMBERS, O. *The Psychology of Redemption*. In: *The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers*, p. 1098.

226 LIGUŠ, J. *Propedeutické systematicko-teologické reflexie o kresťanskej viere v Boha*, p. 29.

### 1.3.2.2 *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*

Another important motivating factor for attaining philosophical knowledge is the fact that a scholarly understanding of theology, particularly its historical development, depends on knowledge of philosophy. Indeed, from the very beginning, systematic theology responded (in the form of apologetics) to questions raised by Greek philosophy. Greek thought was widely influential among the educated classes of the Roman empire. To communicate the gospel, Christian apologists often used concepts borrowed from philosophy<sup>227</sup> and used methods of philosophical argumentation. Thus a discipline gradually developed which we know as dogmatics or systematic theology today. This is why Adolf von Harnack, who studied the origins and history of Christian dogma, declared that “[d]ogma in its conception and development is a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel.”<sup>228</sup> We need not fully agree with Harnack to see that the influence of Greek philosophy is too important a factor to be ignored by theology. “Everyone needs to know some philosophy in order to understand the major doctrines of Christianity or to read a great theologian intelligently.”<sup>229</sup> – this situation is at times too unpleasant for a student who would like to read and study solely the Bible.<sup>230</sup> The Bible is written in the language of

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227 “But one had to be careful to note the distinctive meaning acquired by such philosophical terms when they were employed for Christian doctrine.” (PELIKAN, J. *The Christian Tradition II*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977, p. 36.)

228 HARNACK, A. von *History of Dogma I*, Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1895, p. 17.

229 ALLEN, D. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985, p. iii.

230 We need to be careful not to confuse lay understanding of the Scripture and the simple understanding of the way of salvation with scholarly, or so called scientific study of systematic theology. The Reformation put the Bible into the hands of every man with the conviction of *perspicuitas scripturae sacrae* – clarity of of Holy Scripture. This does not mean,

everyday life whereas systematic theology or dogmatics uses difficult words and notions that try to articulate a Christian worldview in terms intelligible to secular philosophically minded scholars. The process of communication is conditioned by scholarly definitions of Christian dogmas – and that requires a good grasp of philosophy.

### 1.3.2.3      *The Use of Philosophy in Apologetics*

A further reason to study and to understand philosophy pertains to its use in apologetics. Writing on the necessary qualifications of a missionary, R. C. Sproul says: “It’s not enough simply to know the content of the Gospel. It is also important that we understand the society in which we are acting out our role as missionaries.”<sup>231</sup> It is a familiar missiological principle of “translating” the Gospel into the cultural context in which it is proclaimed. (In his book Sproul gives the basics of the most influential philosophical views and positions in the USA: secularism, existentialism, philosophical humanism, pragmatism, positivism, pluralism and hedonism.) In the process of striving to communicate the gospel in secular culture, we must first know whether we ourselves are not unconsciously subject to some of the universally widespread non-Christian popular philosophical opinions. Such self-knowledge, however, requires a humble and critical study.<sup>232</sup> Some philosophical positions are so deeply ingrained in the contemporary culture and in the “mental equipment” of contemporary individuals, that it takes considerable effort

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however, that the Bible need not be a subject of scholarly exegesis and that the everyday, lay reading of Scripture does not involve errors that should be eliminated by the knowledge of language, history, and theology.

231      SPROUL, R. C. *Lifeways*, Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1986, p. 20.

232      “We cannot properly *beware* of philosophy unless we *be aware* of philosophy. To use a medical analogy, the person most likely to catch a disease is the one who does not understand it and thus takes no precautions against it.” (GEISLER, N. *Christian Apologetics Journal* 1999:2, No.1, p. 17.)

to uncover their un-Christian character. As an example, we may note such “self-evident” principles as individualism, anthropocentrism, scientism or the belief in progress of humanity. At the foundations of these views and attitudes is their Christian origin but it is very difficult to distinguish between their use from their abuse.

An excellent example of an apologetic application of philosophy is the work of C. S. Lewis (1898–1963). Besides a number of theological-philosophical articles, he wrote several allegorical works using beautifully fabricated narratives. In his works he points out the difficulties and the absurdities of some of the then-popular philosophical views. Of particular interest for a student of theology is his book reversely mimicking Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, namely *Pilgrim’s Regress*.<sup>233</sup> A thoroughgoing critique of the popular anthropocentric philosophy is his *Abolition of Man*. It is an analysis of hidden philosophical positions lurking in popular school textbooks and their ethical implications.<sup>234</sup>

On the subject of theological-philosophical apologetics, there is a constant stream of publications by many scholarly authors. Every seriously minded student of theology should get acquainted with them – not only in their professional-missional interests but also because of the need to equip one’s own faith with rational formulations.

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233 LEWIS, C.S. *The Pilgrim’s Regress*. Glasgow: Collins, 1990.

234 Walter Hooper, the manager of C. S. Lewis’ estate, made a remark that *The Abolition of Man* “the best defense of natural law I have ever seen” (LEWIS, C. S. *The Abolition of Man*. Glasgow: Collins, 1987, back cover).

## **II. TWELVE “GATEWAYS” TO PHILOSOPHY**

A student of theology reading philosophy needs, first of all, reliable first-hand information about philosophical systems and movements. For a serious student of any subject, it is unwise to form an opinion just on the basis of someone’s well-meaning warnings or recommendations. It is an imperative that the student gets in touch with the texts written by the philosophers.

There are several ways how we can acquaint ourselves with the problems of philosophy. Paths or “gateways” to philosophy are open quite naturally in various spheres of life. Daily life-problems often inevitably lead to philosophical reflection and to the formulation of philosophical questions.

Often, there are several possible ways to solve a difficult philosophical problem. For the Christian, knowing that there is more than one answer to difficult philosophical questions can be very liberating. For the student of theology, such alternatives provide several ways in which Christian faith can be approached.

It is crucial to develop the skill of how to compare and critique answers provided by various philosophical systems. The ability to express the ideas found in the philosophical texts in our own words shows our understanding of the philosophical problem under study. The following twelve “gateways to philosophy” show the way to reach these goals.

### **2.1 YOUR MIND MATTERS**

The first “gateway” to philosophy opens with acquiring a positive attitude to reason and rigorous thinking. Comparing conflicting approaches to philosophical thinking, the student can choose and decide

to seriously develop his or her skills of philosophical reasoning and argumentation.

**Practical Assignment**

Write down your personal response to the following quotation:

I suspect that most of the individuals who have religious faith are content with blind faith. They feel no obligation to understand what they believe. They may even wish not to have their beliefs disturbed by thought. But if the God in whom they believe created them with intellectual and rational powers, that imposes upon them the duty to try to understand the creed of their religion. Not to do so is to verge on superstition.<sup>235</sup>

If your reaction to the idea of “blind faith” is negative you are ready to enter through the first gateway to philosophy.

Now compare and decide which side of the following table is closer to your mind-set:

AS A STUDENT OF THEOLOGY, DO I HAVE TO STUDY PHILOSOPHY?	
“NO”	“YES”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In Christianity I have come to the knowledge of truth – there is nothing philosophy could teach me.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The student of theology needs to understand the Christian revelation in the context of the universal human search for truth.</li></ul>

235 ADLER, M. J. *A Philosopher’s Religious Faith*, In Kelly James-Clark (ed.), *Philosophers Who Believe*, Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 1993, p. 207.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have no time to study philosophical errors. I am fully committed to the study of theology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although philosophy cannot provide ultimate answers, it is an important source of critical questions theology has to answer.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philosophy threatens my faith. It is a source of doubts that troubles me.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student of theology cannot base his or her faith on ignorance. Doubts are useful for learning.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philosophy is a very complicated speculation. The Gospel is simple.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To present the simple Gospel often requires first to answer some very difficult philosophical questions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bible explicitly warns of philosophy (Col 2:8).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Col 2:8 warns against philosophical deceit, not against genuine knowledge.</li> </ul>

It is important to realise that neither of the alternative attitudes to philosophical reasoning is presented here as the “right” one or the “wrong” (let alone “bad”) one.

### **Suggested Reading**

STOTT, J. *Your Mind Matters*, Leicester: IVP, 1972.

ALLEN, D. – SPRINGSTED E. O. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, Westminster/John Knox Press, 2007.

SIRE, J. W. *The Universe Next Door*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

SPROUL, R. C. *Liferviews*, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1986.

## **2.2 THE POWER OF IDEAS**

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the American philosopher Mortimer Adler (1902–2001) led a project called “The Great Books” and “The Great Ideas” that selected and published the most influential works in the history of humanity. A student of theology can find here authors and ideas



that have been the determining and most powerful factors in human history.

### Practical Assignment

Go to the site <http://www.thegreatideas.org/103ideascat.html> and find out if your idea of greatness agrees with that of Adler's. If not, write down the reasons why. Here it is important to learn what the Bible says about the key significance of the mind in thinking. For example, in 2 Cor 10:4–5 a metaphor of “fortress” (ὀχύρωμα,) is used. The word *repentance* in Greek literally means *change of mind* (μετάνοια). How does this bear on the great ideas selected by Adler?

For the relationship of ideas to reality, read closely and write a critical reaction to the following quotation:

Philosophers have too long concerned themselves with their own thinking. When they wrote of thought, they had in mind primarily their own history, the history of philosophy, or quite special fields of knowledge such as mathematics or physics. This type of thinking is applicable only under quite special circumstances, and what can be learned by analysing it is not directly transferable to other spheres of life. Even when it is applicable, it refers only to a specific dimension of existence which does not suffice for living human beings who are seeking to comprehend and to mould their world. Meanwhile, acting men have, for better or for worse, proceeded to develop a variety of methods for the experiential and intellectual penetration of the world in which they live, which have never been analysed with the same precision as the so-called exact modes of knowing. When, however, any human activity continues over a long period without being subjected to intellectual control or criticism, it tends to get out of hand.<sup>236</sup>

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236 MANNHEIM, K. *Ideology and Utopia*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1954, p. 1.

For a thoroughgoing theological evaluation of the influence of thinking on society, it is very helpful to learn about what Peter Berger called the “social construction of reality”.<sup>237</sup>

### **Suggested Reading**

ADLER, M. J. *How to Think about the Great Ideas*, Chicago: Open Court, 2000.

SHAW, M. R. *10 Great Ideas from Church History*, Downers Grove: IVP Books, 1997.

WEAVER, R. M. *Ideas Have Consequences*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

## **2.3 IDEAS “REALLY PHILOSOPHICAL”**

Although all thinking can be viewed as being in some ways philosophical, not all ideas or influential ideologies belong to philosophy as a subject in university studies. The history of ideas shows that not all ideas can be labelled as philosophical in the strict sense. This, in turn, leads us to the problem of the definition of philosophy, which is a philosophical problem in its own right.

In not so distant past, what we call natural sciences belonged under the label of philosophy – it was called “natural philosophy”. But speculative philosophy has been overshadowed by the successes of natural philosophy (i.e. by natural science) and the resulting almost absolute trust in the certainty of scientific knowledge has led to scientism. The critical question is: Are the methods used in natural philosophy (science) applicable in speculative philosophy (and theology)? Give reasons for your answer.

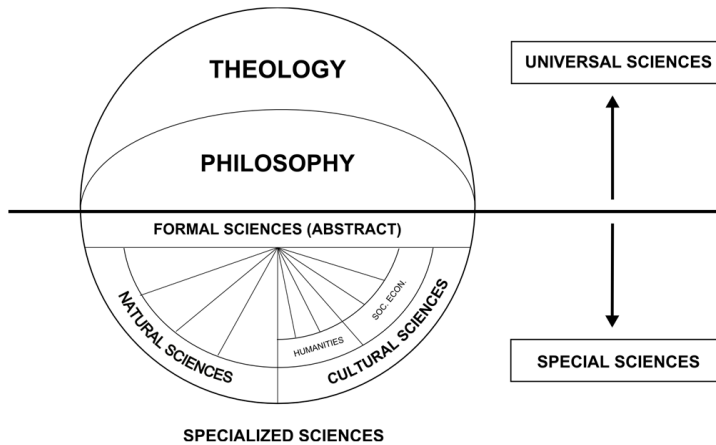
For a better understanding of the relationship between philosophy and other sciences the following diagram may be helpful:<sup>238</sup> In the

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237 BERGER, P. - LUCKMANN, T. *The Social Construction of Reality*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985.

238 ANZENBACHER, A. *Úvod do filozofie*, p. 35.

diagram philosophical ideas are placed between theology and specialized sciences.



In addition to the ideas that constitute an organised system in particular sciences, there is a great number of non-scientific and non-philosophical ideas in the arts, politics, popular beliefs, opinions and superstitions. Ideas in these areas very often are not based on reason and arguments, yet they are often very plausible to the human mind and have powerful influence in people's lives. Such were the ideas of "scientific racism" of the Nazis or "scientific communism" of the Marxists.

### Practical Assignment

Read the following definition of philosophy by Kant and compare it with your understanding of theology. What are the differences? What are the similarities?

Philosophy is ...the science of the final ends of human reason. ...[it] is the idea of a perfect wisdom, which shows us the science of the relation of all cognition and of all use of reason to the ultimate end of human reason, to which, as the highest, all other ends are subordinated, and in which they must all unite to form a unity. The field of philosophy in this cosmopolitan sense can be brought down to the following

questions: (1) What can I know? (2) What ought I to do? (3) What may I hope? (4) What is man?<sup>239</sup>

For the student of theology it is crucial to distinguish between philosophical and theological approaches to the world of ideas. Both philosophy and theology deal with the ultimate questions of existence. The difference is in what authority they submit to. For philosophy it is the universally accessible human experience expressed in language and methodically organized into a rigorous rational system. For Christian theology, authority is divine revelation written down in the Bible, enlivened by the Spirit of God, creating a community of believers.

### **Suggested Reading**

- RUSSELL, B. *The Problems of Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- HONER, T. C. – HUNT, D. L. – OKHOLM, J. L. *Invitation to Philosophy*, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1996.
- SIRE, J. *The Discipleship of the Mind*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1990.
- MORELAND, J. P. – CRAIG, W. L. *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
- YOUNG, W. C. *A Christian Approach to Philosophy*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973.

## **2.4 WHY DO PEOPLE PHILOSOPHIZE?**

Rejection of philosophy (not only by religion) is often based on the argument that what we need in life is *common sense* and that no philosophizing will “make bread any cheaper”. But all answers to important questions of existence have a philosophical background and some *philosophical* position is implicitly hidden even in such a refusal to think.

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239 KANT, I. *Lectures on Logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 537-538.

## Practical Assignment

Read the following quotation by Jaspers and write down your critical reaction. Give arguments both if you agree or disagree:

...man cannot avoid philosophy, it is always present: in the proverbs handed down by tradition, in popular philosophical phrases, in dominant convictions such as are embodied in the idiom of the "emancipated," in political opinions, but most of all, since the very beginnings of history, in myths. There is no escape from philosophy. The question is only whether a philosophy is conscious or not, whether it is good or bad, muddled or clear. Anyone who rejects philosophy is himself unconsciously practising a philosophy.<sup>240</sup>

On the positive side, philosophizing is triggered by several possible experiences. Some of them are: wonder, doubt, search for meaning, fear of death, rationalizing instincts, a desire to understand. Sometimes various motivations are combined in one experience: "The search for truth leads through various activities to sciences; the sciences in turn lead to philosophizing. Experience of knowing creates a relationship with beauty and the beauty of essence is infinite – it neither comes into being nor ceases to exist, it does not grow old, it is not reduced, it is unified..."<sup>241</sup> The author shows how a problem of aesthetics (beauty) connects with a problem of knowledge (philosophy) and substance (existence). This combination of motives leads to philosophical reflection.

From the perspective of apologetics, a student of theology might find it interesting to reflect on the laws that exist independently of time and space as described in J. M. Bocheński's *Philosophy: An Introduction*.<sup>242</sup> A

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240 JASPERS, K. *Way to Wisdom*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954, pp. 11-12.

241 ZAVIŠ, M. Psychologické predpoklady pre kňazskú službu žien. In *Ordinácia žien za farárky v cirkvi*, Žilina: Žilinská univerzita, 2008, p. 230.

242 BOCHENSKI, J. M. *Philosophy: An Introduction*, Heidelberg: Springer, 1963.

similar approach was taken by C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*. “Right and wrong as a clue to the meaning of the universe.”

### Suggested Reading

SIRE, J. W. *Habits of the Mind*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

MCGRATH, A. *Doubting*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

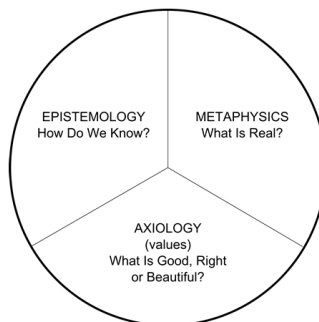
BLAMIRE, H. *The Christian Mind*, London: S.P.C.K., 1963.

LEWIS, C. S. *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Glasgow: Collins, 1990.

PEARCEY, N. *Finding Truth*, Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2015.

## 2.5 THE PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY

Another way to approach philosophy is a systematic classification of philosophical problems into categories. As has been noted above, historically philosophy encompassed all knowledge including today's sciences (as “natural philosophy”). After the developments of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, philosophy was left with universal questions that are usually outside the scope of experimental research. Answers to these questions cannot be rationally proved (or disproved) with total certainty. Their subject matter can be neatly divided into three areas: *ontology* (also called “metaphysics”) – theories of being; *epistemology* – theories of knowing; axiology – theories of value.<sup>243</sup>



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243 HONER, T. C. – HUNT, D. L. – OKHOLM, J. L. *Invitation to Philosophy*, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1996, p. 21.

Here we need to be aware of our unconscious tendency to observe the world with “God’s eye”<sup>244</sup> – as if we were outside reality. From such vantage point everything would be an object of unhindered investigation. This applies particularly to the thinking about existence (ontology or metaphysics). In reality, only an infinite Creator-God can independently evaluate both the whole of reality and human thoughts. Theology can partially solve this problem by reference to divine revelation. Philosophy either denies the possibility of such knowledge or speculates on the basis of the finite human experience.

### **Practical Assignment**

Read the following text by Kierkegaard. Find in it the three areas of philosophy and describe how they relate to each other:

... I find it comic that all human beings love, and want to love, and yet one can never learn what the lovable, what the actual object of erotic love, is. I am not taking the words “to love” into consideration, for they say nothing, but as soon as the subject comes up, the first question is: What is it that one loves? To that, there is no other answer than that one loves what is lovable. In other words, if the answer along with Plato is that one should love the good, then one has overstepped in a single step the whole sphere of the erotic. But then the answer may be that one should love the beautiful. If I then were to ask whether to love is to love a beautiful region of the country, a beautiful painting, we would promptly see that the erotic is not related as a species to the sphere of erotic love but is something utterly distinctive.<sup>245</sup>

It should be clear that although philosophy shares many common subjects with theology (like “meaning”, “truth”, “existence” etc.), theology

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244 PUTNAM, H. *Realism with Human Face*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 7.

245 KIERKEGAARD, S. *Stages on Life’s Way*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 34.

in addition deals with specific ontological, epistemological as well as axiological topics based on the revelation in the Scripture. Ignoring these differences leads to theology reduced to a philosophy in religious words; or it can result in philosophy that is really a theology in disguise because the answers it proposes are based on some sort of revelation, and not on the commonly accessible human experience.<sup>246</sup>

### **Suggested Reading**

ROSEN, G. (et al) *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 2018.

NASH, R. H. *Life's Ultimate Questions*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

PEARCEY, N. *Total Truth*, Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005.

SOLOMON, R. C. – HIGGINS, K. M. *The Big Questions*, Belmont: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning 2014.

HUNNEX, M. D. *Chronological and Thematic Charts of Philosophies & Philosophers*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

## **2.6 THE METHODS OF PHILOSOPHY**

Philosophy as a formal academic subject is, we could say, all about methods. A consistent application of a method to thinking does not come naturally and our mind is quite unmethodical in coming to its various conclusions. The essential feature of philosophical thinking, however, is its *method* or a pattern of argument. Philosophies often have their focal point method encoded just before the suffix *-ism* in the name they bear. They start their building their system from the first principles by way of deduction. For example, *rationalism* is a philosophy whose method is focused on the workings of reason (*ratio* in Latin). For the philosophy of

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246 This statement may be irritating to unbelievers who do not believe in the possibility of supernatural communication from the Holy Spirit through the Scripture. But otherwise is completely impossible to understand the basic tenets of the Christian faith. E.g. "No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again" (John 3:3 NIV).



empiricism it is the sensory experience (ἐμπειρία) that is the source of all knowledge worthy of its name. All our ideas are true only to the extent they can be referred back to our sensory experience. Hedonism directs all philosophical reasoning to one goal – pleasure (ἡδονή). Similarly intuitionism, materialism or fideism make in some ways intuition, matter or faith (*fides*) foundations for their methods. Some philosophies even adjust logic to their way of reasoning. Some of the methods throughout the history of philosophy were: Socratic dialectics, axiomatic method, experimental, phenomenological, hermeneutical method, method of intuition... To discuss these methods in detail practically amounts to studying the philosophies that use them.

A strictly logical argumentation is a hallmark of philosophical reasoning. An evangelical student of theology will do good to remember the words of Wesley:

Ought not a Minister to have, first, a good understanding, a clear apprehension, a sound judgment, and a capacity of reasoning with some closeness? Is not this necessary in a high degree for the work of the ministry? Otherwise, how will he be able to understand the various states of those under his care; or to steer them through a thousand difficulties and dangers, to the haven where they would be? Is it not necessary, with respect to the numerous enemies whom he has to encounter? Can a fool cope with all the men that know not God, and with all the spirits of darkness? Nay, he will neither be aware of the devices of Satan, nor the craftiness of his children.<sup>247</sup>

To learn “reasoning with some closeness”, as Wesley put it, requires some knowledge of argumentation and methods utilised by contemporary philosophies. Critical thinking is a skill that allows the student of theology to make careful decisions about usefulness of philosophical methods in theology. Talking of philosophical methods, the

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247 WESLEY, J. *Works 10*, p. 481.

first example of critical thinking may be directed to the problem of their universal usefulness:

“Ever since Bacon and Descartes the dominant intellectual tradition has connected truth and method. Let us only discover the appropriate method of enquiry and truth will lie plain before us. ...But suppose that method does not yield truth, suppose that it is not sophistication that we need but the right kind of naiveté, suppose that what we need to reflect upon to move toward the truth is what we already (in some sense) know; suppose that if truth is hidden, it is not because it requires searching out by some device of method, but because it is so plainly before our eyes in our everyday activities and conversations that we cannot perceive it.”<sup>248</sup>

We can see that looking for a correct method is no magic wand to solve all our truth-related problems. Critical thinking may look like a dangerous tool to the student of theology who struggles to found all thinking on faith. But actually, genuine faith cannot exist without tools of critical questioning of all sorts of information coming our way. To recognize arguments and their validity, to discern logical fallacies and to distinguish between opinion and truth requires some training. This will come as a very useful skill when studying such important topics as philosophy puts on the table. The student will do well to peruse some of the up-to-date textbooks on the topic.<sup>249</sup>

The human brain does not think in neatly connected methodical lines. A tool that reflects the way the human brain works is the Mind Map,<sup>250</sup> a graphic representation of a system of related ideas. The central

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248 MACINTYRE, A. *On Gadamer's Truth and Method*. In SOLOMON, R. S. *Introducing Philosophy* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989, p. 229.

249 For example: BOSS, J. A. *Think*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2017.

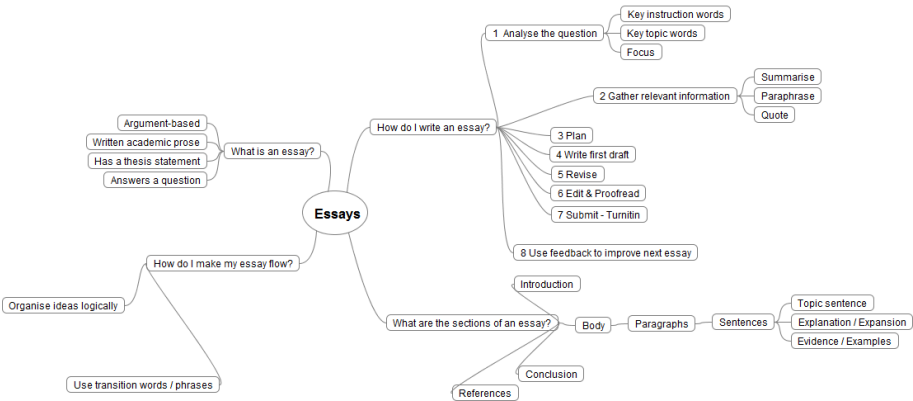
250 “The Mind Map marks the next step in the progression from linear (“onedimensional”) thinking, through to lateral (“two-dimensional”)

theme is connected with its sub-themes by means of a node diagram. Brief descriptions may be found on many websites.<sup>251</sup> Mind maps help especially those students who are visually oriented; nevertheless, they may stimulate everyone’s creativity and imagination.

Tony Buzan, the inventor of mind mapping, designed the following laws for creating useful mind maps:

1. Always use a blank sheet of paper, ... 2. Draw a picture in the centre ... 3. Use images, symbols, codes and dimension ... 4. Select keywords ... 5. Place each word or image on its own branch... 6. Radiate flowing branches out from the central image. ... 7. Keep branches the same length as the words or images on them. 8. Use colours throughout the Mind Map... 9. Use emphasis, arrows and connecting lines ... 10. Aim for clarity in your Mind Map ...<sup>252</sup>

An example of a mind-map may look like this:<sup>253</sup>




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thought, to multi-dimensional thinking or Radiant Thought.” (BUZAN, T. *Mind Map Mastery*, London: Watkins, 2018, p. 39.)

251 E.g. <http://www.mind-mapping.co.uk/make-mind-map.htm>  
[http://www.12manage.com/methods\\_mind\\_mapping.html](http://www.12manage.com/methods_mind_mapping.html) (16 May 2019).

252 BUZAN, T. *Mind Map Mastery*, p. 60.

253 <https://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/sites/public/files/study-skills/images/mind-map-essays.jpeg> (16 May 2019).

### **Practical Assignment**

Draw a mind-map on the relationship between philosophy and theology. Make it personal and practical.

### **Suggested Reading**

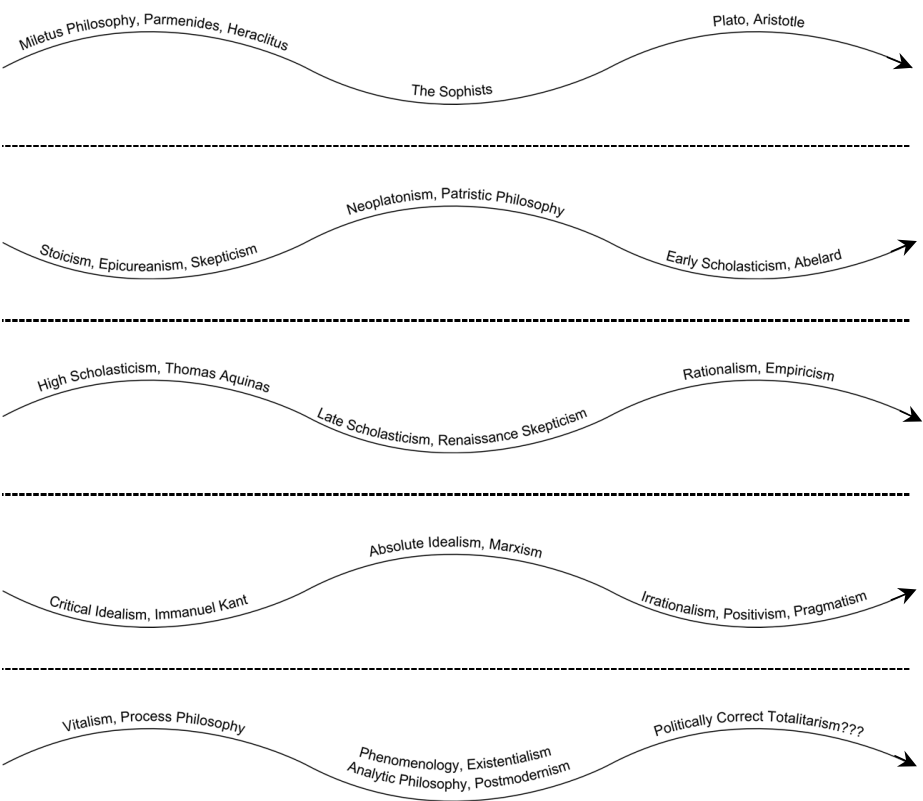
- DEWEESE, G. J. – MORELAND, J. P. *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult*, Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005.
- BAGGINI, J. – FOSL, P. S. *The Philosopher's Toolkit*, Chicester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- DALY, C. *The Palgrave Handbook of Philosophical Methods*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- BROWNE, M. N. – KEELEY, S. M. *Asking the Right Questions*, Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, 2007.
- BUZAN, T. *The Buzan Study Skills Handbook*, Harlow: BBC Active, 2007.

## **2.7 THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY**

History is probably the most frequently used approach to philosophy. The history of philosophy is actually a centuries-long dialogue among philosophers. We need to know the earlier philosophies not only as closed philosophical systems but also as sources of questions which later philosophies propose to answer. Also, the history of philosophy is a problem of philosophy in that various philosophers present according to their particular philosophical views. In the history of philosophy it is interesting to notice a periodicity of philosophical ideas behind the two fundamental motives – to *build up* or to *tear down* some previous system(s) of philosophical thought. Philosophers who could be called “system builders” try to answer all possible philosophical questions and to construct a logically organized non-contradictory whole of ideas. In such a system “there should be a place for everything and everything should be in its place”. Philosophers whom we may call “system destroyers” attack such complete totalitarian thought-systems by pointing out their deficiencies and contradictions. Instead, they concentrate their efforts on

producing a philosophy for living or just for coping with the unanswerable dilemmas of human existence. In history we may discern a pattern of alternation between these basic two tendencies in philosophical speculation.

After some simplifications, the alternating pattern can be depicted like this:



The philosopher Franz Brentano described the upward and downward course in the history of philosophy in following words:

Other sciences, as long as scientists pursue them, show a constant development which may sometimes be interrupted by periods of stagnation. Philosophy, however, like the history of the fine arts, has always had periods of ascending development and, on the other hand, periods of decadence. The latter are, nonetheless, often no less rich, are indeed richer in epoch-making phenomena, than are the healthy and productive periods. In the succession of these periods, a certain regularity can be found.<sup>254</sup>

The history of philosophy is closely related to the philosophy of history. The English historian Herbert Butterfield says: "History must be a matter of considerable concern to Christians in so far as religion in this way represents the attempt to engage oneself with the whole problem of human destiny..." and "...at the present-day such history – by which I mean current assumptions concerning the whole course of human life in time – is in reality a more serious obstruction to Christianity than the natural sciences."<sup>255</sup> Christianity teaches that the meaning of history can be found only outside of history – in the eschatological future. Philosophy finds the meaning of history either in some historically distant future (but still *inside* history) or denies there is any meaning to it whatsoever.

### **Practical Assignment**

In your opinion, what will be the ruling idea(s) of the next phase of philosophical thinking? (In the graphic depiction above described as "politically correct totalitarianism" with question marks.)

### **Suggested Reading**

MELCHERT, N. – MORROW, D. R. *The Great Conversation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

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254 MEZEL, B. M. – SMITH, B. *The Four Phases of Philosophy*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998, p. 85.

255 BUTTERFIELD, H. *Christianity and History*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950, pp. 2, 4.

- COPLESTON, F. *A History of Philosophy*, New York: Doubleday, 1993.
- BROWN, C. – WILKENS, S. – PADGETT, A. G. *Christianity & Western Thought*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- KENNY, A. *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- SCHAEFFER, F. *How Should We then Live?* Westchester: Crossway Books, 1988.

## 2.8 PHILOSOPHERS ARE HUMAN BEINGS TOO

There are many anecdotes about philosophers. For people interested in lives of great personalities biography may provide an easier access to the weighty problems of philosophy - “the philosophy backstairs,” a term aptly coined by Weischedel. In his opinion “...the backstairs have no decorations but also give no distractions. Sometimes they may be a quicker access to reach your objective.”<sup>256</sup>

In Plato’s dialogue *The Apology of Socrates* we learn of Socrates’ honesty and courage facing a death sentence. In Rousseau’s *Confessions* we read how he was prematurely acquainted with passions reading novels with his father into wee small hours of the morning. About Marx, from a poem by Bruno Bauer, we may learn what powerful impression his personality had on those who met him:

But who advances here full of impetuosity?  
 It is a dark form from Trier, an unleashed monster,  
 With self-assured step he hammers the ground with his heels  
 And raises his arms in full fury to heaven  
 As though he wished to seize the celestial vault and lower it to earth.  
 In rage he continually deals with his redoubtable fist,  
 As if a thousand devils were gripping his hair.<sup>257</sup>

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256 WEISCHEDEL, W. *Die philosophische Hintertreppe*, München: dtv, 1988, p. 4.

257 MCLELLAN, D. *Karl Marx, His Life and Thought*, London: The Macmillan Press, 1985, pp. 32-33.

(Wer jaget hinterdrein mit wildem Ungestüm?  
Ein schwarzer Kerl aus Trier, ein markhaft Ungetüm.  
Er gehet, hüpfet nicht, er springet auf den Hacken  
Und raset voller Wut, und gleich, als wollt' er packen  
Das weite Himmelszelt und zu der Erde ziehn,  
Streckt er die Arme sein weit in die Lüfte hin.  
Geballt die böse Faust, so tobt er sonder Rasten,  
Als wenn ihn bei dem Schopf zehntausend Teufel faßten.)<sup>258</sup>

About Wittgenstein we may learn how seriously he regarded philosophical work: "When I'm engaged on a piece of work I'm always afraid I shall die before I've finished it."<sup>259</sup>

A biblical theologian knows of a close connection between thought and life in any individual. Lifestyle and thinking influence and condition each other. Nevertheless, we must be careful not to ape the modern fad of explaining away all views by hidden unconscious drives – by sex, as in Freud, by greed, as in Marx, or by the will to power, as in Nietzsche. The life of philosophers, as well as students of theology or believers, can explain a lot – but not everything. Refuting arguments by identifying them with some hidden motives is rarely admissible. It can be carefully resorted to only in cases in which normal communication has failed and a hidden agenda is clearly in the open.

### **Practical Assignment**

Write for yourself how your own worldview has been influenced by your social environment, education, habits, etc. Compare your life experience with some of the thinkers you read about or personally know.

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258 KARL MARX – FRIEDRICH ENGELS *Werke, Band 41*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1967, p. 301.

259 MONK, R. *Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Duty of Genius*, London: Random House, 1991, p. 272.



### Suggested Reading

MILLER, J. *The Philosophical Life*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2011.

CLARK, K. J. (ed.) *Philosophers Who Believe*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

RESCHER, N. *A Journey through Philosophy in 101 Anecdotes*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015.

JOHNSON, P. *Intellectuals*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

## 2.9 EMPLOYING PHILOSOPHY IN THEOLOGY

Positions of various theologians on the issue of the relationship between theology and philosophy have been discussed at the beginning of this book. As we have seen, a student of theology cannot avoid these problems. The following quotation from Charles Hodge gives the most common evangelical position on the problem:

1. Philosophy and Theology occupy common ground. Both assume to teach what is true concerning God, man, the world, and the relation in which God stands to his creatures. 2. While their objects are so far identical, both striving to attain a knowledge of the same truths, their methods are essentially different. Philosophy seeks to attain knowledge by speculation and induction, or by the exercise of our own intellectual faculties. Theology relies upon authority, receiving as truth whatever God in his Word has revealed.<sup>260</sup>

While we discussed the acceptability of philosophical arguments in theology, we have ignored the mirror problem of theological speculation in philosophy. Despite the irreligious and often anti-theological character of philosophy it can be argued that "...philosophical theology is ... the central problem of philosophy."<sup>261</sup> Which means that not only theology

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260 HODGE, C. *Systematic Theology I*, p. 56.

261 WEISCHEDEL, W. *Der Gott der Philosophen I*, p. 494.

cannot avoid philosophy but the same is true for philosophy – it cannot avoid theology.

In Plato's *Republic* we find this piece of theology (theodicy):

Neither, then, could God, said I, since he is good, be, as the multitude say, the cause of all things, but for mankind he is the cause of few things, but of many things not the cause. For good things are far fewer with us than evil, and for the good we must assume no other cause than God, but the cause of evil we must look for in other things and not in God.<sup>262</sup>

Some philosophical systems strongly resemble a religious system (e.g. neoplatonism, or, in some ways, Marxism). In modern times it is process philosophy that integrated theological speculation in its philosophical reasoning:

Thus the universe is to be conceived as attaining the active self-expression of its own variety of opposites – of its own freedom and its own necessity, of its own multiplicity and its own unity, of its own imperfection and its own perfection. All the 'opposites' are elements in the nature of things, and are incorrigibly there. The concept of 'God' is the way in which we understand this incredible fact – that what cannot be, yet is. ...Thus the consequent nature of God is composed of a multiplicity of elements with individual self-realization. It is just as much a multiplicity as it is a unity; it is just as much one immediate fact as it is an un-resting advance beyond itself. Thus the actuality of God must also be understood as a multiplicity of actual components in process of creation. This is God in his function of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>263</sup>

At this juncture it is important to understand the difference between

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262 PLATO *The Republic* 379 C, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937.

263 WHITEHEAD, A. N. *Process and Reality*, New York: The Free Press, 1978, p. 350.

*philosophy of religion* and *religious philosophy*. Philosophy of religion deals with religion and faith from the outside. It looks at the presuppositions of religion and critically evaluates their validity. Religious philosophy, on the other hand, is a philosophical rendering of religious faith and hence deals with it from the inside. It begins with accepting the presuppositions as being true and therefore received by faith. A Christian student of theology using philosophical methods of builds a *Christian philosophy*. As we have seen, its very possibility is contested but in my view it is a useful designation of a Christian worldview that integrates all knowledge into one whole.

It cannot be stressed too often that while creating such a holistic philosophical-theological thought-system we need to remember how they fared in the past: Augustine was marked by Platonism, Aquinas by Aristotelism, Schleiermacher by romanticism. Barth was influenced by Kierkegaard, Bultmann by Heidegger, theology of liberation takes some of its methods from Marxism... History teaches us not to be too self-assured in our methods.

### **Practical Assignment**

Try to analyse the thinking of your favourite author in theology from the standpoint of his/her theological usage of philosophy. How does it affect your attitude toward it?

### **Suggested Reading**

NAUGLE, D. K. *Worldview, The History of a Concept*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

VESEY, G. (ed.) *The Philosophy in Christianity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

GUNTON, C. E. *The One, the Three and the Many*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

WELLS, D. F. *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

## 2.10 PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

A very rewarding approach to philosophy is through a study and critique of the dominant plausibility structures of the modern society. It has a very practical effect on Christian witness. It not only provides topics that Christians should address, it also uncovers weaknesses in the commonly accepted means of communication. That is why a student of theology ought to make a special effort to understand *why* society is dominated by intellectual and other trends that are taken for granted and so never submitted to scrutiny. And although it is obvious that philosophy is not the only formative element in the dominant plausibility structures, it is certainly one of its main constitutive parts.<sup>264</sup>

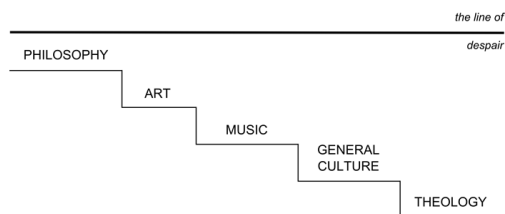
In Eastern Europe evangelical theological discourse done as a critique of society has a much weaker tradition than it does in the West. The very present danger is that we are blind to our own presuppositions.<sup>265</sup> It is a sad fact that theology (and the church) all too often merely reiterates, even if in different words those values that control the thoughts of the general public. Schaeffer in his book *God Who Is There* shows how theology is the last member in the chain of causation that is influenced by the reigning philosophical plausibility.<sup>266</sup>

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264 “To understand where we are in today’s world — in our intellectual ideas and in our cultural and political lives — we must trace three lines in history, namely, the philosophic, the scientific, and the religious.” (SCHAEFFER, F. *The Complete Works V*, p. 84)

265 “...the blindest of all the blind are those who are unable to examine their own presuppositions, and blithely imagine therefore that they do not possess any.” (BUTTERFIELD, H. *Christianity and History*, p. 46.)

266 SCHAEFFER, F. *The Complete Works I*, p. 8.



Schaeffer's Staircase

Being the last in chain means that theology holds conservative views the longest. But it may also mean it is the last one to understand what is really going on in the realm of ideas. For Schaeffer *the line of despair* was the point in history when western society gave up the search for truth. Currently, individualism, anthropocentrism and scientism are the sources of plausibility structures. They have practically become parts of the modern “confession of faith”. A critique of society, which deserves to be called “theological” must be capable of subjecting these presuppositions to an independent scrutiny on the basis of biblical cosmology, anthropology and soteriology.

For an effective theological critique of society, the student of theology also needs to get acquainted with several other fields of study. In addition to the history of ideas that tells us where we are on the timeline of the world history, we also need to have some grasp of economics, political theory, sociology and psychology. But this would take us too far from the immediate topic of our study.

### Practical Assignment

Tell what philosophical opinions you see working in politics, education, arts, economics, theology. Give concrete examples.

### Suggested Reading

STOTT, J. *Issues Facing Christians Today*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.  
COLSON, C. – PEARCEY, N. *How Now Shall We Live?* Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999.

CARSON, D. A. *The Gagging of God*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.  
GUINNESS, O. *The Last Christian on Earth*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010.  
GUINNESS, O. *A Free People's Suicide*, Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2012.

## 2.11 PHILOSOPHY ALMOST CONTEMPORARY

Contemporary academic philosophy is, to a large extent, a job description for the professional philosophers. To keep abreast of the truly *contemporary* philosophy is only possible by reading scholarly philosophical journals for which a student of theology is unlikely to have enough energy or even education.<sup>267</sup> The term “almost contemporary” in the title of this section thus suggests that the chapter does not deal with discussions between contemporary philosophers. Nevertheless, the student of theology should be aware of the extraordinarily complex tools in the current philosophical debate. To get acquainted with the topics and their implications for Christian faith we have to read some “translations” into accessible, popular language. Of course, it takes some time until some involved philosophical topic appears on the Internet or in print.

For an evangelical theologian, it is extremely important to understand how new philosophical ideas affect hermeneutics and the interpretation of the Bible. The time of descent down the “Schaeffer’s staircase” is getting shorter and theology is much more quickly affected by the goings-on in philosophy. This is why it is important, as soon as possible, to take note of those trends in philosophy whose application to theology leads to some biblically questionable and sometimes unacceptable results. Radical hermeneutics formed on the models of deconstruction, neo-pragmatism or reader-response theories offer methods of Bible interpretation which scholarly theology have to use or reject with a critical understanding. A

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267 “...there is much contemporary philosophy into which only someone trained in mathematics or physics or economics can hope to penetrate at all deeply.” (PASSMORE, J. *Recent Philosophers*, La Salle: Open Court, 1992, p. 11.)

vague *postmodernism* label has become a cliché that often covers up unwillingness to delve more deeply into the philosophical background of the newest approaches to Bible interpretation. Anthony Thiselton gives these characteristics of the contemporary situation:

...hermeneutics represents a fully meta-critical evaluation of the foundations, goals, and conditions of possibility for understanding. In this sense the discipline cannot strictly arise until after the emergence of transcendental questions in Kant and his successors. If critical thinking is said to take its rise from Descartes' replacing of trust by doubt in any methodological approach to tradition, hermeneutical thinking follows Kant's work on the limits of thought, and in most traditions also Dilthey's explorations of the role of the social flow of life as a condition for understanding. It also presupposes... the critique of language undertaken by such thinkers as Mauthner, Wittgenstein, Gadamer and others.<sup>268</sup>

For theology it is much more effective to discuss the issues within the field of philosophical starting points than dealing with conclusions reached by the exegetes who uncritically use them. And then it is useful to compare several expositions of the same biblical text that use different contemporary hermeneutical methods based on their determinative philosophy.

### **Practical Assignment**

Get acquainted with the contemporary philosophical currents. Go to the Internet and make a search for the latest trends in philosophical theology. Compare them with historical Christian theology.

### **Suggested Reading**

NOEBEL, D. A. *Understanding the Times*, Manitou Springs: Summit Press, 2008.

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268    THISELTON, A. C. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, p. 145.

- GRENZ, S. J. *A Primer on Postmodernism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- JACKSON, F. – SMITH, M. *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- BROWNING, G. – HALCLI, A. – WEBSTER, F. *Understanding Contemporary Society*, London: SAGE Publications, 2000.
- ERICKSON, M. J. – HELSETH, P. K. – TAYLOR, J. *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004.
- VANHOOZER, K. J. *Is there a meaning in this text?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

## **2.12 PHILOSOPHY AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

How can a Christian who desires to live a life in obedience to the Bible combine it with the pursuit of philosophy? This last gateway to philosophy presents the student of theology with a challenge to create a self-study plan aimed towards a critically thought through development of Christian worldview. Although it is a lifelong goal and cannot be achieved just by reading books, a bibliography can be useful to begin with. The topics can be divided into following parts:

### **I. Worldviews and Cultural Analysis**

### **II. Natural and Applied Sciences**

### **III. Humanities and Social Sciences**

### **IV. After School: Work and Leisure<sup>269</sup>**

By studying diverse topics and authors, the student develops sensitivity to sources of authority on which any set of arguments are built. Philosophy has no source of authority comparable to revelation in the Bible. Nevertheless, as we have seen, it provides methods and information on how to think critically, what are the common plausibility structures or

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<sup>269</sup> <https://www.cmu.ca/faculty/gmatties/BiblioWeCan'tLiveWithout.htm>



where our efforts in apologetics should be concentrated.

The study of philosophy is no task for those who have opted out of life. It is a fallacy to think that the only quality needed is impassive detachment. Much more than this is needed by those who would see through the clichés, half-truths, slogans and unquestioned assumptions which confront all of us every day. There are many unsolved problems. Courage, patience insight and ruthless integrity are required of those who would set about them. But because the Christian is convinced that God is the God of all truth, he will not lose heart.<sup>270</sup>

If such study is to lead to a formation of a man or woman of God, it must be done in a *pneumagomenic* way (see chapter 2). Philosophy requires a considerable investment of time and effort. Such investment ought to lead to a deeper understanding of the word of God, lest it become a negative influence in the study of theology and personal life.

### **Practical Assignment**

Go to the Internet site given above and choose your area of interest. Make a structured plan for the study of your selected subject(s).

### **Suggested Reading**

HARGREAVES, D. H. *Learning for Life*, Bristol: The Policy Press, 2004.

HOLMES, A. *Lifelong Learning*, Oxford: Capstone Publishing, 2002.

INOUE, Y. *Online Education for Lifelong Learning*, Hershey: Information Science Publishing, 2007.

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270 BROWN, C. *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968, p. 289.

## CONCLUSION

Clearly, there is no simple answer to the problem of how to relate theology to philosophy. However, it is not advisable to ignore the problem. There are several reasons why a student of theology should take the trouble to understand it.

In the first place, without some knowledge of philosophy, it is next to impossible to understand the history of dogma and the doctrines of systematic theology. Although the authoritative source of Christian theology is the Scripture, the terms in which many doctrines are set follow the thought patterns of philosophy.

Next there is the important skill of critical thinking. Philosophy is not just about worldviews, it also teaches rigorous logical thinking and rules of argumentation. These skills are important for any believer if believing is not to degenerate into easy-believism and faith into fideism.

Crucial for any evangelical believer is the skill to communicate the gospel in terms that are understood by the secular public. The secularist worldview is deeply imbedded in the soul of our contemporary neighbour. To answer the difficult questions of this widespread worldview requires some concentrated study of its history and presuppositions.

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