

**REDEEMING PHILOSOPHY**  
 Apologetics  
 Zavadka, 11th February 2023

Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν·

**Col 2:8** See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

τὰ γὰρ ὄπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικὰ ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων, λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες <sup>5</sup> καὶ πᾶν ὑψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ

**2 Co 10:4-5** For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments <sup>5</sup> and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

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### 0. INTRODUCTION

- “Philosophy” → “philosophia” (love for wisdom)

#### 0.1. PHILOSOPHY – AN EMPTY SPECULATION?

- [RUSSELL] “...the point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it.”
- A contrast to practical action?
- History: “natural philosophy” → into: physics, chemistry, geology, biology, etc.

- Today: [Alistair SINCLAIR *What Is Philosophy* p. 2] "...the **ultimate thinking** activity."
- [SURBER *What Is Philosophy* p. 13] ...philosophical reasons and arguments were adduced purporting to demonstrate that philosophy was, at best, a **confused** and, at worst, an ultimately **impossible** undertaking...

## 0.2. PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

- Origins of philosophy → Greece? non-religious mentality;
- [Robert CRAWFORD *What Is Religion?*] "Any beliefs which involve the acceptance of a sacred, transempirical realm and any behaviour designed to affect a person's **relationship** with that realm." (Peter Connolly *Approaches to the Study of Religion* p. 6)
- philosophy: rigorous *rational* development of ideas based on generally accessible data (five senses; non-religious information)

## 0.3. THE INEVITABLE QUESTIONS

- → philosophical:
  - What is truth? → What is wisdom?
  - Am I free? or determined?
  - Is the world eternal?
  - Is there reality "behind" our senses?
  - Is everything made of matter?
  - What is the meaning of life?
  - What is the difference between good and evil?
  - Is beauty in the eye of the observer only?
  - Is there a god?
- → theological (religious)
  - How can I find God?
  - How shall I be saved?
  - Who is God? (attributes)
  - What is holiness?

## 1. WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

- [philosophy is] ...*the pursuit of a description of reality at the most fundamental level.*
- The definition of CICERO, De Officiis ii. ii. §5, was considered authoritative: "Nec quicquam aliud est philosophia, si interpretari velis, praeter studium sapientiae; sapientia autem est rerum divinarum et humanarum causarumque quibus eae res continentur scientia."

...philosophy is nothing else, if one will translate the word into our idiom, than the love of wisdom. Wisdom, moreover, as the word has been defined by the philosophers of old, is the knowledge of things human and divine and of the causes by which those things are controlled."

### 1.1. METAPHILOSOPHY

- the branch of philosophy that asks what philosophy is → "**A philosophy of philosophy.**"
- [Routledge *Encyclopedia*] Rorty takes the three models of philosophy most attractive to contemporary philosophers to be the **scientific** (Carnap), the **poetic** (Heidegger) and the **political** (Dewey); he endorses the last as most congenial to pragmatism.

### 1.2. QUESTIONS, METHODS, ANSWERS

#### 1.2.1. QUESTIONS (PROBLEMS)

- many in common with religion
- **Children** ask philosophical questions: (HONER-HUNT-OKHOLM)
  - Why is it wrong to tell a lie?

- Where do people go when they die?
- How can you tell when something is really true?
- If I live in a free country, why can't I do whatever I want to?
- FIELDS of philosophy:



### 1.2.2. METHODS

- central idea, the starting point with an “ism”: → *rationalism*, *empiricism*, *naturalism*, *solipsism*,
- logic; argumentation; research; ...
- Definitions, Axioms, Deduction, Induction, Consistency, law of non—contradiction
- (religion: prayer; prophecy; worship; sacred books study...)

### 1.2.3. ANSWERS

- anthropocentric; scientific; “elements of the world” (Col 2:8)
- pantheism; panpsychism; pan-entheism; atheism...

## 1.3. THEOLOGICAL METHODS

- God speaks (SCHAEFFER *He Is There and He Is not Silent*) → theology begins with God’s initiative...
- Hearing → **faith** (Rom 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.)
- regeneration (*theologia regenitorum*) → John 3:3 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
- submission (vs. “control”) → Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
- hermeneutics/exegesis → 2 Tim 3:15 ...the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus

## 2. IS A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY POSSIBLE?

- yes – if we allow theological methods in it...

### 2.1. EARLY CHURCH

- Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165)

[*Dialogue 8*] ...those men who are **the friends of Christ**; and reflecting with myself on what I had heard, I saw that theirs was the only sure and valuable philosophy:

- Tertullian (c.155-c.220)

[*Liber De Praescriptione Haereticorum*] philosophy ...worldly wisdom, that rash (*temeraria*) interpreter of the Divine Nature and Order. ...heresies are themselves instigated (*subornantur*) by philosophy

**What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?** (Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? quid academiae et ecclesiae? quid haereticis et christianis?)

### 2.2. SCHOLASTICISM

- Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)
- a synthesis of Christian teaching and Aristotelian philosophy.

### 2.3. THE REFORMATION

- Martin Luther (1483-1546)

[the last sermon] But since the devil 's bride, Reason, that pretty whore, comes in and thinks she's wise, and what she says, what she thinks, is from the Holy Spirit, who can help us, then? Not judges, not doctors, no king ...

## 2.4. MODERN

- Blaise Pascal (1623- 1662) **The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know.**  
FEU. « DIEU d'Abraham, DIEU d'Isaac, DIEU de Jacob » **non des philosophes** et des savants. Certitude. Certitude. Sentiment. Joie. Paix. DIEU de Jésus-Christ.

## 2.5. CONTEMPORARY

- Karl Barth (1886–1968)  
[*Church Dogmatics I-2*, p. 728] It is, therefore, a grotesque comedy, in which it is better not to take part, that again and again there are those who think that they can point with outstretched finger to all others past and present, accusing them of falling victim to this or that philosophy, while they themselves abide wholly by the facts, relying on their two sound eyes. No one does that, for no one can. It is no more true of anyone that he does not mingle the Gospel with some philosophy, than that here and now he is free from all sin except through faith.
- postmodernism
- [Stanley GRENZ *A Primer on Postmodernism*, p. 202] “The postmodern situation requires that we embody the gospel in a manner that is (1) post-individualistic, (2) post-rationalistic, (3) post-dualistic, and (4) postnoeticentric.”

## 3. WHAT ABOUT SECULAR PHILOSOPHIES?

- [Thomas SZASZ *The Second Sin*] “In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined.”  
[LEBENS *Philosophy of Religion*] → questions  
What is religion?  
What philosophical problems arise for the practices of prayer, worship, and meditation?  
How might multiple religions co-exist in peace?  
If there's a God, would it be the sort of thing that language could describe?  
When and how might it be rational to wager that a particular religion is true?

### 3.1. WHAT IS “ON THE TABLE?”

- [SCHAEFFER *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*] Somebody once brilliantly said that when you get done with any **basic questions**, there are **not many** people in the room. By this he meant that the farther you go in depth in any basic question, finally the choices to be made are rather simple and clear.
- SIRE *The Universe Nextdoor (Za novými světy)* → (1) Christian Theism, (2) Deism, (3) Naturalism, (4) Nihilism, (5) Existentialism, (6) Eastern Pantheistic Monism, (7) The New Age, (8) Postmodernism.
- David NOEBEL *Understanding the Times* → contending worldviews
  - (1) Christian – (2) Islamic – (3) Secular Humanist – (4) Marxist-Leninist – (5) Cosmic Humanist – (6) Postmodern
  - areas for study: (1) Theology, (2) Philosophy, (3) Ethics, (4) Biology, (5) Psychology, (6) Sociology, (7) Law, (8) Politics, (9) Economics, (10) History.

### 3.2. APOLOGETICS

- **1 Peter 3:15** always being prepared to make a defense (ἑτοιμοὶ εἶναι πρὸς ἀπολογία)
- the prophets understood and pilloried idolatries of the Israelites...
- using philosophical approach we have to defend the faith in:

#### 3.2.1. ONTOLOGY: DEFENSE AGAINST MONISM

- the idolatry of NATURE (explanations through the “elements” of the world → Col 2:8)
- there is no transcendence inaccessible to human mind → *God in the Dock* (C. S. LEWIS)

### 3.2.2. EPISTEMOLOGY: DEFENSE AGAINST SKEPTICISM

- the idolatry of REASON (lingering rationalism)
- the pride of *knowledge*... → scientism
- the unbelief of *dead conscience*... → spiritual inertia

### 3.2.3. AXIOLOGY: DEFENSE AGAINST DEVALUING OF VALUES

- scales: (1) good-evil, (2) beautiful-ugly, (3) sublime-ordinary (MISSING!)
- egalitarianism → from politics (democracy) to philosophy and religion (NIETZSCHE: revaluation of all values or transvaluation of all values (German: Umwertung aller Werte))  
[https://www.vision4living.org/blog/the-devaluing-of-values] In reality, we should not be surprised that a society which has become so comfortable with the elevation of choice and convenience over life and responsibility would find itself confronted with the moral horror of baby parts for sale. Minds and souls that find life so cheap and choice so valuable have ceased to impose the restraint that causes society and individuals to make selfless, sacrificial, and loving choices. When sex is a toy to be played with at will and babies are an interruption to the fun of the toy, any choice that preserves the toy is understandable and even preferable. One cannot help but wonder how far we are from removing the other inconvenience to our **fun**, **comfort**, and **convenience**: the elderly. In such an environment, who's to say that their lives are any more valuable than those of unborn babies.
- → inability to WORSHIP...

### 3.3. USEFUL KNOWLEDGE FOR CONTACT

- Paul in Athens → Acts 17
- **2Cor 10:4-5** For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments (λογισμούς)<sup>5</sup> and every lofty opinion (πᾶν ὑψώμα) raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...
- C. S. LEWIS → *Mere Christianity* answering hopelessness in the time of WW2  
[Foreword] As a young man, C. S. Lewis had served in the awful trenches of World War I, and in 1940, when the bombing of Britain began, he took up duties as an air raid warden and gave talks to men in the Royal Air Force, who knew that after just thirteen bombing missions, most of them would be declared dead or missing. Their situation prompted Lewis to speak about the problems of suffering, pain, and evil, work that resulted in his being invited by the BBC to give a series of wartime broadcasts on Christian faith. Delivered over the air from 1942 to 1944, these speeches eventually were gathered into the book we know today as *Mere Christianity*.
- LEWIS: *The Pilgrim's Regress* → how philosophies affect life
- Francis SCHAEFFER → *The God Who Is There*, communicating with the young generation of the sixties and seventies
  - existentialism of Sartre, Camus...
- Charles COLSON → *How Now Shall We Live*, building the Christian worldview
- Os GUINNESS → *Free People's Suicide*, critique of American popular culture...

[Colin BROWN *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, p. 289] 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 cliches, half-truths, slogans and unquestioned assumptions which confront all of us every day.

- We spoke of it before: (1) anthropocentrism, (2) individualism, (3) scientism, (4) secularism

## 4. TO REMEMBER

- Philosophy as understood in common language is based on generally available sense-data, no revelation.
- Christian philosophy uses philosophical methods (e.g. logic) in light of the faith in God and his revelation.
- Knowing secular philosophies is useful for defense (apologetics) and also for evangelism