1. PHILOSOPHY IS NOT VALUABLE (UNTIL IT IS)

1.1 Philosophy Requires More Than Facts

PHILOSOPHY (Short):[1]
Excellent thinking.

PHILOSOPHY (Long):
The history and collection of skills that constitute excellent thinking — analytical and synthetic reasoning, empirical sensitivity, self-awareness, the ability to understand complex concepts, and a profound grasp of reality, knowledge, beauty, and the ethics.

Philosophy has no value if you aren't unsettled by a question. But propelled by some question — an ethical "issue," a theological dilemma, political disagreement, a problem in your family system, or even your own existential fears — then philosophy becomes relevant. What you must have in order for philosophy to become valuable to you is a reason for it to become valuable. The ethics of integrating church practice with LGBTQ concerns, the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, the obligations of a government to its people and vice versa, the effects of your parent's divorce or your brother's death on your soul, the nature of your dark and lonely depression which grips you — these are questions in disguise. These are philosophical muses. Our soul, if we are aware enough — if we care enough — is a cauldron of philosophical need.[2]

Philosophy "can never be what it aims to be" without a compelling existential dilemma which must be supplied by the would-be philosopher.[3] Satisfaction and contentment do not breed depth of thought. Pain and conflict in one's autobiography are more likely sources. It's no surprise that more political revolutions have been catalyzed by philosophical novels than by philosophical treatises. We owe more of the shape of our world to the consideration of subjective realities perceived by certain

[1] It is worth noting that in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, there is no article on "Philosophy" itself. The reason for this, the editor Robert Audi notes, is that "no short definition of philosophy is adequate. It will not do to define 'philosophy' in the etymological way many have, as 'the love of wisdom': granting that it is natural for philosophers to love wisdom and for many lovers of wisdom to be inspired to pursue philosophy, a lover of wisdom can be quite unphilosophical, and even a good philosopher can be wise in at most a few domains of inquiry." He then goes on to say that reading the entire dictionary "will probably yield a much better indication of what philosophy is than we could expect from even a thousand-word entry." Robert Audi, "Preface to the First Edition" in Robert Audi (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 1999), xxix [xxvii-xxxii]. This strikes me as lazy — a self-excused inability to define or describe the very discipline which the entire work claims as its reason for existence, a philosophical problem in its own right.

[2] It is possible that, in reading philosophy, you will discover some reason, some need. But we should be careful — what the ancients labeled "muse," we in the 21st century tend to label "madness:" "Somewhere around the eighteenth century, culture's way of thinking about unusual experiences altered markedly. What was once revelation and inspiration became symptom and pathology. What was piety and poetry became science and sanity." Daniel B. Smith, *Muses, Madmen, and Prophets; Rethinking the History, Science, and Meaning of Auditory Hallucination* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 14.

[3] Allen Wood explains the fundamental problem of philosophy well: "Philosophy … is condemned to be a form of critical thinking which aims at practical transformation of the world but remains essentially divorced from that world. Philosophy succumbs to its own dialectic: to understand what it *is* is to understand why it can never be what it aims to be." Allen Wood, "Philosophy: Enlightenment Apology, Enlightenment Critique" in C. P. Ragland and Sarah L. Heidt (eds.), *What is Philosophy?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 113 [96-120].

individuals than objective, abstract realities perceived in the universe. "The greatness of a philosophy is measured by the nature of the events to which its concepts summon us or that it enables us to release in concepts."[4]

Facts are worthless in and of themselves. But if facts can grip the heart, they become a door to an entire world of value.

1.2 Philosophy Can Turn Our Existence Upside-Down

> EXISTENTIAL: Authentic and self-determined felt experience (as opposed to fabricated or imposed determination of our felt experience).

Immanuel Kant, who many would say is the Darth Vader of philosophy, said this about the philosophical task:

> "One cannot learn any philosophy; for where is it, who has possession of it, by what can it be recognized? We can only learn to philosophize, i.e., to exercise the talent of reason in prosecuting its general principles in certain experiments that come to hand, but always with the reservation of the right of reason to investigate the sources of these principles themselves and to confirm or reject them."[5]

The principles must always be allowed to overthrow the principles in charge if they work better for reality — regardless of whether or not they work better for us. Mere fact-knowing is not a significant power. More valuable in the 21st century is the ability to do knowledge work — the labor of connecting the dots, and implementing those connections; to use knowledge. But this is dangerous work — the work of being open to having our deepest understandings about the world changed, even the idea that we ought to have an understanding of the world. This is why it is important to understand that philosophy should not be conceived as a "thing," but as a set of skills. By honing the skills of philosophy, work becomes more efficient, effective, and meaningful. Goals become more meaningfully rooted in their motivations. Complex realities come into harmony with the more elemental ones.[6] This is the work of philosophy, and if we find it to be meaningful, it is not without consequences for us. But the danger in all of this, is that philosophy turns our lives around, and we have no control over it. When the urge to philosophize finally seizes us, we don't have control over where it will throw us.

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[4] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (New York: Verso, 1991, 1994), 34. They earlier comment on the relationship between the concept of "concept" ("the philosophical concept") and the discipline of philosophy: "Science needs only propositions or functions, whereas philosophy, for its part, does not need to invoke a lived that would give only a ghostly and extrinsic life to secondary, bloodless concepts. The philosophical concept does not refer to the lived, by way of compensation, but consists, through its own creation, in setting up an event that surveys the whole of the lived no less than every state of affairs. Every concept shapes and reshapes the event in its own way." Ibid., 33-34.

[5] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen w. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 694 (A838/B886).

[6] Cal Newport encourages those in "knowledge work" to pursue depth for the sake of its effect on the rest of life: "To embrace deep work in your own career, and to direct it toward cultivating your skill, is an effort that can transform a knowledge work job from a distracted, draining obligation into something satisfying—a portal to a world full of shining, wondrous things." Cal Newport, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 91.

Philosophical inspiration can be powerful — even too powerful for us. The working of philosophical profundity into our consciousness "enacts a seizure of psychic power oriented towards the future."[7] It is too much for some. René Descartes, for instance, arguably the inventor of modern philosophy, suffered chronic nervous breakdowns, spiraling in and out of sanity.[8]

Many Christians who begin to read philosophy leave their Christian beliefs behind. That's one of philosophy's important skills — the excellent challenging of our own assumptions — and it is not a bad thing. Christians should not be afraid of atheist philosophers bringing difficult arguments against their beliefs, not because difficult objections to Christianity don't exist, but because Christians should be doing that to themselves already.[9] Philosophy doesn't require us to be self-critical in a sadistic, self-deprecating sense. Rather, if we conceive philosophy as a kind of a kind of "self care" — in the same way that brushing teeth is an inconvenient process to maintain hygiene, and exercise is a form of painful self-care because it relieves psychological stress and maintains physiological capacity — so also self-criticism is a way to care for ourselves by ensuring that we are aligned with truth.[10]

Jennifer Michael Hecht, in her book *Doubt*, summarizes it this way: "Thus the birth of philosophy is, in itself, one of the origins of doubt—when empirical, rational thinking becomes a goal unto itself, that means people have developed a system for checking whether an idea has a foundation outside plain faith. This sort of checking keeps valuing those ideas that have a demonstrable foundation and scuttling the rest. The very behavior gets one into the habit of devaluing beliefs that have no describable, rational foundation."[11]

One example of the way this works out is in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," in which he observes: "Silence was the greatest secularism of all."[12] Moreover, "Every

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[7] Timothy Clark, *The Theory of Inspiration: Composition as a Crisis of Subjectivity in Romantic and Post-Romantic Writing* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 50.

[8] Stephen Gaukroger comments, "Descartes was in fact in a state of considerable nervous anxiety." Moreover, regarding the diagnosis of melancholia as becoming "a savadge creature, haunting the shadowed places, suspicious, solitarie, enemie to the sunne," Gaukroger comments that Descartes' behavior has "a striking similarity to the symptoms of the disease described here." Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 110.

[9] I do this, for instance, in that in one article, I defend the coherence of a classical Christian view of God, and in another I critique it. Neither requires me to abandon my faith, but I felt obligated by my conscience in both instances to pursue truth, even though the first direction directed me to defend a certain tradition, and the other to unveil ways in which it felt incoherent. See Paul C. Maxwell, "Is Reformed Orthodoxy a Possible Exception to Matt McCormick's Critique of Classical Theism? An Exploration of God's Presence and Consciousness," *Philo* (Published by the Council for Secular Humanism) 15, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2012): 113-126; idem, "The Formulation of Thomistic Simplicity: Mapping Aquinas's Method for Configuring God's Essence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 2 (2014): 371-403.

[10] Aristotle states that listening to the rebuke of a logical argument is like listening to the advice of a doctor. Michel Foucault insisted that we must cultivate a habit of self-criticism in order to develop a "point of resistance" to the opposite of extremes of normalization and estrangement. Self-criticism keeps at bay "everything which separates the individual, breaks his link with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way." Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer, 1982): 781 [777-795]. See Christian Iftode, "Foucault's Idea of Philosophy as 'Care of the Self:' Critical Assessment and Conflicting Metaphilosophical Views," *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences* 71 (2013): 76-85.

[11] Jennifer Michael Hecht, *Doubt: A History: The Great Doubters and Their Legacy of Innovation from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 4.

[12] Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," in *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Signet, 2000), 80 [64-84]. Indeed, this resonates with Dominic Erdozain's observation that "religious cultures often embody the secular values that they profess to deny." Dominic Erdozain, *The Soul of Doubt: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.

day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust."[13] Here, we have an example of something called "Christianity" acting in a way that conflicts with certain of its fundamental ideologies — and so, King had a choice to make: declassify the incoherent ideology of its Christian name, or accept its classification as truly Christian and reject it. He chose to declassify it and call it "secularism."

What makes this pertinent is the notion that we must reshape our language for the most basic realities of the universe constantly — even our faith. Sometimes we must even reject the realities themselves. Philosophy provides the vehicle to maneuver through the storms of evil, contingency, and inconsistency in the world we perceive. The world will consistently provide interpreted data to the consciousness that conflicts with Christian theology. The task before us, and the skills required to competently undertake it, is whether we will accept these interpretations, or patiently re-interpret the data in order to find its home within Christian theology.

The tools that philosophy provides for this task are neutral, and they do whatever the user tells them to do. Logic doesn't dictate whether or not there is a God — but it will say what its user tells it to say in the name of "rationality." The same goes for "experience." And the same even goes, to a lesser degree, for "The Bible says." In all of these ways, philosophy is a frightening and unpredictable minefield of power, and in no way is that a bad thing.[14]

1.3 Meaning vs. Meaningfulness of Life

> RATIONALITY (Short): Being reasonable.
> RATIONALITY (Long): The practice of right reasoning, based on both facts and the interpretation of those facts in accordance with the principles of logic.

Philosophy can improve your mental health. For example, John Russon, writing on the relationship between philosophy and neurosis, comments, the "practice of therapy is ultimately realized as the intersubjective practice of phenomenological philosophy." Explained in more explicit detail:

> "Neurosis is an intrinsically contradictory lived interpretive stance, and the distress marks the conflict of interpretations: the distress reveals the polemical and argumentative nature of the lived theses. The resolution to this distress will amount to a testing—really, a self-testing—of these commitments as truth-claims: caring for—"curing"—this situation will ultimately amount to bringing to explicitude the interpretive commitments that are manifest as the neurotic behavior, discerning their implications, working to establish the soundness or unsoundness of these interpretive values, and engaging in practices to develop an habituation to an alternative (defensible and desirable) interpretive stance."[15]

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[13] King Jr., "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," 80.

[14] Richard Rorty makes the point rather brilliantly that this "power" is not in fact "real," but defended by philosophers in order that they might retain their authority on matters of knowledge. For Rorty, the power within philosophy is power bestowed by those who speak about it. And the same goes for meaning in knowledge everywhere — "truth" is something the speaker bestows upon a claim in order to grant it a higher epistemic status, when in fact the purpose of the word "truth" is merely to advance one's own perspective deemed truthful. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[15] John Russon, *Human Experience: Philosophy, Neurosis, and the Elements of Everyday Life*, A Volume in the SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 129-

To whatever degree this is true, in reading this, the commonsense intuition is undeniable that this is true *in some sense*. We are not merely victims of our internal physiology or our external circumstances. If that is true, what makes us responsible for our experiences? Russon insists, it is our capacity to philosophize. It is the skill therapists rely upon when we enter the counseling room. It is the skill employers expect when they hire us: to be rational — and more, to be consistently, coherently rational about the endless waves of irrational experiences that come crashing into our lives every day. People don't make sense to us. God doesn't make sense to us. *We* don't make sense to us. Then why not despair? Because there are tools to begin to make sense of these things. There are things we can do to find meaning out of the smallest chaos to the biggest questions of life.

The question is not "What is the meaning of life?" Surely you can spat out some answer about glorifying God forever, but the reason that has so little lasting emotional impact for so many is because the question isn't a very good one. Of course, you might agree (or disagree) with John Piper's reading of the Westminster Confession of Faith[16] that the purpose of life is to glorify God by enjoying him forever, but the better question is not "*What* is the meaning of life?" but "*How* can (or does) life mean something to us?"[17] Here, we shift our own task in philosophy from trying to fabricate existential unction somewhere inside of us about the glory of God, to finding our existential propulsion[18] — where is it, and what is it about, and where does that point and order our lives in God's world where our existence brings him glory? That's a different way of doing philosophy. And learning to do philosophy makes that question of "How" life is meaningful *our very own question* that we ask ourselves. And, when we begin to find answers, asking that question becomes a foundational habit of life itself.

The study of philosophy can be used personally. Talk therapy is categorically the same thing as *good* philosophy. That carries implications for both our therapy and our philosophy.

1.4 Do I "Have To" Believe Something?

SITUATED RATIONALITY: The rules of being reasonable are relative to each person's situation.
DOXASTIC OBLIGATION: The ethical burden to believe something.
DOXASTIC VOLUNTARISM: The view that belief is a product of the will — a choice.[19]

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130. We should note that this is a philosophical construal of cognitive therapy. There are other practical therapies which would take issue with the weight Russon here gives conscious and discursive knowledge in the therapeutic process of "curing" healing mental illness — essentially, equating an ability to perform calculated, syllogistic reasoning with an ability to overcome mental illness. This will be explored in depth later.

[16] John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, Revised Edition (Sisters, OR: 1986, 2011), 17.

[17] This distinction is found in Julian Baggini, *What's It All About? Philosophy and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 166.

[18] It will prove interesting to reflect on Owen Flanagan's quote: "The worst question to ask is 'What is *the* meaning of life?' There is no single meaning of life. Persons naturally engage in psycho-poetic performances in which and by which they seek to make sense of things and to live meaningfully." Is he, in any Christian sense, correct? From a metaphysical perspective, Christians may claim that he is missing some data about the "chief end of man." But from a psychological perspective, is his claim that counterintuitive to the Christian's life in the world? Owen Flanagan, *The Really Hard Problem: Meaning in a Material World* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 201.

[19] Ronney Mourad offers a simple and succinct explanation: "If a belief is a disposition to apprehend some state of affairs as real or to think of some proposition as true, then it is sometimes possible for us to choose to believe. Voluntary choices are possible only if our evidence underdetermines or overdetermines our beliefs, and by choosing them, we aim to achieve some purpose other than holding true propositions and avoiding false ones. Since voluntary beliefs are possible, it

INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES: The practices of inquiry which fortify the accuracy of its results.

In a sense, computers can do philosophy.[20] In theory, we could teach IBM's Watson — a computer that "learns" and "does" (through executing algorithms) the skill — not only of beating Chess Grandmasters or interpreting healthcare metadata, but executing algorithms that will compute more elemental philosophical inquiries such as "the meaning of life."[21]

We should, however, note that one philosopher of artificial intelligence (AI) suggests that AI would be impossible if there is anything necessarily immaterial to the constitution of human intelligence.[22] Thus, if there is anything computational about philosophy, it's not difficult to conceive its task being carried out by a computer. Yet, if the human intelligence is anything more than material, and if there is anything distinctly human about philosophy, then we have a task before us that only *humans* can perform. Think about your time at Moody. Could a computer do what you're doing here? Could it get a 4.0 GPA? Yes. Could it figure out how to talk to a girl? Yes. Could it find the code that allows you to assimilate into the popular crowd that sits at the circle-tables in the cafeteria? Yes. Could it learn how to learn languages and translate the Bible into those languages? Most definitely.

So, what are you doing here? How are you not completely replaceable in the next hundred years? How are you any different from a McDonald's cashier who's going to be obsolete in twenty years? I hope that in this class, you somehow find internal access to your humanity. Only there will you find your true sense of calling. You don't have to do something irreplaceable. But whatever you do, if you ever want to do anything in your daily life (and ultimately *with* your life) more than execute algorithms, philosophy can help.

There is in fact a great distinction between humans and computers. Computers merely execute algorithms. Humans must make a distinction between the laws of logic (possibly tied as they might be to some immutable aspect of the universe) and the practices of inquiry (possibly tied as they might be to the unavoidable mutability required by human finitude). This has implications for the ethics of knowledge in general, and the ethics of belief in particular. Can you say to someone "You ought to

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makes sense to talk about regulating them. We have a prima facie moral obligation to refrain from choosing beliefs in pursuit of goals other than truth, and this obligation is grounded in the values of consistency and honesty." Ronney Mourad, "Choosing to Believe" in Eugene Thomas Long and Patrick Horn (eds.), *Ethics of Belief: Essays in Tribue to D.Z. Phillips* (New York: Springer, 2008), 69 [55-69].

[20] Artificial intelligence is philosophical explication turned into computer programs. The limitation of the computer program parallels the limitation of philosophical theory." Clark Glymour, "Artificial Intelligence is Philosophy" in J. H. Fetzer (ed.) *Aspects of Artificial Intelligence*, Studies in Cognitive Systems (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 195-208.

[21] Dr. Jesse Hoey, a professor and researcher of AI, believes that Watson cannot be taught to meet the emotional needs of humans, or replace humans. Yet, it is unclear why learning emotional intelligence would be different from learning intellectual intelligence, especially because of the multiple ways humans colloquially and subconsciously quantify emotional interaction. Thus, Watson's (or as imilar program's) ability to solve existential problems does not seem to rest on a qualitative distinction between machine and human, but a temporal quantitative distinction between the present and the future. See Adam Miller, "The Future of Health Care Could be Elementary with Watson," *CMAJ* 2013, 185, no. 9 (June 11th, 2013): E367-E368; Jennifer L. Malin, "Envisioning Watson As a Rapid-Learning System for Oncology," *Journal of Oncology Practice* 9, no. 3 (May 2013): 155-157. See also Eric Topol, *The Creative Destruction of Medicine: How the Digital Revolution Will Create Better Health Care* (New York: Basic, 2012). We might ask Topol: What about mental health, particularly as it is connected so explicitly with philosophical concerns, on both medical and experiential sides?

[22] John Haugeland, *Artificial Intelligence: The Very Idea* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1985), 255n3

believe this?" Nicholas Wolterstorff says "No."[23] (Quickly: Wolterstorff rejects the notion that we ought to believe any one thing [doxastic obligation], because he rejects the idea that we can choose what we believe about everything [doxastic volunatism]).

There is no such thing as "What you ought to believe" in the abstract (an idea we will learn more about when we study Rationalism). There is no such thing as a universal intellectual obligation. There only exist obligations relative to individuals in certain contexts with certain levels of awareness and maturity. In like manner, each person is responsible for their own intellectual development. Parents are charged with cultivating lawful children, teachers are charged with instruction and cultivating character, and peers are empowered by ethical competitiveness and camaraderie. But when faced with the impossible tasks of life, or the job interview, or a debate, or a pulpit, or a mission field, there only exists what each one has learned, and what he or she has done with it. Philosophy rewards both learning and doing with information and empowerment — if we put in the work of study and deep thought to make it actionable for ourselves.

Thus, if we want to be more than calculated extensions of the little cultures of power around us, we must do the one thing that the universe gives us which it does not give machines: an ethical obligation to ourselves, and to God.[24] But what those obligations are have overlap and variegation from person to person.

When we study a topic, we become responsible to integrate it into our lives. A machine is obligated to integrate what it learns into its operations because, we might guess for now in this initial lecture, it lacks the human components which make that integration a choice — it lacks free will, and therefore lacks moral responsibility. On "ethical and religious concepts such as honesty, justice, love, God, sin, and faith," Linda Zagzebski writes, "If a writer on these topics leaves aside the way these concepts may apply to himself, he is leaving out an essential aspect of their use and hence is guilty of a conceptual error."[25] Our knowledge promotes us to a higher tier of responsibility in the world around us. The same must be said also of rationality — to study logic is to accept the constraints logic may place upon us.[26]

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[23] Thus, if we conceive of rationality is a universal phenomenon defined in each place entirely by social convention, we arrive at what Wolterstorff calls "situated rationality:" "My own view is that there are no purely intellectual obligations; the practices of inquiry that one is obligated to employ are a function of one's obligations in general. And the obligations that one has vary from person to person depending on one's situation: one's maturity, one's role in society, the state of knowledge in one's society, and so forth." Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, "Foreword" in Nathan D. Shannon, *Shalom and the Ethics of Belief: Nicholas Wolterstorff's Theory of Situated Rationality* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), viii [vii-ix].

[24] Pushing these boundaries, AI can in fact practice "situated rationality," and showcase the radically subjective factors of individuated experience — which raises, for instance, the concept of *programmable virtue*. See Francisco J. Varela, *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom, and Cognition* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 58-59; Peter Danielson, *Virtuous Robots for Virtual Games* (New York: Routledge, 2002). However, a machine cannot breach the gap of epistemology and metaphysics — if humans are merely materials, than by means known to us, machines can never become human in a sense that is meaningful beyond perception.

[25] Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 333.

[26] In other words, it is too strong to say that we are morally obligated to believe everything we know. We cannot with exacting precision calculate all of our activities from our assumptions. What we perceive to be (Our "Is") does not always follow, at a psychological level, to what we choose to do (Our "ought.") To the degree that our "is" determines our "ought," we have a working concept of rationality. Zagzebski comments, "Some intellectual virtues have to do more with the quality of the knowledge than with its quantity, and knowledge is also something that admits of higher and lower quality." Ibid., 315.

We call this whole project "the pursuit of intellectual virtue." Aristotle breaks the intellectual virtues down into five categories: The Theoretical ([1] wisdom, [2] scientific knowledge, and [3] logic), the practical ([4] prudence), and the Productive ([5] technical knowledge). He also praises the skills of deliberation, sensibility, decisiveness, and cleverness.[27] These realms of knowledge are the places of learning we find ourselves obligated to "reason rightly." What's the most sharp criticism somebody could give you in a conversation? "You're being irrational." But what is rationality? It is the coherent embodiment of this constellation of knowledges in a given situation.

Wolterstorff calls this subjective understanding of rationality "situated rationality." Situated rationality determines what we think is reasonable, because "our noetic obligations arise from the whole diversity of obligations that we have in our concrete situations."[28] In other words, "obligations to employ practices of inquiry are *personally situated* obligations."[29] The notion that we must be purely "logical" creatures is not only impractical and unrealistic, but restricts the *ways* that we can practice intelligence and rationality to certain rules, rather than extending rationality to more diverse forms of inquiry, relative to each person's situation.

We ought to be "philosophical" in *this* way: *we ought to be rational*. Put in terms of what philosophers call "deontological ethics" (right and wrong defined as *obligation*), we are obligated to be rational. Construed as a virtue: becoming rational is our best shot at bringing the highest quality of enjoyment into the world, for ourselves and others. But it goes a level deeper.

Wolterstorff applies this notion of situated rationality to what philosophers call "doxastic" obligation — which is, inquiry about what we ought to *believe*. For all of these things, while we might not yet come to a conclusion about *for what* knowledge we are responsible, we can begin here: we are responsible for our own knowledge, and we *ought* to know what we know in the most excellent manner available to us.

Thus, we reject any "ought" someone may put on us relative to any piece of knowledge, but we invite proper "ought" to be required of us relative to our manner of knowing. In other words, in principle, no one can ever require us to believe something in this way: "In order to be rational, you must believe this," because that would reflect an impoverished understanding of the diversity of personal situatedness. But it *is* proper to be required to "be rational," and that is where we must begin.

What do you think? Is there such a thing as doxastic obligation?

1.5 Is God a Certainty?

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[27] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hacket, 2014), intelligence (*nous*, 6.6), scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*, 6.3), wisdom (*sophia*, 6.7), prudence (*phonēsis*, 6.5), technical knowledge and art (*technē*, 6.4), understanding (*synesis*, 6.10), good sense (*gnōmē*, 6.11). See Irene Zavattero, "Moral and Intellectual Virtues in the Earliest Latin Commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*," in István P. Bejczy (ed.), *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics, *1200-1500* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 31-54. Zavattero highlights the distinction between infused virtues and acquired virtues — "according to the theologians, man is only the source of evil, not of good. In order to act rightly, it is necessary that the 'First Intelligence' infuse *rectia ratio* into our intellect. Right reason, the criterion of reasonableness by which man chooses to act for a useful and right end, is accordingly removed form the responsibility of man, and the credit for every good action is traced back to God's goodness. Therefore, according to theologians, the infused *habitus* precedes every good action, while in the opinion of philosophers the *habitus* arises from good actions produces by the will of man." Ibid., 35.

[28] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Can Belief in God Be Rational If It Has No Foundations?" in *Practices of Belief: Selected Essays, Volume 2*, ed. Terence Cuneo (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 231 [217-264].

[29] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Entitlement to Believe and Practices of Inquiry" in *Practices of Belief*, 111 [86-117].

PRINCIPIUM ESSENDI: God himself, the foundation of our existence.
PRINCIPIUM COGNOSCENDI EXTERNUM: God's revelation in Scripture.
PRINCIPIUM COGNOSCENDI INTERNUM: The witness of the Holy Spirit.

"It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth a man's mind to atheism;
but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion."[30]

Christians usually relegate the role of philosophy to its utility for the apologetic task — for defending the faith ("polemic theology"[31] it was called in the 19th century). Yet, while there are many views on this issue,[32] this relegation of philosophy to apologetics has in a backward way made it more conceptually foundational than Scripture itself to the Christian proponent's access to religious certainty. This, it seems to me, would be an error.[33]

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), a Dutch Reformed theologian and philosopher, critiqued Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who is often called "the Father of modern liberal theology,"[34] for "his rigorous separation of dogmatics and apologetics, of theology and philosophy."[35] Bavinck thought it erroneous the notion that "whether Christianity was the true religion lay outside the reach of dogmatics," that "its sole task was to set forth positively the elements of Christian piety."[36] Yet elsewhere, Bavinck insists, "theology, as an independent scientific enterprise, has its own first principles and does not borrow them from philosophy."[37]

When I was in college, I was in agony over which soteriology was true: Calvinism, or Arminianism. And when I thought I had settled on a Bible text that, for me, proved the Calvinist position, an Arminian friend of mine came to me in our Culby lounge, and said: "Actually, that passage is debated." I felt so defeated. I thought I had it figured out based on this one piece of evidence, and then

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[30] Francis Bacon, "Of Atheism," in Brian Vickers (ed.), *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, Oxford World's Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 2002), 371 [371-373]. Herman Bavinck quotes a nearly identical version of this Baconianism, but (perhaps) errantly attributes it to German Roman Catholic apologist Joseph Görres (1776–1848). Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2: 56. Vriend translates Bavinck's citation it more poetically: "Perhaps small sips taken in philosophy lead a person to atheism, but fuller draughts will bring him back to religion."

[31] See the section "Warfield as a Polemic Theologian" in Fred G. Zaspel, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 551ff.

[32] While the whole notion of "philosophical foundations for a Christian worldview" seems (perhaps not necessarily) to imply that philosophical axioms have more epistemic say in Christian belief than Scripture itself, the content of this book is superb, and the first chapter "What is Philosophy?" is probably the best introductory chapter I've ever read detailing the multiple ways the study of philosophy can aid the Christian life: J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 11-27.

[33] My own personal view is called "Presuppositionalism," which can be found explained in the following works: Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 2nd ed., ed. William Edgar (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1976, 2003); Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings & Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1998); idem, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith* (Nacodoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 1996); K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles and Practice in Defending Our Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 235-257 (these pages present a sample dialogue between a Presuppositionalist and a Muslim).

[34] He is likewise (and not inconsequently) also called "the father of modern hermeneutics as a general study." Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 97.

[35] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 1: Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 48.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 1: 55.

someone defeated me: "It's debated." So I went back to my room and explained why I was so discouraged to my roommate. And he simply replied: "Paul, everything's debated." And I realized: Even though someone somewhere disagrees with your point, that has no real-life bearing on the truth-value of my belief. And yet, we must still wonder: If everything is debated, and yet that debate has no necessary bearing on the truth-value of a certain religious view, *what* makes a certain religious view true or false?

We must return to Bavinck: Are philosophy and theology related or not? Which is it? Bavinck definitively weighs in: "One who seeks his religious conviction in a school of philosophy confuses religion with science and gains nothing but a learned judgment or opinion (*sententia* or *opino doctoris*), an opinion that is always uncertain and opposed by many. In virtue of its own nature, religious faith, however, is always bound to a religious community and its confession."[38]

Does that mean we just accept what our community tells us, and sign on the dotted line, and tow the line without questioning or doubting authentically? No. It means we recognize the proper source of religious certainty. You can have a "good old boy" championing the cause of Christianity in your local community, but his understanding of why he is certain may have the wrong source, which makes his zeal wrongheaded.

Bavinck makes an important distinction between three concepts:

the *principium essendi* (God himself, the foundation of our existence)
the *principium cognoscendi externum* (which is God's revelation in Scripture)
the *principium cognoscendi internum* (which is the witness of the Holy Spirit)

Bavinck explains:

> "These three are one in the respect that they have God as author and have as their content one identical knowledge of God. The archetypal knowledge of God in the divine consciousness; the ectypal knowledge of God granted in revelation nand recorded in Holy Scripture; and the knowledge of God in the subject, insofar as it proceeds from revelation and enters into human consciousness, all three are from God. . . . They may and can, therefore, never be separated from each other."[39]

When asking "What *is* the *principium cognoscendi externum*?" Bavinck rejects both tradition and human consciousness. His answer is: revelation. It's not so simple as to say "The Bible," since The Bible can be construed, if we are uncareful, as either tradition or human consciousness. Bavinck's answer is not simply "Scripture" (and that is his answer), but Scripture *construed as the authoritative speaking of the Holy Spirit*.

Regarding the *principium cognoscendi internum*, Bavinck insists, there are of course many different ways that people come to believe in Christ — whether through apologetics, or their upbringing, or a sentimental reason like Alcoholics Anonymous — but common to them all is, not an ambiguous or generic encounter with the Holy Spirit, but what he calls the "inner testimony of the Holy Spirit." He explains: "The revelation of God in Christ does not ask for the support or approval of

[38] Ibid., 1:85.
[39] Ibid., 1:214.

human beings. It posits and maintains itself in sublime majesty. Its authority is normative as well as causative. It fights for its own victory. It itself conquers human hearts and makes itself irresistible."[40]

To conceive of religious certainty as requiring "philosophical foundations" is to inappropriately prioritize a *principium cognoscendi externum*, divorced from God, the *principium essendi*, and his authoritative speaking in our hearts, the *principium cognoscendi internum*. To conceive of faith as a "leap" where we leave reason behind is to conceive of creligious ertainty *only* as a *principium cognoscendi internum*, without its authority rooted in a God who is there (*essendi*) who has spoken objectively (*cognoscendi externum*) to our consciousness (*cognoscendi internum*).

Thus, the relevance of philosophy for theology is not to validate it, but to serve it.[41] As soon as we have assumed the notion that the subject of religion can be determined by a neutral appeal to philosophy — with philosophical principles presiding over the jurisdiction of theological certainty — we have already adopted a theological stance which is incompatible with Christian thought: that is, thought which presupposes from the outset that there is no such thing as neutral knowing.

This threefold act of God — his existence, external his speech and his internal testimony — simply *is* the source of certainty, and to divorce one concept to another is to reduce faith to a firm religious conviction that is guided wrongheaded kind of certainty, or a doubt that is driven by the requirement of a wrongheaded kind of certainty. Philosophy is a source of certainty like the English Bible is an aid to the authority of the original manuscripts of Scripture: it helps, but it is not the *bona fide* source.

1.6 Philosophy Requires Footnotes

There are a lot of footnotes in these lectures. We've talked a lot about responsibility, and mentioned once how responsibility is a consequence of freedom — of choice. As John Paul Sartre has said, we are, in a sense, "condemned to be free."[42] And with that condemnation comes the blossoming responsibility of "being informed." There is such shackling liberation in *being informed*. It removes so much anxiety when you know that you know what you're talking about, and yet becoming informed only replaces our anxiety with despair.[43]

We bear the full consequences of our decisions. We should have been taught better. We should have been imbued with more skill. The more we learn, the more vistas of ignorance we discover in our own conciseness. But here we are, uninformed and unskilled, in a world in which we are responsible for all our actions and emotions. That is a scary thing.

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[40] Ibid., 2:505.

[41] For a brief, readable introduction to this concept, see K. Scott Oliphint, *Christianity and the Role of Philosophy*, Christian Answers to Hard Questions (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 2013); idem, *Should You Believe In God?*, Christian Answers to Hard Questions (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 2013).

[42] John Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992; originally Gallimard, 1943), 567.

[43] The disappearance of footnotes has exacerbated the modern problem of misinformation. See Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Where Have All the Footnotes Gone?" in *On Looking into the Abyss* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994).

The condemnation to be free compels some of us to be autodidacts — the "self-taught," rather than the learned.[44] The publishing industry went through a transition in the 1990's in which good writing was equated with a lack of footnote: "Annotation was out; breezy, uninterrupted prose was in."[45]

This transition inaugurated a genre of literature adopted largely by mainstream Christian publishing houses.[46] But footnotes are for those in desperate need.[47] Each footnote is intended to introduce you to a tangential smattering of scholarly resources on a topic, in order to show, by example, exactly how deep the rabbit hole goes. Footnotes are for warriors who understand that knowledge is power — even if you can't immediately see how that power is applied.[48]

Footnotes are a place to meet those people. For those who want information that goes as deeply as their emotions and beliefs, I have provided them. For those who cannot stand footnotes, your success in this class is not at all dependent on them. Feel free never to look at them.

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[44] As John Piper insists about intellectual inquiry: "It's not about going to school or getting degrees or having prestige. It's not about the superiority of intellectuals. It's about using the means God has given us to know him, love him, and serve people." John Piper, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 17.

[45] Jenny Lyn Bader, "Forget Footnotes. Hyperlink," The New York Times, July 16, 2000. http://partners.nytimes.com/library/review/071600footnotes-review.html. Accessed on July 30, 2016.

[46] "Footnotes distress publishers, who unfortunately lurk behind every book. They find notes unsightly, costly, forbidding." Chuck Zerby, *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 2.

[47] It would be an error to say that the footnote is an academic contrivance. "One of the earliest and most ingenious inventions of humankind, the footnote has been for centuries an indispensible tool of the scholar and a source of endlessly varied delight for the layperson." Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 1.

[48] "To the inexpert, footnotes look like deep root systems, solid and fixed; to the connoisseur, however, they reveal themselves as anthills, swarming with constructive and combative activity." Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 9.

1.7 Glossary of Terms

Term	Short Definition
Philosophy (Short)	Excellent thinking.
Rationality (Short):	Being reasonable.
	Long Definition
Doxastic Obligation:	The ethical burden to believe something.
Doxastic Voluntarism:	The view that belief is a product of the will — a choice.
Existential:	Authentic and self-determined felt experience (as opposed to fabricated or imposed determination of our felt experience).
Intellectual Virtues:	The practices of inquiry which fortify the accuracy of its results.
Philosophy (Long):	The history and collection of skills that constitute excellent thinking — analytical and synthetic reasoning, empirical sensitivity, self-awareness, the ability to understand complex concepts, and a profound grasp of reality, knowledge, beauty, and the ethics.
principium essendi:	God himself, the foundation of existence and knowledge (The original knower).
principium cognoscendi externum:	"The external foundation of thinking [certain knowledge]" (God's revelation in Scripture).
principium cognoscendi internum:	"The internal foundation of thinking [certain knowledge]" (The internal witness of the Holy Spirit).
Rationality (Long):	The practice of right reasoning, based on both facts and the interpretation of those facts in accordance with the principles of logic.
Situated Rationality:	The rules of being reasonable are relative to each person's situation.

