An Examination of the Relation of Religious Groundmotives and Philosophical Analysis

by

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TITLE: An Examination of the Relation of Religious Groundmotives and Philosophical Analysis.

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: To examine the relation of religious commitment and philosophical thought, with special reference to aspects of A.J. Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic, R.B. Braithwaite's An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief, A.G.N. Flew's discussion of Falsification and P.M. Van Buren's The Secular Meaning of the Gospel. I begin with a presentation of certain influential views of the autonomy (i.e. independence from 'religion') of genuine philosophical investigation. I point out that such 'neutrality' does not seem to have been achieved in practice and raise the question as to whether it is possible in principle. Finally, in the light of the view that Western thought since the Rennaissance has actually been controlled by the dialectical religious nature-freedom ground-motive of Humanism I seek to examine the works mentioned above.

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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This thesis is dedicated to
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been so kind to me.

C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION

In his review of Herman Dooyeweerd's New Critique of Theoretical Thought Richard Kroner maintains that it "fits into the present trend of philosophic thought which has come to realise that the whole modern way of so-called scientific philosophy needs critical reflections and considerations of a most radical character. The basic relation between religious faith and scientific philosophy can no longer be ignored."[1] It is this relation that we intend to investigate. This task will have both a factual and a principial aspect, involving both a 'critique of books and systems' as well as initiating a critique of philosophical thought per se. This means we shall seek to raise the question as to whether philosophical thought can, in principle, be carried out in independence of any religious pre-suppositions. In spite of the decay of earlier certitudes in philosophy it seems that the dogma of the autonomy and religious neutrality of theoretical thought has continuously been elevated as an intrinsic condition of genuine philosophy. H. Dooyeweerd's own extensive investigations[2] have led him to conclude that the proponents of the dogma have not been consistent with it as

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1 Review of Metaphysics VIII (1954-5)p. 321. Michael Polanyi has done some valuable reflection on this topic in his work Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post Critical Philosophy. New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, revised ed. 1962.

2 For bibliographical details of his work see p.

a matter of fact. However his criticism penetrates far deeper in that he has sought to show that the ideal of neutrality involved in this dogma is inconsistent with the nature of theoretical thought itself. Dooyeweerd has argued that the intrinsic structure of theoretical thought requires it to be dependent upon pre-suppositions of a supra-theoretical character. Putting the matter generally he holds that all forms of theoretical thought are rooted in religious commitment in his sense of the term 'religious'.[3]

Quite consistently with this view Dooyeweerd holds that this is true also of his own philosophical endeavours and critically acknowledges these commitments so far as he can determine.[4] As I find myself in agreement with Dooyeweerd's main contentions I have thought it helpful to provide a brief sketch of my own commitments so that my intentions will not be misunderstood.[5] This I have provided in an appendix.

We mentioned that this thesis also contained a factual aspect, which involves the investigation of the assumptions

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3 Dooyeweerd's transcendental idea or limiting concept of religion he defines as follows. It is the innate impulse of the human selfhood to direct itself towards the true or toward a pretended absolute Origin of all temporal diversity of meaning, which it finds focussed concentrically in itself." A New Critique of Theoretical Thought (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris and Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company 1953, Trans. W. Young and D.H. Freeman) Vol. 1 p. 57. On this point much more needs to be said but that will come later. (In the remainder of the text we will simply refer to this work as 'New Critique'.)

4 For this reason Dooyeweerd has been accused of a beginners petitio principii, for example by D.H. Freeman in The Journal of Religion XXXVIII (1958) p. 51. But this important matter I will discuss later.

5 Appendix to be found on p. 87.

of particular works and schools in order to determine whether or not a pure theoretical neutrality of investigation has been achieved. Our particular area of investigation was suggested to us by Ronald H. Nash's recent work Dooyeweerd and the Amsterdam Philosophy in which the author recommends that Dooyeweerd's followers in the English-speaking world should extend the implications of his critique of philosophic thought to the particular American and British brands of philosophy such as Logical Positivism and the school of the various types of linguistic analysis."[6] So far this task has not been undertaken by anyone else, so this present work constitutes a pioneer venture with all the defects that necessarily involves.[7] My own concern will be mainly with recent British philosophy and centred on the relation of that variety of philosophy to religious commitment.

Our thesis will develop in the following manner. We shall begin by citing several statements of the idea of autonomy of the type which have proved to be very influential mentioning particularly those of Frederic Copleston, Bertrand Russell and G.J.Warnock. Then we shall introduce an account of the crisis in modern thought, not only with respect to conflict between the various schools of philosophy but also the schools of thought which are to be found within every

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6 Dooyeweerd and the Amsterdam Philosophy. (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House 1962.) p. 105.

7 Some work has begun on American philosophy, for example Hendrik Hart's Communal Certainty and Authorized Truth. An examination of John Dewey's Philosophy of Verification. (Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1966.)

special science from mathematics to theology. We shall then proceed to enquire whether the dogma of the autonomy of theoretical thought can possibly resolve the crisis or whether it is that dogma which actually has contributed to the crisis and impeded insight into the real roots of the problem. In the light of our findings we shall give an account of the relation of philosophy to religion as it discloses itself in certain works of L. Wittgenstein, A.J. Ayer, R.B. Braithwaite, A.G.N. Flew and finally P.M. VanBuren. This will lead us into our conclusion.

CHAPTER I: OBJECTIVITY AND THE CRISIS OF MODERN THOUGHT

In his book In the Twilight of Western Thought Dooyeweerd draws attention to the fact that those who maintain, as a condition of the possibility of philosophy, the belief in human theoretical reason as the ultimate judge in matters of truth and falsehood, are involved in a problem of particular interest. This is because the dogma of autonomy, "which is considered the common basis of ancient Greek, Thomistic scholastic and modern secularized philosophy lacks that unity of meaning necessary for such a common foundation."[1] However before we consider the actual diversity and divergence of stating points, it will prove helpful to examine a few examples of the common attitude or stance which these positions share. We will begin our discussion by considering some remarks of Frederick Copleston on the subject of 'Christian philosophy'. According to Copleston the "philosopher's principles are those discerned by the natural light of reason."[2] Consequently he would seem to argue the "most that the phrase 'Christian philosophy' can legitimately mean is a philosophy compatible with Christianity; If it means more than that, one is speaking of a philosophy which is not simply philosophy, but which is, partly at least, theology."[3] St. Thomas Aquinas, Copleston is pleased to tell us "helped philosophy become

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1 p. 2 In the Twilight of Western Thought, Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1965.

2 p. 281 A History of Philosophy Vol 2 Part II Image Books, New York, 1962.

3 pp. 280-1 Ibid.

self conscious and aspire after independence and autonomy."[4] In pre-Thomistic thought philosophy and theology were confused and resulted in something more like apologetics rather than genuine philosophy. Copleston gives the example of St. Bonaventure "who did not think that a satisfactory metaphysic could be worked out save in the light of Faith."[5] By way of contrast Thomism is a "self-sufficient system of philosophy" which can "enter into competition and discussion with other philosophies"[6] because it finds its basis on natural reason; on the other hand Augustinian thought can "hardly enter into the philosophical arena on equal terms"[7] because, it seems, of its unphilosophical insistence on the primacy of faith, credo ut intelligam.

We now turn to Bertrand Russell's formulation of autonomy. For Russell the aim of philosophy is the theoretical understanding of the world. He declares that: "ethical and religious motives...have been on the whole a hindrance to the progress of philosophy, and ought now to be consciously thrust aside by those who wish to discover philosophical truth. It is, I maintain, from science rather than ethics or religion that philosophy should draw its inspiration."[8] Any philosophy which is in any way influenced by religious ideas Russell would declare to be...

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4 p. 279.
5 p. 281 Ibid.
6 p. 282 Ibid.
7 p. 282 Ibid.
8 On Scientific Method in Philosophy reprinted in Mysticism and Logic p. 93. Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1957.

> ... never impartial and therefore never fully scientific. As compared with science, it fails to achieve the imaginative liberation from the self which is necessary to such understanding of the world as man can hope to achieve, and the philosophy which it inspires is always more or less infected with the prejudices of a time and a place. 9

Furthermore, "The scientific attitude of mind" maintains Russell

> ... involves a sweeping away of all other desires in the interests of the desire to know - it involves suppression of hopes and fears, loves and hates, and the whole subjective emotional life, until we become subdued to the material, able to see it frankly, without pre-conceptions, without bias, without any wish except to see it as it is, and without any belief that what it is must be determined by some relation, positive or negative, to what we should like it to be, or to what we can easily imagine it to be. 10

While he admits that human beings cannot "wholly transcend human nature" Russell maintains that "scientific philosophy comes closer to objectivity than any other human pursuit" and represents a "higher form of thought than any pre-theoretical belief or imagination".[11]

So far then we have presented two views which maintain the necessity of the absolute independence of philosophy from religion, in the name of 'natural reason' and 'scientific thought' respectively. We now turn to a third view which would make similar claims for something often called 'conceptual analysis'. G.J. Warnock champions this position in his little book English Philosophy Since 1900. In it he seems very concerned to uphold the ideological and religious neutrality of the methods of contemporary liguistic analysis. He is not unaware of the objections to this view,

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9 p. 104, Ibid.
10 Science and Culture reprinted in Mysticism and Logic, p. 42.
11 p. 30, Mysticism and Logic.

such as that of Professor Ernest Gellner who maintains that ...

> linguistic philosophy is a certain cluster of views about the world, language and philosophy. This cluster has a considerable measure of unity and inner coherence. It merits treatment as 'a philosophy', that is a distinctive outlook, a way of looking at things, with its associated style of reasoning and of setting about solving problems, of recognizing problems and solutions. 12

Although after much shuffling Warnock admits the possibility that this charge mught be well-founded, he clearly has no relish for such a conclusion. He employs at least two lines of defence. In the first place he ends his discussion by demanding a "demonstration of the ways, if any, in which current philosophy has any such Weltanschauung .. implications".[13] It is indeed difficult to know what he would accept as a 'demonstration'. Secondly he plays for time, for it seems that he would put off the possible evil day when a 'demonstration' is provided, or, as he so urbanely puts the matter: "it would be the course of prudence to await with due humility the verdict of history".[14] Until that verdict is given, Warnock unquestioningly intends to accept the "undeniably plausible prima facie contention that it has none."[15]

Here then we have presented three typical and very influential views of the nature of philosophy which in each case demand that it is an intrinsic condition of real philosophy that it should be developed in complete independence of

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12 p. 17 Words and Things, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1963.
13 p. 110 English Philosophy Since 1900 (Oxford University Press, New York, 1966).
14 p. 111 Ibid.
15 p. 110 Ibid.

religion.[16] The same demand would be found if we exchanged philosophical for theoretical thought so as to include both philosophy and every special science. In this case too the dogma of neutrality is held even more firmly - if that were possible at least with respect to present achievements if not to past formulations which have inescapably seen to be 'influenced'. If, however, Dooyeweerd's thesis that the intrinsic structure of theoretical thought requires it to be dependent upon pre-suppositions of a supra-theoretical religious character is well founded, then it will really make sense not only to talk of Christian philosophy, but also an integrally Christian development of every special science from mathematics to theology. This would mean also that it would make sense to speak of various non-Christian developments of philosophy and every special science.

Having rejected as impossible the idea of an integrally Christian re-formation of philosophy because of the dogma of automony, Copleston quite consistently maintains that it would "sound absurd to speak of 'Christian biology' or 'Christian mathematics'."[17] It seems quite clear that Russell would hold the same view even more strongly. Science has made

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16 In the case of the Thomistic position less emphasis should be placed on the word complete for the Thomistic position involves a semi-autonomy view of reason, the limitations being involved in the idea that 'nature is perfected by grace' and by virtue of an external accommodation of 'reason' to the authoratative statements of the Church which are supposed to have their source in Divine Revelation.

17 A History of Philosophy, Vol. 2, Part II, p. 280.

progress and gives us the truth only because it has disentangled itself from religion entirely; and philosophy, if it is to succeed, must follow the same pattern. Warnock, as we saw, also holds an idea of autonomy in philosophy and this seems to be true of the sciences for him also. In the chapter entitled 'metaphysics' in the book to which we have already referred Warnock makes a very sharp disjunction between scientific theories and the conceptual systems provided by metaphysics. As far as one can see Warnock sees the two completely unrelated or believes this to be so with respect to the present day. As an example of the former he suggests the theory of evolution which "of course was a scientific and not a metaphysical theory, supported not so much by argument or would-be arguments as by an immense variety and range of empirical facts".[18] "Solid knowledge indeed", Warnock seems to suggest, even though the general theory is still held in spite of the data and because of unacknowledged metaphysical commitments.[19] On the other side - one might feel inclined to say on the other side of a positivistic demarcation - Warnock puts metaphysics which he suggests "has arisen from, and often too has been a substitute for, religious or theological doctrine".[20] Although it is fair to mention that Warnock does admit that there "may be fields of inquiry, areas of knowledge, in which

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18 English Philosophy Since 1900 p. 89.

19 For an account of this situation see Prof. J.J. Duyvene de Wit's recent publication A New Critique of the Transformist Principle in Evolutionary Biology J.H. Kok. N.V. Kampen 1965.

20 English Philosophy Since 1900 p. 93.

some metaphysicians new way of seeing may have the most fruitful and important results" yet he adds "But there may not be."[21] It is this latter negative view which colours his general approach and leads him to present on one hand the idea that scientific knowledge is self contained and self sufficient, and on the other that any conceptual system of metaphysics is in the last analysis a matter of arbitrary choice. In terms of this more or less positivistic idea any view of a necessary relation and inter-action between metaphysics and scientific interpretations is of course to be rejected.

We have now sketched out three influential trends to which the dogma of the autonomy of theoretical thought is regarded as axiomatic. Warnock as we noted demanded a demonstration of the contradictory character of his interpretation of the axiom before he would abandon it, or rather be required factual evidence to show that the school to which he belongs has, as a matter of fact, not maintained neutrality. We hope, in due course to be able to satisfy him on both these counts. However for the present we wish to introduce an account of the crisis of knowledge in modern culture which will help to bring out the deep complexity of the problems and prevent our discussions from becoming merely formal which is inevitable if one looses the sense of the historical-cultural situations out of which the problems have arisen. It is important to remember that the situation which Ernst Cassirer describes in the

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21 Ibid p. 92.

following passages has been one in whose historical background the dogma of autonomy has been continuously maintained. Cassirer in his An Essay on Man maintains that the crisis of Western culture is rooted in the crisis of man's lack of self-knowledge which he holds is basic to all our theoretical endeavours, for self knowledge preceeds even the scientific definition of man. On this question and on all others Cassirer sees modern thought in a condition of almost unlimited anarchy, which he contrasts with earlier times when there existed...

> at least a general orientation, a frame of reference, to which all individual differences might be referred. Metaphysics theology, mathematics and biology successively assumed the guidance of thought on the problem of man and determined the line of investigation. The real crisis manifested itself when such a central power capable of guiding all individual efforts ceased to exist. The paramount importance of the problem was felt in all the different branches of knowledge and enquiry. But an established authority to which one might appeal no longer existed. Theologians, scientists, politicians, sociologists, biologists, ethnologists, economists all approached the problem from their own viewpoints. To combine or unify all these particular aspects and perspectives was impossible. And even within the special fields there was no generally accepted scientific principle. The personal factor became more and more prevalent, and the temperament of the individual writer tended to play a decisive role. Trahit sua quemque voluptas: Every author seems in the last count to be lead by his own conception and evaluation of human life."[22]

Such thinkers says Cassirer may be "determined empiricists; they would show us the facts and nothing but the facts" but Cassirer goes on to maintain "their interpretation of the empirical evidence contains from the very outset an arbitrary assumption - and this arbitrariness becomes more and more obvious

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22 p. 21 An Essay on Man Yale University Press, New Haven, 1944.

as the theory proceeds and takes on a more elaborate and sophisticated form. Nietzsche proclaims the will to power, Freud signalizes the sexual instinct, Marx enthrones the economic instinct. Each theory becomes a Procrastean bed on which the empirical facts are stretched to fit a pre-conceived pattern."[23]

The themes which Cassirer has mentioned will be found to recur again and again in our coming investigation. One of the features which he finds very disturbing is the relation between the interpretations produced in the various empirical sciences to the self-understanding and pre-scientific world and life-view of the investigator. How can theoretical throught avoid such "arbitary assumptions" or must we resign ourselves to complete relativism as G.J. Warnock seems to with respect to what he calls 'meta-physics'?

> It has ... become" [maintains Warnock] "almost impossible to believe that some <u>one</u> way of seeing, some <u>one</u> sort of theory, has any exclusive claim to be the <u>right</u> way; the notion of 'reality' itself, it would commonly be held, must be given its sense in terms of some particular theory or view, so that the claim that any such theory reveals or corresponds to 'reality' can be given a circular justification which is also open, in just the same way, to quite other views as well.' 24

Is there, then, no exit? Russell, whomwe quoted

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23 p. 21 <u>An Essay on Man</u>

24 p. 93 <u>English Philosophy Since 1900</u>

earlier, mentioned that the "impersonal cosmic outlook of science"[25] was only to be achieved when a man transcended his own selfhood, which Russell admitted to be impossible, even in 'scientific philosophy' which of all ways of knowing approached most closely to the truth in his opinion. Elsewhere he draws out the implications of this view.

> "In every writer on philosophy" he maintains there is a concealed metaphysic, usually unconscious; even if his subject is metaphysics, he is almost certain to have an uncritcally believed system which underlies his explicit arguments ... Where they differ, I find it hard to imagine any argument on either side which do not beg the question; on fundamental issues perhaps this is unavoidable." 26

In these three quotations it is important to note the dilemma with which these philosophers are faced. The dogma of autonomy which is regarded as the saviour of theoretical thought ironically turns out to be the destroyer, which leads it in due time to nihilistic relativism. Few thinkers are willing to face this radical implication. "Every author", says Cassirer "seems in the last count to be led by his own conception and evaluation of human life."[27] (My italics). For Warnock "it has ... become almost impossible that some one way of seeing, some one sort of theory, has any

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25 p. 43 Science and Culture in Mysticism and Logic

26 p. 138 The Philosophy of John Dewey ed. P.A. Schilpp. Tudor Publishing Company, New York, 1951.

27 p. 21 An Essay on Man

exclusive claim to be the right way"[28] (first italic mine) And finally Russell says, with respect to disagreements on fundamental issues, "perhaps this is unavoidable"[29] (my italics).

Dooyeweerd comments on this situation by suggesting that "if all philosophical currents that pretend to choose their starting point in theoretical reason alone, had indeed no deeper pre-supposition, it should be possible to settle every philosophical argument in a purely theoretical way. But the factual situation is quite different. A debate between philosophical trends which are fundamentally opposed to each other usually results in a reasoning at cross purposes because they are not able to penetrate each others true starting points".[30]

Why are not real starting points penetrated? Is it because the parties involved insist upon maintaining the idea of the autonomy of theoretical thought and are unwilling to acknowledge the inescapable role of pre-theoretical assumptions? Our investigation will be concerned with

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28 p. 93 English Philosophy Since 1900

29 p.138 The Philosophy of John Dewcy

30 p. 3 In the Twilight of Western Thought

cf. H.W. Johnstone in "Self-reference and Validity" (The Monist 1964 p. 484) rather dramatically illustrates this kind of debate between fundamentally opposed positions: "When a linguistic analyst faces the exitentialist there is little that either can do except beg the question. The wheels of argument spin wildly and the encounter reduces to a statuesque confrontation. Discussion degenerates into repetition relieved from time to time by name calling".

locating the roots of the modern crisis in knowledge and the conditions upon which genuine communication between various philosophical trends can be re-established. We now proceed to examine the historical roots of the modern crisis and the various attempted solutions.

CHAPTER II: THE ORIGIN OF THE HUMANISTIC GROUNDMOTIVE

In this chapter we wish to take a brief look at the historical background of the modern crisis in philosophy so that we should have some sort of perspective in terms of which to investigate certain special problems in the twentieth century philosophy of religion. Before we look at Dooyeweerd's account we shall consider two others, that of Professor A.N. Whitehead and that of T.A. Burkill, which will serve to confirm our findings. Whitehead in Science and the Modern World holds that the increasing problems of Western culture have arisen because it is founded on what he holds to be analogous to "two religions" which are absolutely incompatible. This contradictory situation he describes in the following manner:

> "A scientific realism based on mechanism, is conjoined with an unwavering belief in the world of men and of higher animals as being composed of self-determining organisms. This radical inconsistency at the basis of modern thought accounts for much that is half hearted and wavering in our civilization. It would be going too far to say that it distracts thought. It enfeebles it, by reason of the inconsistency lurking in the background!" 1

Whitehead speaks further of this realism which increasingly leads modern thought into "superficial orderings from diverse arbitary starting points" in a way which echoes Cassirer's comments on the growing crisis. He maintains that the "discrepancy between the materialistic mechanism of science

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1 p. 75, Science and the Modern World, Mentor Books, New York, 1964.

and the moral intuitions, which are pre-supposed in the concrete affairs of life, only gradually assumed its true importance as the centuries advanced."[2]

This problematic dualism noted by Whitehead is also seen by T.A. Burkhill who gives a short account of its development in a chapter called, very significantly, "The Chains of Kantianism". He maintains that as a consequence of the

> "dualistic tradition to whose establishment Kant so greatly contributed, the post-Kantian period is to a considerable extent characterized by two classes of philosophers - the phenomenally contented and the phenomenally discontented. To the former class belong the positivists, while in the latter class we find the absolutists, the intuitionists, and the symbolo-fideists. We might say that the positivists more or less accepted Kant's conception of the limitations of human understanding while rejecting as sheer nebulosity his proposed way out from mere appearance to reality via the autonomy of the will. After all, it is thought, the tremendous advances of modern science can only be explained by the fact that man has at last discovered a mode of investigation purified of all metaphysical obscurantism. The scientific methodology holds the future; by it the indefinite progress of humanity is secured". 3

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2 p. 77, Ibid.
NOTE: Professor W.H.F. Barnes seems to sense at least one of these "religions" when he humorously writes of the Logical Positi-vists - that they are the "dogmatic theologians and heresiologists of the Orthodox Church of Natural Science. All clear language is scientific language ... The true role of philosophy is, as the handmaid of science (ancilla scientiae) to reveal the logical syntax of language. To do this is at the same time to show that metaphysics is nonsense ..." p. 101 The Philosophical Predicament, A. & C. Black, London, 1951.

3 p. 24, God and Reality in Modern Thought Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1963.

This passage from Burkill brings together many important themes. As we shall be dealing to a large extent with the condemnation of the phenomenally discontented metaphyscians by the phenomenally contented philosophers it is important that we gain insight into the origin of this distinction. The dualism, noted by Whitehead and Burkill has been subjected to careful historical analysis by Herman Dooyeweerd and he refers to it as the religious dialectical groundmotive of modern humanism[4]. This nature-freedom dialectical he believes to have originated in the Renaissance. Whereas Medieval philosophy had been mainly centred on the problem of the relationship of the realms of nature and grace, rapid secularization had led to a new basic question. This new question was that of the relation between man's free and autonomous personality and the natural world as pictured by the science of the day. According to Dooyeweerd the humanist basic motive

> "does not comply a univocal answer to the question: Where is the central seat of man's autonomous liberty to be found? Neither does it furnish a univocal answer to the question: What is the relation between man's force and autonomous personality and the realm of nature, and, under what viewpoint can nature be conceived as a unity? From the Humanistic starting point the centre of man's autonomous and creative freedom might be sought in the moral, or in the æsthetic, in the theoretic - logical or in the sensitive aspect of our temporal experimental horizon. In the same way the unity of nature is the macro-cosmic universe could be conceived under different absolutized modal viewpoints". 5

Not only is the nature-freedom groundmotive multivocal in meaning

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4 For Dooyeweerd's treatment of this theme see New Critique, Vol I, pp. 216-495, and pp. 183-238 in E.L. Hebden Taylor's The Christian Philosophy of Law, Politics and the State (The Craig Press, Nutley, New Jersey, 1966.)

5 p. 48, In the Twilight of Western Thought

with respect to the nature of man and the cosmos but this gave rise to much diversity in the conception of God. The Biblical doctrine of the creation of man in the image of God was thereby humanistically inverted, so that God became the idealized projection of man's own self understanding. At the same time the Christian idea of freedom was transformed into the humanistic idea of autonomous freedom which soon diverged into two motives which dialectically both pre-suppose and excluded each other. "The motive of autonomous freedom" "Dooyeweerd maintains

> "evoked first of all the new ideal of personality which refuses to be submitted to any practical law which it has not imposed upon itself with its own reason. In the second place, it evoked the motive of the domination of nature by autononous science according to the model of the new natural science founded by Galileo and Newton. This is to say, it evoked the new ideal of science." 6

The dialectical religious tension between the two motives soon became clear for to the extent that the theoretical vision of reality was moulded by the science ideal there remained no room for the free pursuits of the human personality because the "rationalistic ideal of secularized science developed a strictly deterministic view of reality, deprived of every structure of individuality and construed as a closed rigid chain of cause and effect."[7]

As both ideals claim religious absoluteness if one

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6 p. 13, "The Secularization of Science", International Reformed Bulletin.. July, 1966.

7 p. 14, Ibid.

is to avoid a dialectical structure this means he is faced with the necessity of giving one of the antagonistic motives the primacy over the other and at its expense.

At this point it will be of advantage to introduce Hume and Kant, for the twentieth century philosophers, with whom we shall soon be dealing have perhaps stronger connections with the thought of these two men than with any subsequent philosophers. It is clear that Hume gives the primacy to the science ideal of the freedom-nature dialectical ground-motive of humanistic thought. Hume subsumed all of reality, in all of its modal aspects of meaning under the denominator of sensation, so that the horizon of our experience is in the final analysis resolved into impression, and into ideas which are derived from them. The first result of this radical psychologistic epistemology was the destruction of the meta-physical foundation of the rationalist ideal of personality by his critique of the idea of spiritual or thinking substance. However, he "not only undermined the Humanist Metaphysics of the rationalistic mathematical science-ideal and of the ideals of personality with its three themes; deity, freedom and immortality, but through his psychologistic epistemology he also shook the ground-pillars of the ideals of personality and science as such".[8] Hume's famous critique of the principle of causality not only dissolved the rationalistic idea of causality which was the foundation of mathematical physics by maintaining that the denial of a necessary connection between

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8 New Critique, Vol. I, p. 300.

cause and effect does not lead to a single logical contradiction. It also finally undermined the foundations of his own psychological science ideal, the psychical laws of association which rest on the principle of the uniformity of "human nature" at all times. Except for a few points of inconsistency, Hume provided the classical reductio ad absurdum of empiricism. In the conclusion of Book I of the Treatise of Human Nature he describes eloquently the position to which he is driven.

> "The intense view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason" he declares "has so wrought upon me and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or more likely than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I count, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? and on whom have I any influence, and who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of th use of every member and faculty." 9

This crisis of the ideas both of science and personality Hume had produced, as we have mentioned, by giving the primary to the science ideal and by giving this ideal a psychological meaning. This crisis succeeded in awaking Kant from his dogmatic slumbers for he accepted wholehearedly both ideas, and wished to place them both on a firm foundation. He was keenly aware of the dialectical relation between the two ideas and sought to resolve the problem by means of a sharp separation between the realms of nature and freedom. Since the time of

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9 A Treatise of Human Nature, Book I, Part IV Section VII. (New York, Doubleday & Co., 1961). p. 243.

Descartes humanist philosophy had been characterized by its tendency to seek the foundations of reality in the knowing subject above. Dooyeweerd maintains that if Kant "had done no more than proclaim the sovereign transcendental - logical subject as lawgiver for empirical reality, his Copernican deed would have been nothing more than the realisation of the basic tendency of the science ideal ..."[10] What was really revolutionary was the way in which he gave the primacy to the ideal of personality by his withdrawal of the things in themselves from the domination of the mathematical science ideal and his limitation of knowledge to sense phenomena. It was in terms of this balance of the ideas that Kant gave content to his transcendental ideas and worked out his critique of knowledge. This can be understood from his discussion of the antinomies where he states:

> "That my thinking self has a simple and therefore indestructible nature, that the self is at the same time free in its volitional acts and elevated above the coercion of nature, and that finally the whole order of things in the world originates from a first Being, from which everything derives its unity and appropriate connection: there are so many fundamentals of morals and religion." 11

Kant rejects the antithesis in the interest of the humanistic ideal of personality, which for Kant is the autonomous moral selfhood, and in terms of this commitment to the primacy of practical reason he structures his whole epistemology.[12] Consequently the mathematical and mechanistic science ideal be restricted to an empirical world of sensory phenomena

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10 New Critique, Vol. I, p. 355.

11 Critique of Pure Reason, A. 466, B. 494.

12 Vide: Richard Kroner's Kant's Weltanschauung (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

ordered by the transcendental logical categories of the understanding. By way of contrast the autonomous freedom of man does not belong to the sensory realm of nature but to a super-sensory realm of ethics beyond the domination of nature and even death, which is ruled not by natural laws but by moral norms.

So far in this chapter we have traced the origin and development of the freedom-nature groundmotive of modern humanistic thought up until its classical formulation in the philosophy of Kant, in whose philosophy primacy shifted to the personality ideal as we have seen. Having seen the development of this basic structure we need not enter into a detailed discussion of the philosophical current of the nineteenth century, for to a large extent these were characterized in the post-Kantanian thinkers by the increasing primacy of the personality ideal which went to speculative extremes.[13]

The thought of Wittgenstein in The Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus marks an interesting reaction, which can perhaps be best seen in contrasting his position with that of Kant. The latter had struggled to resolve the tension between the poles of the humanistic groundmotive as he had understood their terms of Newtonian science and moral freedom. Wittgenstein, it seems, found himself engaged in a similar struggle between, we might say, mysticism and logic. On this matter Russell gives us some interesting background:

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13 Dooyeweerd gives a brief outline of the developments in New Critique, Vol. I, pp. 207-215, and pp. 403-495.

> "He was in the days before 1914 concerned almost solely with logic. During or perhaps just before the First World War, he changed his outlook and became more or less a mystic, as may be seen here and there in the Tractatus. He had been dogmatically anti-Christian, but in this respect he changed completely. The only thing he ever told me about this was that once in avillage in Galicia during the war he found a bookshop containing only one book, which was Tolstoy on the Gospels. He bought the book, and, according to him, it influenced him profoundly. Of the development of his opinions after 1919 I cannot speak." 14

This is further confirmed by Rudolf Carnap in his autobiography when he mentions a "strong inner conflict in Wittgenstein between his emotional life and his intellectual thinking". Carnap describes this condition in the following manner. He says that:

> "Wittgenstein's intellect, working with great intensity and penetrating power, had recognised that every statement in the field of religion and metaphysics did not, strictly speaking, say anything. In his characteristic absolute honesty with himself he did not try to shut his eyes to this insight. But this result is extremely painful for him emotionally, as if he were compelled to admit a weakness in a beloved person." 15

In the light of these biographical details let us now examine Wittgenstein's view of the demands of Kant's practical reason: freedom, immortality and deity. About each of these conditions of the possibility of moral religion Wittgenstein seems to be sceptical. He maintains that there is "no

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14 Mind, 60 (1951), p. 298.

15 The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap (edited by P.A. Schillp). (La Salle, Illinois, Open Court Publishing Company, 1963), p. 27.

guarantee of the temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say its eternal survival after death".[16] The freedom of the will merely consists in the impossibility of knowing what actions lie in the future (5.1362). So much for the absolute noumenal freedom and immortality of the Kantian selfhood. Again, whereas Kant declares that it is "impossible to conceive anything at all in the world or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification except the good will",[17] Wittgenstein maintains that it is "impossible to speak about the will in so far as it is the subject of ethical attributes. And the will as a phenomenon is of interest only to psychology." (6.423). Not only so but it is "impossible for these to be propositions of ethics" (6.42). Finally, and perhaps not surprisingly, Wittgenstein has no place for a rewarder of autonomous moral agents, perhaps following Tolstoy, who rejected the idea of a personal God and personal immortality.

In Kant it was the human self who, by means of the transcendental categories of its understanding created the lawful and meaningful coherence of the phenomenal world out of the purely indeterminate effect of the things in themselves. In the Tractatus there seems to be a shift from the morally

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16 Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961). 6.4312. N.B. Future references will be inserted in the text.

17 Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, translated by H.J. Paton in The Moral Law (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1963), p. 61.

understood personality ideal to the science ideal understood logically, for "there seemed to pertain to logic a peculiar depth - a Universal significance. Logic lay, it seemed, at the bottom of all the sciences. - For logical investigation explores the nature of all things".[18] Wittgenstein further describes this vision which gripped him then as absolutely inescapable:

> "Thought, language, now appear as the unique correlate, picture of the world. These concepts: proposition, language, thought, world, stand in line one behind the other, each equivalent to each ....
>
> "Thought is now surrounded by a halo - its essence, logic, presents an order, in fact the apriori order of the world: that is, the order of possibilities, which must be common to both world and thought. But this order, it seems, must be utterly simple. It is prior to all experience; no empirical cloudiness or uncertainty can be allowed to affect it - it must rather be of purest crystal. But this crystal does not appear as an abstraction; but as something concrete, indeed as the most concrete, as it were the hardest thing there is." 19

Here then we see the development of a philosophical-ism. Using the Tractatus, and by way of supplementation Russell's Our Knowledge of the External World we shall examine a few of the typical problematics which disclose themselves, and with which the later philosophy, with which we shall soon be dealing, sought to resolve or evade in various ways. In

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18 Philosophical Investigations translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963). 2nd Edition, p. 42e.

19 Ibid, 44e.

the first place there is the question of the "balance" that is to be given to the ideas of science and freedom in the groundmotive. Then there is the question as to the specific meaning which will be given to each pole. Finally there is the question of providing a theoretical justification for the decisions taken on these two questions.

Let us watch one 'scientific philosophy' declare war upon and 'demolish' another 'scientific philosophy'. Various immanence standpoint philosophies absolutize various special scientific syntheses. We have already seen one philosopher "subliming ....." his "whole account of logic".[20] Of course, the science ideal can equally be given other meanings, for example by 'subliming' biology or psychology, in the form of Evolutionism or Empiricism. Wittgenstein merely dismisses them, simply by saying "Darwin's theory has no more to do with philosophy than any other hypothesis of natural science" (4.1122) and "Psychology is no more closely related to philosophy than any other natural science" (4.1121).

Instead of unargued rejection, Russell simulates a little combat with Evolutionism which is slightly more illuminating, but not to his advantage. Clearly Russell takes Evolutionism to be a threat to his own logical atomism, for it "sublimes" biological rather than logical doctrines, indeed "logic, mathematics and physics disappear in this philosophy

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20 Ibid, 44e.

because they are too 'static'."[21] He begins his attack by saying that Evolutionism consists of two parts. One part is a hasty generalization of the kind which the special sciences might hereafter confirm or refute".[22] The other part is "not scientific, but a mere unsupported dogma, belonging to philosophy, but its subject matter, but in no way deducible from the fact upon which evolution relies".[23] A few pages later it seems that Evolutionism no longer truly belongs to philosophy, for logic is the essence of philosophy. The only genuine philosophical problems are logical problems. "Every philosophical question" Russell maintains "when it is subjected to the necessary analysis and purification, is found either to be not really philosophical at all, or else to be, in the sense in which we are using the word, logical."[24]

Here we have an example of theoretical dogmatism which is completely uncritical and abolishes communication with other schools of immanence philosophy. Not only does it claim to have exclusive access to philosophical truth, but also at the same time maintains that questions which cannot be answered in terms of its own framework cannot be significant questions.[25] Hence

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21 Our Knowledge of the External World (New York; Mentor Books, 1960) p. 20.
22 Ibid., p. 21.
23 Ibid., p. 21.
24 Ibid., p. 33.
25 c.f. Tractatus, 6.5 - 6.51. "Where the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words .... If a question can be framed at all it is also possible to answer it. Scepticism is not irreputable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no question can be asked ..", etc.

they are dismissed after being "subjected to the necessary analysis and purification "as either psuedo questions or, for example, as belonging to some special science which itself is interpreted in terms of the metaphysical framework of that school. Russell refutes Evolutionism by declaring it is "not scientific, but a mere unsupported dogma ..... in no way deducible from the facts on which evolution relies."[26] He immediately proceeds to replace it with his own unscientific and unsupported dogma of logical atomism which is in no way deducible from the logical doctrines on which it relies - as he later comes to admit.[27]

Yet in this case why did Russell accept logical atomism rather than Evolutionism? We quoted Russell earlier where he maintained that with respect to such issues where different philosophers are said to have uncritically believed systems that he finds it "hard to imagine any arguments on either side which do not beg the question; on fundamental issues perhaps this is unavoidable."[28] Evolutionism subsumes the special science of logic within its framework, points out the historical development of logic (and the other sciences),

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26 Our Knowledge of the External World, p. 21.

27 In Logical Atomism , reprinted in Logical Positivism, edited by A.J. Ayer. (New York: The Free Press, 1966), Russell says that "there is nothing in logic that can help one decide between monism and pluralism or between the view that there are ultimate relational facts and the view that there are none." p. 45.

28 On p. 138.

perhaps the biological basis of thought and even the need for an evolutionary logic[29] Russell's own programme, with respect to logical atomism, has a similar comprehensive scope, and so, it seems, his criticism is equally applicable to his own position. Against Evolutionism he maintains that "it is time to remember that biology is neither the only science, nor the model to which all other sciences must adapt themselves. Evolutionism, as I shall try to show, is not a truly scientific philosophy, either in its method or in the problems which it considers."[30] Russell could equally have replaced 'biology' with the name of any other special science[31] (including logic) and the general critique relevant to evolutionism in that it is uncritical, dogmatic, reductionistic and not generally scientific could be applied to any other special scientific synthesis which is abstracted, absolutized and made the very key of knowledge.

So far then we have briefly introduced the development of the humanistic groundmotive and discussed some of the

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29 Which Russell describes - perhaps in tones of horror - as "sweeping aside not merely the laws of physics, but the whole apparently immutable apparatus of logic, with its fixed concepts, its general principles, and its reasonings which seem able to compel even the most unwilling assent." Our Knowledge of the External World, p. 19.

30 Ibid., p. 17.

31 As other fields of theoretical investigation we could perhaps mention those of arithmetic, geometry, kinematics, physics, biology, psychology, logic, history, sociology, linguistics, economics, aesthetics, ethics and theology.

problems which it generates, for example, the multiplicity of possible "scientific starting points for philosophy", the problem of choice and the result of reductionism. In our introduction of Wittgenstein's view of 'noumenal reality' it seems that he simply rejects it and maintains the genuine significance of only the "propositions of natural science" (6.53). This seems to agree with the rejection of 'metaphysics' by the philosophers of the Vienna Circle. Ayer, for example, defines metaphysical enquiry as "an enquiry into the nature of reality underlying or transcending the phenomena which the special sciences are content to study"[32] or again that the aim of metaphysics is to "describe a reality lying beyond possible experience", beyond "empirical observation".[33] In Language Truth and Logic that is metaphysical which lies beyond the scope of a phenomenalistic epistemology, for example, the assertion that there is a "non-empirical world of values, or that men have immortal souls, or that there is a transcendant God".[34] But this does not seem to have been the case, for Carnap mentions that the Vienna Circle had erroneously believed Wittgenstein's view of metaphysics was similar to theirs because they had not "paid sufficient attention to the statements in his book about

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32 "Demonstration of the Impossibility of Metaphysics" (Mind, Vol. 43, 1934), p. 335.

33 Ibid., p. 339.

34 Language Truth and Logic, 2nd Edition (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1962), p. 31.

the mystical."[35]

Part of the reason may be as follows, and not unconnected with the fact that Wittgenstein found himself torn in two ways by his 'logical' and 'mystical' views of reality respectively. This gave him a pessimistic view of his philosophical achievement, for, in a real sense, the "problems of life remain completely untouched" (6.52). He even recognises the self-stultifying character of the argument of the Tractatus and in a way acknowledges the fact by saying "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical, when he has used them - as steps - to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed it)." (6.54). And so Wittgenstein sets before us his conclusions about "the sense of life" (6.521) and seeing "the world aright" (6.54) and immediately closes the whole discussion. "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." (7) Later he describes such philosophical bewitchment in the following manner "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside of it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably"[36] ... leading to the deep disquietude of "But this isn't how it is!" - we say. "Yet this is how it has to be."[37]

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35 The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap, p. 27

36 Philosophical Investigations, 48e.

37 Ibid., 47e.

By way of contrast let us now introduce the aggressive and optimistic creed of the men of the Vienna Circle, which Carnap tells us "nearly all of us shared ... as a matter of course which hardly needed any discussion."[38] The first article of the creed was the conviction of the truth of atheism and its correlative, human self sufficiency. "Man", Carnap tells us "has no supernatural protectors or enemies and that therefore whatever can be done to improve human life is the task of man himself."[39] Not only is man cast upon his own resources, but also he can make good progress in that way. "We had the conviction that mankind is able to change the conditions of life in such a way that many of the sufferings of today may be avoided and that the internal situation of life for the individual, the community and finally for humanity will be essentially improved."[40] But how shall man's life be released from trouble? "All deliberate action" Carnap maintains "pre-supposes knowledge of the world and ... therefore science must be regarded as one of the most valuable instruments for the improvement of human life."[41] Carnap tells us that the best designation for this Creed would be "scientific humanism".[42]

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38 The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap, p. 83.
39 Ibid., p. 83.
40 Ibid., p. 83.
41 Ibid., p. 83.
42 Ibid., p. 83.

The contrast, then, between the position of the Tractatus and that of the Vienna Circle makes it rather obvious why Wittgenstein never joined forces with them. In his own investigation he came upon just too many fundamental problems which he found himself unable to resolve. It was hopeless to think that the anarchy of modern thought could be resolved by the institution of a unified and universal language of science even on the basis of the communal confession of the Vienna Circle. The 'multiversity' could not become a 'university' (i.e. a real community of scholarship) and the projected encyclopedia could not be anything more than a collection of isolated monographs. Gradually, as his later works indicate, Wittgenstein sought to reconcile himself with the idea that meaningful language possesses virtually unlimited and irreducible variety and multiplicity, concerning which the task of philosophy was merely to describe and protect.

Our following chapters will be dealing with a number of philosophers who have been caught up in the problematics of the humanistic groundmotive. The very term "scientific humanism" expresses the heart of the problem by its juxtaposition of the terms 'scientific' and 'humanism' which, as we shall see, stand in dialectical opposition to each other, and have historically speaking issued in the marked divergence of naturalistic positivism and atheistic existentialism.

CHAPTER III: A.J. AYER'S LANGUAGE TRUTH AND LOGIC

In the preceding chapter we introduced and discussed some of the historical background and systematic problems of the modern humanistic groundmotive of nature and freedom. We considered how this groundmotive reveals its essential lack of stability. Its manifold ambiguity becomes clear as soon as it seeks to theoretically articulate itself, for a specific meaning must be given to the pole which is given primary, and yet another specific meaning to the counter pole which is evoked.

To a considerable extent the Vienna Circle was informed by the spirit of Comte's doctrine of three stages of human development, so the question of the nature of scientific thought was of central significance, for their eschatology rested upon it. How was science to be liberated from unprofitable and unverifiable speculation, so that it might fulfill the high expectations of "scientific humanism", and how might all obscurantist opposition be finally vanquished. The enemy was usually called "metaphysics". What exactly was the nature of 'metaphysics' was never made particularly clear. The reason for this lack of clarification may well have been that they wanted to condemn both all non-science and views which were incompatible with the communal

confession of which Carnap gave us details. In other words "meaningless" was intended to cover all statements which were not "empirically verfiable" and all statements which were not coherent with the world-and-life-view of the Vienna Circle. This tension between 'scientific' and 'humanism' was not only responsible for the problems of defining the verification principle but also for tension in the view of scientific thought itself. The dialectical groundmotive led , on the one hand, to views (similar to those of Russell's) concerning the impersonal cosmic outlook of science which alone provides objective theoretical truth, and hence the absolute distinction between theories and attitudes.[1] On the other hand if the humanistic pole takes priority then a pragmatist doctrine of science is formulated.

On this topic let us begin our examination of A.J. Ayer's famous Language Truth and Logic. In the last analysis Ayer's concern in that book is not that of safeguarding theoretical truth, as becomes clear when he explains the meaning of "rational belief". Man is tied to no standards beyond himself, but rather rationality is to be defined by what man at any time considers to be "successful in practice".[2] But what is

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1 Rudolf Carnap. "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language" reprinted in Logical Positivism edited by A.J. Ayer (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 79.

2 Language Truth and Logic, 2nd Edition (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1962), p. 100.

taken to be successful in practice depends upon the purposes one is seeking to achieve. However, once this question is asked we are beyond the pragmatic criterion and encounter the inner problematics of the personality ideal whose evaluations of success are purely emotive and individualistic according to Ayer's view of value. So if we follow this line out then rationality does indeed rest on attitudes which are consequently beyond 'rational' criticism. Indeed it seems that if this is true rational criticism can only be engaged in by those who have attitudes in common and who belong to the same community of commitment.[3] In the last analysis for Ayer it seems that the free individual self creates the theoretical world directed by its own 'practical' purposes. It is perhaps of some significance that in Hume we find a certain prelude to Kant's shift to the primacy of the personality ideal: "Reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."[4]

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3 If this is true then it seems that rationality is rooted in and dependent upon "metaphysical" commitments, using Carnap's view of metaphysics which he says "arises from the need to give expression to a man's attitude in life, his emotional and volitional attitude to the environment, to society, to the tasks to which he devotes himself, to the misfortunes that befall him. This attitude manifests itself, unconsciously as a rule, in everything a man does or says." The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language. Reprinted in Logical Positivism, p. 79. In this sense the Vienna Circle had a metaphysic or world-and-life view.

4 Treatise of Human Nature, Book III, Part III, Section III. Vide: New Critique, Vol. I, pp. 302-313.

The same situation discloses itself in Professor W.H.F. Barnes' criticism of Logical Positivism. Only that is secure which is the free creation of the human mind: the "framing of definitions which are useful and fruitful may well be regarded as a creative act."[5] The cardinal error of logical positivism, maintains Barnes ...

> "is to deny reason in the name of logic. One after another the different spheres of rational activity are paraded and condemned. Metaphysics is branded as nonsense. Reason in conduct and criticism is pronounced to be emotion masquerading as reason. The thinking behind scientific hypotheses becomes guesswork, and even scientific inductions are at one stage regarded as nonsense. Are the deductive processes of mathematics and logic alone the haunt of reason? In the end even deduction becomes the mere linguistic transformation of one set of sentences into another according to rules adopted - for expedience." 6

Hence the real foundations of rationality and logic are practical success and expedience, and these terms find their meaning in a humanistic world view. No wonder Ayer is so interested in prediction for "on our ability to make simple predictions depends the satisfaction of even our simplest desires, including the desire to survive."[7] Hence that which does not serve human autonomy in general, and anticipate the future course of sensation in particular, is irrational, inexpedient, unfruitful, insignificant and meaningless. On

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5 Language Truth and Logic, p. 86.

6 The Philosophical Predicament, p.

7 Language, Truth and Logic, p. 97.

this basis Ayer proceeds "to establish beyond question what should be the purpose and method of philosophical enquiry",[8] for he considers the "traditional disputes of philosophers" to have been "for the most part, as unwarranted as they are unfruitful."[9] Ayer's unquestionable method is "the analytic method", whose validity he tells us "is not dependent upon an empirical, much less any metaphysical pre-suppositions about the nature of things."[10] We have already seen that the term "metaphysical" can have at least two meanings. Let us suggest, for example, that in his acceptance of phenomenalism he assumes that there is no non-empirical world of values, that men do not have immortal souls and that there is no transcendant God. Now is this a metaphysical assumption? In the first sense we distinguished "metaphysical" meant not compatible or coherent with scientific humanism. On this basis to say "There is no transcendant God" is not metaphysical because this statement is compatible with scientific humanism, whereas the statement "There is a transcendant God" would be metaphysical. In a second sense of 'metaphysical' meaning lying beyond the scope of a phenomenalistic epistemology then perhaps both the assertion and denial are to be counted as metaphysical. Thus the assertion of the existence of God is

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8 Ibid., p. 33.
9 Ibid., p. 33.
10 Ibid., p. 57.

always meaningless yet the assertion or rather assumption that He does not exist is necessary both for the creed of scientific humanism and for the assertion that the "phenomenalist theory is correct."[11]

It seems then that Ayer has indeed loaded the metaphysical dice at the foundation of his system, which gives rise to his whole theoretical vision of reality, which is no limited theory dealing piecemeal with single problems, but which rather involves its own special interpretation of language, truth, logic, ethics, philosophy, science, aesthetics and religion. Ayer's phenomenalism comes very close to Hume's empiricism except in that the latter is retrospective rather than predictive in orientation.

Let us begin with his treatment of individuality structures,[12] which he exhaustively reduces to the hypothetical occurrence of sense data. Thus Ayer maintains that the "English state is a logical construction out of individual people"[13] and that "man must define his own existence,

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11 Ibid., p. 53.

12 By "individuality structures" I mean individual things such as chairs, plants, animals, stones and men and societal structures such as familes, schools, states, churches, clubs, etc. On this see J.M. Spier's An Introduction to Christian Philosophy (translated by D.H. Freeman, 2nd Edition. Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1966), especially Chapters IV and V.

13 Language, Truth and Logic, p. 63.

and the existence of other people, no less than that of material things, in terms of the hypothetical occurrence of sense contents."[14] Not only does he seek to eliminate individuality structures but also modal diversity[15] for he maintains that it is "a mistake to conceive of the various "special sciences" as portraying different aspects of reality" because "all empirical hypotheses refer ultimately to our sense content".[16] As in Hume the psychological science ideal is given unlimited continuity such that reality is resolved eventually into loose sense data. The self (itself ruled out by the theory) then proceeds to create (by means of "logical construction" pragmatically orientated) the lawful coherence of reality out of essentially structureless sense content; for "as Hume showed conclusively, no one event intrinsically points to another."[17]

Ayer's doctrine of meaningful language is itself derived from this theoretical vision of reality. The assumptions involved in this vision Ayer attempts to place beyond question by saying that "the empiricist doctrine to which we are committed is a logical doctrine concerning the distinction between analytic propositions, synthetic propositions and metaphysical verbiage",[18] with the implication

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14 Ibid., p. 141.
15 See Appendix.
16 Ibid., p. 151.
17 Ibid., p. 47.
18 Ibid., p. 39.

that as a logical doctrine it is without metaphysical assumptions about the nature of reality. As Ayer's empiricism needs certain assumptions in order to be maintained he is forced to say that they are purely pragmatic (i.e. meaningless, but useful) or that their negation is meaningless. An instance of the first case is the idea of the uniformity of nature. A denial of his phenomenalist assumption - i.e. the "world of sense experience is altogether unreal"[19] he rules out as meaningless. "Anyone who condemns the sensible world as a world of mere appearance, as opposed to reality is saying something which according to our criterion of significance, is literally nonsensical."[20] If this statement is meaningless then so is its negation and therefore so is Ayer's phenomenalist thesis. Unlike Wittgenstein in the Tractatus Ayer did not seem to realise that he was sawing off the branch he was sitting upon. Wittgenstein at least displayed the contradiction by telling us both to climb and throw away his philosophical ladder.

After having introduced the general structure of Ayer's position we must now consider his treatment of God and language about God, indeed what Karl Popper has called "the arch-metaphysical assertion: there exists an omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient personal spirit."[21] Ayer's phenomenalism rules out even the possibility of the existence of God if "God" refers to something more than that which can be exhaustively

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19 Ibid., p. 39.

20 Ibid., p. 39.

21 "Science and Metaphysics" in The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap, p. 207.

defined in terms of predicted sense contents. Either the term "God" must refer to part of the predicted "world of sensation" or the term cannot have any significant use. In the next two chapters we shall be examining the writing of two men who call themselves Christians, and who seem to be saying that the term "God" does have a significant use. However, as I wish to argue that the thought of R.B. Braithwaite and Paul Van Buren is really still rooted in the humanistic groundmotive of nature and freedom rather than the Christian groundmotive of creation, fall and redemption in Jesus Christ, some further discussion of Ayer will be of value. Because of their synthetic concern neither Braithwaite nor Van Buren seem fully aware of the problems of empiricism or verificationalism (or falsificationalism), and, at a deeper level, the question of the religious root of theoretical thought.

As Ayer claimed, as we have seen, to be an empiricist, let us briefly consider his concept of 'experience' or 'the empirical'! If we consider the temporal horizon of our experience as it is given in our daily encounter with people, animals, plants, things and a variety of societal structures, we find that it displays a number of interwoven aspects which refer not to the concrete <u>what</u> but the <u>how</u>, the mode or manner of experiencing. In theoretical reflection these modal aspects which appeared first in their original indissoluble interrelation are explicitly distinguished. These modal aspects are subjected to investigation by the special science whose

fields of enquiry they delimit. A provisional list of irreducible aspects of experience would perhaps include number (arithmetic), space (geometry), motion (kinematics), energy (physics), life (biology), feeling (psychology), thought (logic), cultural development (history), symbolical meaning (linguistics and semantics), social intercourse (sociology), saving (economics), harmony (aesthetics), judgment (jurisprudence), love (ethics) and faith (theology). The nuclear moment of the psychical aspect is that perception, feeling and sensation but whose full meaning is only given in the original coherence of retrospective and anticipatory moments. If this is true then it seems that Ayer replaces our integral experiencing of reality with an abstraction from that which was originally given. Under the direction of the dualistic groundmotive of Humanism this becomes the empirical-analytic dichtomy. In effect Ayer reduces all other modalities to modes of the absolutized psychical aspect which evokes over against it the freedom pole which is centred in the creative production of the empty tautologies of logic and mathematics. On this basis he looks forward to the day when the "unnecessary multiplicity of current scientific terminologies will end"[22] and the language of unified science will reign. If our analysis of Ayer's phenomenalism is accurate then it means that an attempt to formulate an empiricist criterion of the meaning of language is precluded in principle as resting upon

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22 Language, Truth and Logic, p. 151.

confusion engendered by the freedom -nature groundmotive of Humanism.[23]

So far then we have seen something of the uncritical character of Dyer's position and a few of the problems involved in his phenomenalistic formulations. We now come to a third feature which we may call Dyer's 'predictivism'. Against this doctrine at least three objections may be raised. In the first place it involves one arbitary restriction with respect to scientific investigation. Secondly, it seems to make knowledge of past events impossible in principle, because of a virtual (phenomenalistic) identification of the past event with the presently available evidence which would be relevant to probabilifying claims about the event. Finally, and thirdly, Dyer's predictivist view of the past seems to make impossible his very formulation of the meaning of rationality.

Let us consider the first objection in more detail. We have already noted Dyer's (empiricistic) reduction of the knowable to analytically derived abstractions (sense-data) from our integral experience. Additionally he comes very close

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23 To a limited extent Dyer later acknowledges some of the problems involved in his position. See, e.g., his equivocating remarks on the nature of the verifiability principle in the introduction of the 2nd edition of Language, Truth and Logic (1946) and The Problem of Knowledge (London: Penguin Books, 1956), p. 121, where he admits that there are "strong reasons for concluding that the phenomenalist 'reduction' is not feasible". Vide: H. Dooyeweerd's discussion of the necessity of analogical concepts in science: New Critique, Vol. II, pp. 59, ff.

to identifying all knowledge with scientific knowledge although occasionally he verbally distinguishes "scientific knowledge" and "common sense."[24] However, let us consider the steps of scientific reductionism: (1) Science should involve prediction; (2) Science should be limited to prediction; (3) Science should explain everything predictively; in other words there is, in principle, nothing which cannot be explained by predictive analysis.[25] The acceptance of this third step leads Ayer to maintain that "propositions about the past are rules for the prediction of those "historical" experiences which would be said to verify them,"[26] for he adds "I do not see how else our 'knowledge of the past' is to be analysed."[27] Whether this view of Ayer's is truistic or really problematic depends on the meaning he attaches to the word 'analysed'. He may merely be saying that our knowledge of historical events depends upon the evidence which we have or will have

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24 Language Truth and Logic, pp. 48, 49.

25 c.f. Professor H.G. Stoker's "Outlines of a Deontology of Scientific Method" in Philosophy and Christianity: Philosophical Essays dedicated to Professor Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd. (N.V. Kampen: J.H. Kok and Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1965).

26 Language, Truth and Logic, p. 102.

27 Ibid., p. 102.

concerning them. However, he seems to be saying more than this for he seems to expect disagreement with the view he has put forward. "I suggest" he says " ... that those who object to our pragmatic treatment of history are really basing their objections on a tacit, or implicit, assumption that the past is somehow objectively real - that is 'real' in the metaphysical sense of the term ... it is clear that such an assumption is not a genuine hypothesis."[28] It seems that we have met this sort of situation before, for example when Ayer rejects the view that the "world of sense experience is unreal'. His own views pre-suppose the negation of such a view, and yet if he stated his assumption it would be seen to be incompatible with his alledged metaphysical neutrality - 'metaphysical' meant in the traditional sense. We may ask, therefore, does a pragmatist or a predictivist account of history assume that the past is <u>not</u> objectively there and to be corresponded to? If the answer to this question is yes then it does seem that Ayer means that the actuality of past events is nothing but (=analysable in terms of) what is usually considered to be <u>evidence</u> for them. If the answer is no then I completely fail to see what view Ayer's seeking to maintain. However, if I have not misunderstood Ayer then it seems that his view is open to two objections. The first one is well put by A.C. Danto in his <u>An Analytical Philosophy of History</u>. There he argues that:

> "if I have no way of referring to past events,
> if, each time I try to refer to a past event,
> I find myself instead making a prediction

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28 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 102.

> about my future experiences, how am I to describe these experiences as standing in some evidential relationship to a past event? For the moment I try to refer to the past event, I must be making a prediction about future experiences. How could I say that these experiences are evidence for 'p', where 'p' ostensibly refers to a past event, when 'p' itself is just a prediction of future experiences?" 29

A second and not unrelated problem arises because Ayer had earlier maintained that "for us 'being rational' entails being guided in a particular fashion by past experience."[30] Unless past events can be acknowledge in more than a predictivist sense then it is difficult to know how one could be guided by them.

At this point we must draw our discussion of Ayer to a close. We shall come, I think, to realise that although the philosophers with whom we shall be dealing would wish to disassociate themselves from the doctrines of Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic, it seems that, as a matter of fact, many of fundamental contentions are still maintained, although not carefully or explicitly formulated. The idea of the neutrality of analysis is still maintained and would be put much as Ayer put it in 1936, when he said that "the validity of the analytic method is not dependent on any empirical, much less any metaphysical assumption about the nature of things."[31] Still maintained is empiricism with its empirical-analytic dichotomy and its criterion of meaning. All that is new seems to be the

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29 An Analytical Philosophy of History (Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 37-8.

30 Language, Truth and Logic, p. 50.

31 Language, Truth and Logic, p. 57.

doctrines of the later Wittgenstein about the manifold uses of language, which are often used in a thoroughly ad hoc manner to circumnavigate the difficulties to which we have been drawing attention in Ayer. These contentions I hope to substantiate during the course of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER IV: R.B. BRAITHWAITE'S "AN EMPIRICIST'S VIEW OF THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF"

For our first example in support of the claims made at the conclusion of the last chapter we turn to Professor R.B. Braithwaite's much discussed Eddington Memorial Lecture entitled An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief which he gave in 1955. The very title of this lecture is significant, in that it purports to be an 'empiricist's view'. But what does Braithwaite mean by 'empiricism', and how does his empiricism overcome the problem which since the time of Hume have so monotonously ruined other efforts? To the question Braithwaite gives us no answers even though the entire significance of his pronouncements on religious belief rests upon it.[1]

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1 His book Scientific Explanation (Harper and Row, New York, Evanston & London, 1960) is equally unhelpful on these issues. Here also Braithwaite simply sidesteps all the fundamental questions. His definition of science, however, is significant and displays reductionstic tendencies. "In this book the word 'science' will be taken to include all the natural sciences, physical and biological, and also such parts of psychology and the social sciences (anthropology, sociology, economics) as are concerned with an empirical subject matter. It will exclude all philosophy which is not 'general science', all history which is concerned merely with the occurence of particular historical events, and the disciplines of pure mathematics and symbolic logic which are not (except perhaps in a very peculiar sense) about empirical facts at all". p. 1.

As our criticism of Braithwaite is often the same as that which we directed at Ayer many points we shall make with brevity. "I will start" says Braithwaite near the beginning of his lecture "with the verificational principle in the form in which it was originally propounded by the logical positivists - that the meaning of any statement is given by its method of verification."[2] He maintains that the implication of this principle for religious belief is that the primary question becomes, not whether a religious statement such as a personal God created the world is true or false, but how could it be known to be true or false."[3] Unless this latter question can be answered then the religious statement has "no ascertainable meaning", for 'meaning' and the possibility of verification are "one and indivisible".[4] To have Braithwaite simply assert the verifiability principle in this manner is, to say the least somewhat anachronistic, especially when it is generally conceded, to use Harry Ruja's words that the "verifiability principle of meaning seems to be a shambles. It might be well to start all over again trying to describe

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2 An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief, (Cambridge University Press, 1955), p.2.

3 Ibid., pp. 2-3.

4 Ibid., p. 3.

the relation, if any, which experience regularly has to meaning."[5]

However, still maintaining his logical positivism - which he assumes to have clearly distinguished between 'metaphysics' and 'science' - he goes on to claim that there are three classes of statement whose method of truth-testing is in general outline clear. Clear to an empiricist, one may wonder? He enumerates them as follows: first, 'statements about particular matters of empirical fact'; secondly, scientific hypothesis and other general empirical statements' and thirdly the 'logically necessary statements of mathematics and logic (and their contradictions)."[6]

Quite unperturbed by the thought of any difficulties so far - as if what he had maintained so far were axiomatic - Braithwaite tells us that religious statement, as normally used, have no place in his trichotomy. Phenomenalistically he points out if one attempt to put statements about God in the first category by maintaining that God is known by observation, for example in the 'self-authenticating' experience 'meeting God' then it must follow that the "term 'God' is being

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5 "The Present Status of the Verifiability Criterion" Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 22 (1961-2), p. 222.

6 An Empiricist View of the Nature of Religious Belief, p. 4.

used merely as part of the description of that particular experience."[7]

Secondly, with respect to treating statements about God as scientific hypothesis, Braithwaite maintains that it is no valid objection to say that God cannot be an empirical concept because God is not directly observed, for neither is an "electric field of force or a Schrodinger wave function"[8] and these it seems, being scientific concepts, must be preserved at all costs. Therefore, Braithwaite even goes so far as to say that there is "no prima facie objection to regarding such a proposition as that there is a God who created and sustains the world as an explanatory scientific hypothesis."[9] But in the end this concession is worth very little, for if a set of theological propositions is to be regarded as "scientific explanations of fact in the empirical world" then says Braithwaite "they must be reputable by experience, for a hypothesis which is consistent with every possible empirical fact is not an empirical one."[10] Pointedly summing up this situation he issues his challenge: "If there

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7 Ibid., p. 4.
8 Ibid., p. 5.
9 Ibid., p. 5-6.
10 Ibid., p. 6.

is a personal God, how would the world be different if there were not? Unless this question can be answered God's existence has no empirical meaning."[11]

Let us for a moment consider this argumentation for it is somewhat puzzling. Let us consider that theological proposition which Braithwaite mentioned "There is a God who created and sustains the world." Now according to Braithwaite this can be an empirical hypothesis only if it is not consistent with every possible empirical fact. Leaving aside the meaning of 'empirical' for the moment we may say - may we not - that the non-existence of the world would count against this hypothesis. If there were no world then it could not be true that there is a God who created and sustains the world. Surely the existence of the world is and empirical fact? Consequently, it seems that the theological statement is open to empirical falsification, in principle even if not in practice.[12] The theologian is simply

11 Ibid., p. 6. This is, of course, a formulation of the Falsification Principle which was introduced into the recent British philosophical theology debate by John Wisdom in his paper Gods (Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1944) and later elaborated by Antony Flew. But more of this anon.

12 Going even farther in this direction we could say that, the logical conditions for the truth value of this theological statement are clear. The sentence "There is a God who created and sustains the world" is true if, and only if, there is a God who created and sustains the world.

answering the factual question "What is the origin of the world of our experience?" or "What is the absolute origin of the temporal diversity of meaning which we experience?" On the other hand there is another sense in which such a statement could be said to be empirically satisfied. Let us consider how the Christian theologian distinguishes between theological propositions or more properly systems of theological propositions. For example what would count against the "Five Points of Calvinism"[13] for the Christian theologian qua theologian? The central answer would be that these doctrines were not compatible with revelation. Consequently revelation (which by definition falls within our experience) would be said to verify or falsify various theological theories, such as those we have mentioned. In this sense there is no problem in calling theology an empirical science. The fact that there are many schools of theology, many theological-isms does not necessarily, of course, count against theology as an empirical science for this is true of every special science.

However, if we take Braithwaite's list of 'empirical sciences' as we noted them in Scientific Explanation we see that he limits himself to "all the natural sciences, physical and biological, and also such parts of psychology and the social sciences (anthropology, sociology, economics) as are concerned with empirical subject matter."[14] So it seems that Braithwaite

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13 i.e. (i) Total depravity; (ii) Unconditional election; (iii) Limited atonement; (iv) grace; (v) Perseverance of the saints.

14 Scientific Explanation, p. 1.

will only call our theological proposition an 'empirical proposition' if we say that theology is reducible to one of the disciplines which he has mentioned. Unhappily, Braithwaite provides us with no clear definition of empirical so if we take it that "non-empirical" merely means that theology is not one of the natural sciences and does not belong to certain parts of the social sciences then the Christian theologian would say that this is the merest truism which he has never doubted. But perhaps this is not Braithwaite's real intent. Perhaps Braithwaite is trying to say something more for to be 'empirical' in his sense is an attribution of reality or significant existence. He, of course, as we have seen, by giving an empiricist meaning to 'empirical', 'commits' 'empiricide' to use Kaufmann's pointed phrase. His challenge which we previously quoted "If there is a personal God, how would the world be different if there were not? Unless this question can be answered, God's existence cannot be given an empirical meaning"[15] is worthy of careful consideration. The question seems to be an open-minded asking for evidence for the existence of God, e.g. such as is given by natural theology, miracles, religious experience and the course of history. Nothing would seem fairer than this. But the statement following shows that, in fact, no evidence will possibly be allowed to count in favour of the existence of God. For all that the evidence would do

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15 An Empirist's View, p. 6.

would be to give "God's existence ... an empirical meaning" which would mean that 'God' would be defined exhaustively in terms of the 'evidential' sense data. Contrary to empiricist mythology ancient and modern, empiricism is just as thoroughly and badly aprioristic as any form of rationalism. There simply cannot be any evidence for the existence of God, for all empirical facts in order to be 'facts' must be processed in terms of empirical categories and that very processing-apriori eliminates even the possibility of God's existence or rather, in one sense one might say it assumes it. Clearly Braithwaite is possessed by the nature-freedom groundmotive in which clear primacy is given to the science ideal understood empiricistically. His interpretation at every point is governed by this ideal. Let us briefly consider, for example his treatment of the 'evidence' which might - unwittingly - be put forward to meet his challenge. He begins by rather weakly ruling out miracles on the grounds that most educated believers do not appeal to them. This may well be disputed - but even if they did appeal to them Braithwaite's empiricist metaphysics would demand that they should be classified merely as odd or surprising events for which a scientific explanation has yet to be found. Even if it was to be conceded that one never would be found (quite a concession that!) then it could still be pointed out that 'miracles' in the sense of odd lawless events are quite 'logically possible' and no more need to be referred to divine intervention than any ordinary event. It should be

clear that the real question here is not that there are doubts about the historical records of 'miracles' or that there have been very few miracles - as though bigger and better ones would prove more acceptable and make faith easier. Rather the real problem is that Biblically interpreted miracles are ruled out precisely because a Biblical Christian-theoretic interpretation of any and every event has been ruled out in advance. The falsification principle of meaning is no more 'open-minded' than the verification principle - indeed it seems strange why they should be distinguished as they have been.

In line with the same general policy neither is an appeal to religious experience of any avail. Braithwaite will not allow the human relationship to God to be compared in any way to a meeting of human persons. This he states is an "unreal comparison."[16] It is not too difficult to guess that his account of personal identity would be that of a phenomenalistic solipsism or behaviourism which would necessarily make talk of divine-human encounter 'nonsensical'. Again Braithwaite, on the authority of the science ideal, tells us that the traditional theological language of 'original sin', 'the Old Adam', 'the new man', 'growth in holiness' must be stating merely facts of biological and psychological development in metaphorical language or they cannot be saying anything at all. He quite correctly observes that any attempt to hold concurrently the totality views involved in Empiricism

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16 Ibid., p. 5.

and Christianity must involve a sort of 'double-think attitude'.[17]

Having 'discovered' that theological statements as normally understood, or according to Braithwaite misunderstood, in terms of his empiricist categories he notes that moral statements, as normally (mis-) understood have a similar character. Earlier we noted that Braithwaite assumed that he could concurrently maintain empiricism and the genuine integrity of various forms of scientific statements. Of this possibility we remain unconvinced. So now while still hanging on to his empiricism and natural science he seeks to rehabilitate ethics too, doubtless due to the freedom motive. We shall note later, as we hinted earlier that the science ideal has the last say and ethical (and theological) statements are interpreted as empirical hypotheses open to verification. However, we shall look for a moment at Braithwaite's initial stratagem for removing ethical statements from the verificational category of meaninglessness. He writes: "Though a tough minded logical positivist might be prepared to say that all religious statements are sound and fury signifying nothing he can hardly say that of all moral statements. For moral statements have a use in guiding conduct; and if they have a use they surely have a meaning - in some sense of meaning."[18]

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17 Ibid., p. 8.
18 Ibid., p. 10.

Having made this move Braithwaite again anxiously assures us that he is not deserting the spirit that leads into all truth - the 'spirit of empiricism', for, says he, the only way in which we can discover how a statement is used is by 'empirical enquiry'.[19] What ethical statements primarily express is one's intention to perform a particular action when occasion for it arises. Whether one really means an ethical expression, whether one has a pro-attitude towards a particular course of action is open to empirical verification for 'whether or not a man has an intention of pursuing a particular behaviour policy can be empirically tested by observing what he does and by hearing what he replies when he is questioned about his intentions'.[20] This is what he calls the conative theory of ethics. We now seem to have moved back into the cadre of verificationalism which means that ethical statements are now capable of verification and falsification in that they are my predictions of my future behaviour. Hence - it seems - if I say today that 'Murder is good' and it is later empirically verified that I have murdered say two hundred people in the next week then my ethical statement is verified and thus true. My ethical statements will always be <u>true</u> so long as I live consistently with them. As long as my ethical statements 'describe' what I actually do then they are true. In the last analysis then we end with an utterly individualistic 'ethic' with no criterion above the individual decision to pursue a particular course of

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19 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 11.

20 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 13.

behaviour. Hence to put the matter radically whatever a man does is right because he does it. He cannot even say his own actions are wrong or false - only that he previously mis-described the behaviour he intended to follow. Here we have the religion of the free autonomous individual emerging, in terms of which and in the light of which Braithwaite proceeds to tell us about the essence of religion.

Braithwaite's whole argument suffers from many inconsistencies so we shall attempt to follow out what seems to be the central thrust or direction. In the main, if we hear continual and strong echoes of Kant's Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone ringing in our ears, I don't feel that we shall be seriously mistaken. There are, of course, differences in detail - e.g. Braithwaite is thoroughly individualistic and does not have Kant's rationalistic 'universalizing' tendencies in ethics. But this does not discount the fact that both are gripped and committed to the same religion of the autonomous human personality. For Braithwaite, as for Kant, theology is made the servant of ethics, for the freedom pole is in both cases understood moralistically. In his Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals Kant completely rejects rejects Biblically orientated ethics or the 'theological concept which derives morality from a divine and supremely perfect will' for such a concept must involve 'such characteristics as lust for glory and domination bound up with frightful ideas of power and vengefulness.' Even worse it would 'inevitably form the basis of a moral system which would be in

direct opposition to morality.'[21] In other words that which will not entirely submit to human practical reason as the "sovereign authority, as the supreme maker of law"[22] is necessarily immoral. For Braithwaite too it is "no part of higher religion" to do what God "commands or desires irrespective of what this command or desire may be."[23] The truly religious man - as Braithwaite doubtless learned from Kant - should only obey God's commandments if they "accord with his own moral judgments."[24] For Kant 'God' is made in the image of his own moralistically-conceived self as a postulate of practical reason.[25] In Braithwaite, 'God' is a character in a story which some men entertain as they find that it serves them as a psychological aid to carrying out those purposes and that way of life they have chosen for themselves. For them to tell themselves that their own evaluations are also God's will serve as consciously inward mythical deception for human pragmatic purposes.[26] The stories

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21 The Moral Law: Kant's "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals translated and analysed by H.J. Paton. 3rd edition. (Hutchison and Co., London, 1961), p. 111.
22 Ibid., p. 109.
23 An Empiricist's View, p. 31
24 Ibid., p. 31.
25 New Critique, Vol. I, p. 384.
26 cf. John Dewey's conception of 'God' in A Common Faith (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1964).

are more effective in their original form, but may be 'reduced'. They are not the necessary pre-suppositions of ethics as Kant thought but merely happen to be useful to various people who choose various life patterns and directions. Statements which seem to be about the will of an Eternal Being called God are actually rather indirect but useful ways of talking about what I intend to do today and tomorrow and tomorrow. If I change my intentions then one story will be of no more use to me, or as Braithwaite put it, have no 'meaning' any longer, so I will choose another which is meaningful within a new conative perspective. An example of such a reduction given by Braithwaite is the Christian's assertion that 'God is love' must really be understood as his declaration of an intention to "follow an agapeistic way of life",[27] for the "primary use of religious assertions is to announce allegiance to a set of moral principles".[28] Hence the theological statement that 'God is love' is really a prediction about my future behaviour having observable-sensory agapeistic characteristics.

Perhaps we should stop for a while now and consider a few problems which may be encountered in Braithwaite's account. We have already noted problems in

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27 An Empiricist's View, p. 18.

28 Ibid., p. 19.

the adoption of the verifiability principle as such, so we will turn now to the question of application. The problem here is that whereas with respect to factual statements the possibility of verifiability or falsifiability merely indicated that a statement could be true or false (and not meaningless), yet when it comes to religious assertions the categories seem to have become rather different. If, for example, I assert that 'God is love' (and we accept Braithwaite's analysis of that statement) and I don't proceed to live in an agapistic way then how am I to classify my original statement. The Braithwaite equivalent is surely meaningful and falsified, but is the statement that 'God is love' also falsified thereby? Braithwaite seems to agree that for me in such circumstance the statement is not 'meaningful' which would be most naturally expressed by the reproving words - "You didn't really mean it" or, more fully, "When you said it you were insincere because your behaviour was not consistent with your affirmation." It was this idea of a genuine or meaningful confession which provoked Braithwaite to use the Biblical statement "By their fruit ye shall know them" in his discussion. Even though Braithwaite has here signalized another use of the word 'meaning' how it can possibly fit his empiricist meaning of 'meaning' I cannot see, for 'sincerely intended' and 'open to sensory falsification in principle' are somewhat different.

Another problem here involved is that Braithwaite, in terms of his empiricism, insists that the stories must -

in order to be meaningful - consist of "straightforwardly empirical propositions". However, as he had earlier decided that 'God' was not an empirical concept, God (or, for example, God's will) can not meaningfully appear in the Christian stories.[29] This means that what is said in the Bible would have to be 'demythologised' into merely historical statements about the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth in order to be meaningful to modern empiricist man.[30] If we are to accept this then it seems we must reject Braithwaite's psychological use of, and ethical extraction from, such statements as 'God is love'.

At every point we have discussed it seems as if Braithwaite wants to have it both ways. He wants to give the science ideal an empiricist meaning and yet make room for the humanistic ideal of personality which he seeks to 'baptise' by relating it to the Biblical narratives in both their original and 'demythologised' (conformed to empiricism) form. It is very doubtful whether this amazing synthesis does "justice .... to the empiricist's

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29 Braithwaite's definition of a story is as follows: it is a 'set of propositions which are straightforwardly empirical propositions capable of empirical test and which are thought by the religious man in connection with his resolution to follow the way of life advocated by his religion'. p. 23, An Empiricist's View.

30 cf. Rudolf Bultmann's 'New Testament and Mythology' in Kerygma and Myth, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (Harper and Row, Publishers, New York and Evanston, 1961).

demands"[31] nor is it entirely certain that it is the 'very essence of the Christian religion'.[32] As has become very clear it is difficult to summarize what Braithwaite says, mainly because close examination will reveal that these various themes simply cannot hang together. Development of one theme will very easily bring one to conclusions which Braithwaite would doubtless be unwilling to accept - and against which may be found evidence in other parts of his lecture. This situation seems to be quite coherent with our main contentions.

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31 An Empiricist's View, p. 35.

32 Ibid., p. 35.

CHAPTER V: PROFESSOR FLEW ON FALSIFICATION AND VAN BUREN'S "SECULAR MEANING OF THE GOSPEL"

In the conclusion of Chapter III we mentioned that we would do our best in the succeeding chapters to illustrate our central thesis with discussion of certain prominent modern thinkers. So far we have introduced Professor R.B. Braithwaite and he in turn introduced the topic of falsification with which we now wish to deal at greater length. The formulation of falsification which has been decisive for modern philosophical theology has been the one provided by Professor Antony Flew in 1950. Flew's parable of the invisible gardener is now sufficiently well known that there is no need to quote it in full. The parable ends with the Sceptic's challenge to the believer "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or no gardener at all?[1] Flew interprets his parable as illustrating that what sets out as an assertion is finally qualified to such an extent that it reduces to a mere "picture preference".[2] Such utterances

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1 New Essays in Philosophical Theology, pp. 96-97 (S.C.M. Press, London, 1956).

2 Ibid., p. 97

as God has a plan, God created the world, God loves us as a father loves his children appear at first to be "vast cosmological assertions".[3] However, whenever there is any suspicion that an utterance is not really meaningful one way of testing this, Flew tells us, is to ask what would be regarded as "counting against, or being incompatible with, its truth"[4] for an utterance which does not deny anything does not assert anything either. So Flew challenges the Christian believer by asking "What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or the existence of, God?"[5]

The utterances of the Christian, Flew complains, are incapable of falsification, because nothing is allowed to count against the existence or love of God, because all contrary evidence is explained or qualified away.

For example, the Christian refuses to recognise that

> "every moral defect in the Universe and every evil human act is the responsibility of God, since His omnipotence does not allow Him to say that God would like to help but cannot, and his omniscience does not allow him to say that God would help if He only knew.

Flew maintains that an

> "omnipotent omniscience God must be an accessory before (and during) the fact of every human misdeed; as well as being

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3 Ibid., p. 97.

4 Ibid., p. 98.

5 Ibid., p. 99.

> responsible for every non-moral defect in the Universe". 6

Consequently the Christian is accused of "double-think", of "holding two contradictory beliefs simultaneously and accepting both of them" for he "confesses his faith in a loving God in face of the reality of a heartless and indifferent world."[7]

It is rather difficult to grasp exactly the point Flew is trying to make. It seems that he is trying to confront the Christian with a dilemma. Either the statement 'God is love' is meaningless, or the evidence is against the truth of the statement, and consequently is an irrational statement because obviously wrong. Furthermore, if we are to understand the idea of 'falsification' symmetrically with that of 'verification' then it seems that the statement "God is love" is either meaningless or its meaning is identical with the empirical evidence for its truth. For example, if it is to be meaningful then it must be a vast cosmological assertion, e.g. concerning the general happiness of mankind. In this case it no longer makes sense to talk about 'evidence' and consequently the demand for it is meaningless. To present the matter as if all that was being asked for was some straight-

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6 Ibid., p. 107.

7 Ibid., p. 108.

forward evidence for the Christian position is extremely misleading. If we wish to get a clear understanding of the situation perhaps we ought to revise the parable, for the sceptic is a believer just as much as the believer is a believer. Flew is a believer too, for the use of the falsification principle pre-supposes that significant reality is exhausted by our sensory functioning. What would Flew allow to count against this belief? If nothing could count against this assumption then the assumption is meaningless and so the whole falsification theory of meaning must collapse. For Flew the assumption is most likely a basic one within his world and life view which doubtless resembles that of the Vienna Circle which Carnap described. The conflict, the real conflict between a Humanistic naturalist like Flew and the Christian believer is not quite what Flew insinuates in his parable. The conflict is not about a few ambiguous facts whose interpretation is problematic. The conflict is deeper, it is about any and every possible fact, about the right framework for the interpretation of all the facts. Should one have a naturalistic or a Christian view of the origin of all we experience, of ourselves and of the cosmos in which we live? This is easy to illustrate if one reverses Flew's challenge so that it now reads: "Now it often seems to people who are Christians as if there was no conceivable event or series of events the occurence of which would be admitted by sophisticated humanists to be a sufficient reason for conceding 'There was a God after all' or 'God does really love us then'."[8] Our

8 Flew's own formulation, p. 98, Ibid.

previous discussions of the religious groundmotives of theoretical thought disclosed the inevitability of this situation of complete conflict.

What is of particular interest is that Flew attacks the Christian position in terms of both the ideals of science (understood in terms of falsification) and personality (in the form of the problem of evil). As these ideas find themselves in dialectical relation in the humanistic groundmotive one can point to the tension between the two attacks which Flew mounts. Either Flew must stick to falsification and rule out all statements about God as meaningless or allow that statements about God are meaningful but false, for example when it is said that 'God exists' or 'God is love'. Now if the only meaningful statements are those which are empirically falsifiable in principle then it seems that statements about God and moral statements are ruled out. In this case, the problem of evil cannot be stated even, for the problem pre-supposes that the terms 'God' and 'evil' are genuinely meaningful and capable of the relation of contradiction or incompatability.

Let us understand 'God' in a Biblical context as the omnipotent, omniscience and righteous Creator of all things. But what is 'evil'? It does not seem to be some sort of object like a planet or an elephant or a magnetic field. Can we say what 'evil' is? It seems that Flew thinks

that human suffering and death are 'evil'.[9] But what does Flew mean when he says that certain psychological states and organic decay are evil? What is he claiming, for unless we know this we shall not know why the existence of 'evil' is incompatible with the existence of God. In order to introduce the problem here, the following quotation from one of Flew's fellow Humanists will perhaps help:

> "When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet. This morality is by no means self-evident: this point has to be exhibited again and again, despite the English flatheads. Christianity is a system, a whole view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole: nothing necessary remains in one's hands. Christianity supposes that man does not know, cannot know, what is good for him, what evil: he believes in God who alone knows it. Christian morality is a command; its origin is transcendant; it is beyond all criticism, all right to criticism; it has truth only if God is the truth - it stands or falls with faith in God."
>
> "When the English actually believe that they know "intuitively" what is good and evil, when they therefore suppose that they no longer need Christianity as the guarantee of morality, we merely witness the effect of the dominion of the Christian value judgment and an expression of the strength and depth of this dominion: such that the very conditional character of its right to existence is no longer felt. For the English, morality is not yet a problem." 10

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9 Such a belief certainly seems to be 'meaningless' (or perhaps merely expresses a 'picture preference') unless it is to be interpreted in a Braithwaitian manner as a falsifiable hypothesis about Flew's own future death and suffering alleviating behaviour.

10 from Twilight of the Idols, pp. 515-516, The Portable Nietzsche edited by Walter Kaufmann, The Viking Press, New York, 1965.

So argued Nietzsche in the year 1888. Ayer and Braithwaite realised the problem in a humanistic manner with emotivist and conativist ethics respectively. It is perhaps significant that they raised no 'problem of evil'. Part of the reason may have been that no problem of evil could be formulated from their standpoint. Perhaps Flew half realised this. In his later essay "Human Freedom and Divine Omnipotence" he allows that

> "one might say since all things depend absolutely upon God that there can be no locus standi for an independent appraisal. Or one might say that the Creator has an absolute right to do whatever he likes with his own creatures. Or as those who would define all moral notions in terms of God's will: and thereby make it self-contradictory to say that God acted unjustly or did evil". 11

If this is how the Christian understands 'evil' then within his system there is no problem of evil for to be evil is simply to be incompatible with the revealed will of God. Doubtless, Flew would himself be unhappy with such a definition, and so it seems that the matter must be referred back to the dictates of his own moral consciousness, so that 'evil' is simply that which is not held to be desirable by Flew. Suffering and death are evil, therefore, solely because Flew dislikes them. In this case it is difficult to see how the 'problem of evil' could be significantly stated as a problem. We should perhaps merely note that at the present time Professor Flew

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11 New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 157.

dislikes certain aspects of the creation order. It is difficult to see how this produces the 'most intractable of theological problems',[12] except if we consider the 'theology of the sovereign man', in which all evaluational distinctions seem to sink into confusion and pure arbitariness. The absolute religious character of the personality ideal of humanism finally reveals itself, when freed from the historical influencing of Christianity, when in the last analysis it becomes clear that evil is nothing more or less than a transgression of the pretended absolute freedom and creative autonomy of the individual, who himself is beyond good and evil.[13]

However, unless it be thought that only avowed Humanists like Flew are gripped by the problematics of the science-freedom dialectic we perhaps need to point out that "Christian theologians", both amateur (like R.B. Braithwaite) or professional (like P.M. Van Buren) are also involved, and not just yesterday, but also in the present. Paul Van Buren's widely acclaimed book, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel: based on an analysis of its language, was published as late as 1963. Like the various writings we have already examined, it shows

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12 New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 107.

13 Vide: Flew's later article in Mind (1965), Vol. 74, pp. 578-81, called "The 'Religious Morality' of Mr. Paterson Brown". There he writes that in the literature "one can find attempts to exploit the problem of evil as a means for forcing upon reluctant Christians an unwelcome choice: between this sort of fundamental value commitment, with all its appalling theoretical consequences; and a rejection of a large part, if not the whole, of the traditional Christian scheme. (I confess that this was one of the unstated aims in my 'Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom', in New Essays in Philosophical Theology). If the generality of Christians actually were content to take their stand openly and unequivocably upon the principles which Brown attributes to Christianity, then these exercises too could indeed be dismissed as both irrelevant and misconceived", p. 580. All that Christians need it seems is the faith of Abraham or Job - or as Flew chooses to put it a "very clear head - and a very strong stomach", p. 579.

signs of incipient disintegration, not unconnected with the near exhausted energy of the two religious motives. The result is an eclectic, confusing and uncritical work. By an attempted synthesis of empiricism and existentialism Van Buren seeks to provide a meaningful faith for 'modern secular man'. Van Buren quotes with approval most of the writers whom we have discussed in these past pages and makes very similar claims concerning his approach to religious belief. He assures us that "linguistic analysis is what its name implies: a method, not a philosophical doctrine. It simply clarifies the meaning of statements by investigating the way they are ordinarily used".[14] He admits that linguistic analysis, although historically related to the "Logical Positivism of the Vienna Circle of the 1920's, should not be confused with the somewhat dogmatic spirit and teaching of that philosophy".[15] We must not speak of linguistic analysts as forming a school or movement of philosophy, "for what its practitioners share is only a common interest and a common logical method".[16] Because of their 'more flexible conception of language'[17] Linguistic analysts are not opposed in principle

14 The Secular Meaning of the Gospel based on an analysis of its language, (The MacMillan Co., New York, 1966).
15 Ibid., p. 14.
16 Ibid., p. 14.
17 Ibid., p. 15.

to the use of religious or theological language, as the logical positivists were".[18] Such language can gain a hearing or rather an analysis on the basis of the doctrine that the 'meaning of a word is identical with its use",[19] which thesis, Van Buren declares, "is fundamental to our whole study".[20] However, to say this is to say no more than that people have religious beliefs and use religious language and that philosophy must give some sort of account of this matter. The Vienna Circle gave their interpretation in terms of their theoretical vision of reality with its implied view of language and meaning and the later Analysts - as we have already seen - do just the same. However, and as Van Buren admits, the deepest roots of the philosophy of analysis "lie in thetradition of British empiricism"[21] and this fact can never be forgotten, for this is determinative for the view of both the totality of existence and horizon of our experience in terms of which categories of language 'meaning' are formulated. According to Van Buren modern secular man "thinks empirically and pragmatically"[22] and linguistic analysis can produce a faith he finds meaningful,

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18 Ibid., p. 14.
19 Ibid., p. 16.
20 Ibid., p. 16 (footnote).
21 Ibid., p. 14.
22 Ibid., p. 17.

and 'meaningfulness' depends, of course, upon being rooted in the humanistic religious groundmotive.

What is rather significant from the viewpoint of the history of philosophy is the manner in which such an interpretation of the later Wittgenstein of the Philosophical Investigations becomes, in some ways, remarkably similar to the views of William James, particularly of those found in his work called Pragmatism, published in 1907.[23] It would need another thesis to deal in a satisfactory manner with the parallelisms and divergencies of the two thinkers, but a few points of comparison may be mentioned in closing.

In the first chapter of the above-mentioned work entitled "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy" James introduces what we have called the freedom-nature dialectic of modern humanistic philosophy. He characterizes it in a number of different ways - as the 'conflict between science and religion'[24] or between the 'Tough-Minded' and the 'Tender-Minded',[25] and finally sums up the problem as follows:

> "You want a system that will confine both things, the scientific loyalty to facts and willingness to take account of them, the spirit of adaption and accommodation, in short, but also the old confidence in human values and the resultant spontaneity,

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23 It seems that Wittgenstein had considerable acquaintance with the work of James for he mentions him in the Philosophical Investigations a fair number of times, e.g. pp. 109e, 124e, 125e, 219e.

24 Pragmatism (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1961), p. 24.

25 Ibid., p. 22.

> whether of a religious or of the romantic type. And this is your dilemma: you find the two parts of your quaesitum hopelessly separated. 26

The solution to the problem James tells us is Pragmatism. It can "satisfy both kinds of demands. It can remain religious like the rationalism but at the same time, like the empiricisms, it can preserve the richest intimacy with facts",[27] a "happy harmonizer of empiricist ways of thinking with the more religious demands of human beings".[28] Pragmatism has "no dogmas and no doctrines"[29] and is "a method only".[30] Pragmatism has

> "in fact no prejudices whatever, no obstructive dogmas, no rigid canon of what shall count as proof. She is completely genial. She will entertain any hypothesis, she will consider any evidence. It follows that in the religious field she is at a great advantage over both positivistic empiricism, with its anti-theological bias, and over religious rationalism, with its exclusive interest in the remote, the noble, the simple, and the abstract in the way of conception". 31

Furthermore, James tells us that pragmatism "has no apriori prejudices against theology"[32] for "on pragmatistic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true."[33] It is notable

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26 Ibid., p. 26.
27 Ibid., p. 33.
28 Ibid., p. 55.
29 Ibid., p. 47.
30 Ibid., p. 46.
31 Ibid., p. 61.
32 Ibid., p. 57.
33 Ibid., p. 192.

that what James means by 'works' comes remarkably close to the notion of 'meaningful' in Van Buren and recent British philosophy generally. James uses various formulations of the Verification, Falsification and Use Principles as the occasion arises in order to 'harmonize' the freedom-nature dialectic[34] although it generally, I think, seems to give priority to the freedom ideal in that 'truth is <u>one species of good</u>".[35]

At this point we have no wish to enter into a discussion of pragmatism, but merely to note the relatedness of principles of philosophy which are supposed, according to certain accounts, to be separated by a veritable revolution. What we actually find is a slight shift from the science ideal (of verification) to the personality ideal (pragmatism) which attempts to <u>overcome</u> the problems of the former position such as the logical-empirical dualism, while at the same time the former position is still inconsistent and periodically

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34 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 73. "Thus if no future detail of experience or conduct is to be deduced from our hypothesis, the debate between materialism and theism becomes quite idle and insignificant".

<u>Ibid</u>., p. 133. "Pragmatism on the other hand, asks its usual question. "Grant an idea or belief to be true", it says "what concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiental terms?"

<u>Ibid</u>., p. 177. "On pragmatic principles we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it. Universal conceptions, as things to take account of, may be as real for pragmatism as particular sensations are. They have, indeed, no meaning and no reality if they have no use. But if they have any use they have that amount of meaning. And the meaning will be true if the use squares well with life's other uses."

35 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 59.

maintained.[36] While the modern debate still rages on we must close this present chapter in order to introduce our conclusion.

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36 See the interesting article by T.M. Olshewsky on empiricism and its transformation into pragmatism, in "A Third Dogma of Empiricism". The Monist, Vo. 49 (1965), pp. 304-315.

C O N C L U S I O N

And so our first short expedition must end - almost it seems before it has begun. However, our purpose was that of reconnaissance rather than careful and detailed investigation and if taken as such our sketch map may have some significance. The time has now come to reflect upon certain features of the journey. As we said in the introduction the main subject of our inquiry was to be the connection between religious commitment and theoretical thought in certain aspects of modern British philosophy. In this conclusion there are perhaps two tasks which need to be undertaken. On the one hand perhaps a brief defense of the method we have employed and on the other a brief summary of our findings. There is a sense in which these two questions can be separated for it may be accepted that the philosophical works under discussion have not possessed religious neutrality while it may still be maintained that that neutrality is possible in principle and that it is a necessary ideal of genuine philosophy. In this case we may win the factual question but have to surrender our view of theoretical thought. However, I believe that both may be defended.

Let us turn first to an attack made upon our view of philosophy. The question has been raised as to whether it is possible to demonstrate the impossibility of the dogma

of the autonomy of theoretical thought without in turn presupposing that dogma. D.H. Freeman, for example, once maintained that Dooyeweerd's denial of the autonomy of theoretical thought is self-refuting, for

> ..... if a religious groundmotive is in fact universally operative, then Dooyeweerd cannot expect that his own conception of philosophy and of theoretical thought will be free of religious prejudice. He is, therefore, unable objectively to demonstrate that religious motives are intrinsically related to philosophical thought. The introduction of a thesis which in principle denies the possibility of objectivity ultimately makes any kind of demonstration impossible. 1

This criticism is answered, and I think with some adequacy, by Professor C.G. Seerveld when he writes that:

> Dooyeweerd does not claim to positively <u>prove</u> 'objectively' that religious motives are intrinsically related to philosophic thought; he only claims, and I think rightly, to have argued and negatively proved by appeal to the structure of theoretical thought (naturally disclosed by his own admittedly Christian orientation), which is <u>common to all</u> theoretical thought irrespective of one's religious slant, that the answer to its possibility and workability cannot be found in theoretical thought itself. 2 To philosophies unwilling to face

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1 <u>Journal of Religion</u> XXXVIII (1958), p. 51.

2 (The two following footnotes are given by Seerveld):
"... the demonstrative force of our critique has been <u>negative</u> in character, so far as it, taken seriously, can only demonstrate that the starting point of theoretical thought cannot be found in that thought itself, but must be supra-theoretical in character. That it is only to be found in the central religious sphere of consciousness is no longer to be proved theoretically because this insight belongs to self-knowledge which as such transcends the theoretical attitude of thought, - i.e. is dependent upon religious pre-suppositions. <u>New Critique</u>, Vol. I, pp. 56-7.

> the problem but dispose of the implied question about the self as a psuedo-problem, nothing can be proved 3 - until they speak out thoughts claiming scientific validity: then the dogmatic (extra-theoretical) character of their position becomes evident, and Dooyeweerd's point is made. To object, that nothing is demonstrated unless it be 'objectively' demonstrated, is this not itself a petitio principii, assuming philosophical argument is valid only when it proceeds without any religious assumptions." 4

And further how shall we respond if it becomes clear that it is Dooyeweerd's supra-theoretical presuppositions (the Christian groundmotive) which free theoretical thought from dogmatic 'axioms' standing in the way of a veritable critical attitude? However, we must now turn to the second strand of our conclusion - a few comments on the results of our investigation.

In the most general terms we might say that we found that the struggles and problematics of the philosophies which we examined were ultimately rooted in the dialectical religious groundmotive of modern Humanism. We noted the rise and development of this nature-freedom motive and its classical formulation in the philosophy of Kant, and were pleased to see that its significance for modern thought

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3 In the Twilight of Western Thought, pp. 26-7.

4 Dooyeweerd's contribution to the Historiography of Philosophy in Philosophy and Christianity, p. 196.

was acknowledged not only by Dooyeweerd but also by a variety of thinkers of different commitments such as James, Burhill and Whitehead. We also noted the crisis of modern thought and scholarship - not merely seemingly irreducible divisions within philosophy, but also expressed by the conflicting schools of thought to be found in every discipline, including the so-called 'empirical' and 'formal sciences'.[5] This situation of the conflict of the schools seemed to present one with an impossible choice between scepticism and dogmatism, and humanistic philosophy was seen to hover and oscillate between these poles. We noted many proposed solutions by means of 'scientific philosophy' 'logical analysis', 'empirical verification', 'falsification' and by a study of 'language usages'. At the same time we examined critiques of 'religious belief' in the works of Professors Ayer, Braithwaite, Flew and Van Buren. Generally, we found that these critiques were merely a dogmatic rejection of 'religious beliefs' which were not coherent with the Humanistic groundmotive while not critically acknowledging the determinative influence of that groundmotive upon their thought.

Although many of the contentions of this thesis may

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5 See the sections: "The role of the -isms in pure mathematics and in logic." and "A closer examination of the relationship between philosophy and the special sciences" in New Critique, Vol. I, pp. 47 ff. and pp. 545-566.

arouse more or less disagreement, what does not seem to be seriously disputable is the need for an investigation into the transcendental conditions of theoretical thought if we wish to work towards genuine contact and communication between the various schools of thought and insight into their various actual starting points. Dooyeweerd in his magnum opus the New Critique of Theoretical Thought has made a significant advance in this direction. Steadily the Amsterdam Philosophy is gaining adherents in numerous disciplines, and through their co-operative effort offers great promise for the future.

APPENDIX "A"

In this appendix I can do no more than sketch my basic commitments in so far as they affect philosophy. As I have already stressed the interpretation I am attempting has not been carried out precisely and therefore is by no means completed. It is merely an initial investigation, a sounding of the problems involved.

The philosophic position, which I have adopted, developed out of a Biblically directed world and life view which historically was the fruit of a Reformational Reveil in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century, especially through the initial work of Guillaume Groen Van Prinsterer (1801-1876) and Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920).[1] The latter founded the Free University in Amsterdam in 1880. At this institution two professors, D. H. Th. Vollenhoven (b. 1892) and H. Dooyeweerd (b. 1894) have worked at developing a Christian philosophy. Their work has gained widespread acknowledgement and even international influence and repute. I am commited to the general direction of these philosophical endeavours.

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[1] For further details of the influence and work of Abraham Kuyper and Guillaume Van Prinsterer see E. L. Hebden Taylor's The Christian Philosophy of Law, Politics and the State. pp. 28-63

I have found it useful to largely follow Hendrik Hart's formulation which is to be found in his recent book Communal Certainty and Authorized Truth: An examination of John Dewey's Philosophy of Verification, on pp. XLII and XLV, and to illustrate this with one simple diagram from J. M. Spier's introduction to this philosophical movement.[2]

A basic commitment directing a philosophy is not in itself philosophical, and as it is basic there can be no question of asking for its grounds. With reference to philosophy this commitment can be briefly stated as follows. The cosmos is God's creation. Man is a creature. The cosmos, including man, is subject to the structural order of the creation, itself creaturely, by God, who is not himself conditioned by it but is faithful to it. Creaturely existence is meaning, i.e. any aspect or part of existence taken by itself of necessity refers beyond itself to something else for its meaning. This restless referring comes to rest only in the origin of all existence. Human life, including philosophy, is religion (not religious.) True religion is the direction of life through the Word of God to be life coram Deo, the referring of the entire creation (inclusive of man) to God. The functional diversity of cosmic existence has its and integral point of unity in the heart of man which means nothing in itself but only exists meaningfully in relation to the Creator in whose image man was made, and in communal relation to his fellow man.[3]

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[2] An Introduction to Christian Philosophy second edition, translated by D. H. Freeman (Nutley, New Jersey. The Craig Press, 1966) p. 43

[3] Vide: Dooyeweerd's paper What is Man? in the International Reformed Bulletin, 3, 1960 pp. 4-16, and reprinted in In the Twilight of Western Thought pp.173-195.

Man chose to live an untrue life, constructed a false religion, attempted to refer the creation to a false origin of his own choosing and construction through the autonomous absolutization of himself or some other part or aspect of the creation.[4] He remained a creature, subject to the creation order maintained by God. Human life thus also continued to be religion, be it in a radically different direction and incapable by itself to find the true direction again. Jesus Christ restored life to its true origin and enables man to live truly through subjection to him in communion with the Holy Spirit. This I believe to be a truly Biblical commitment and confession.

We come now to the simple diagram provided by Spier. In the first place we must stress that Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd emphasize that they do not wish their system to be considered closed or unchangeable and both wish to allow that future investigation may disclose the necessity of slightly modifying the distinctions they have made:

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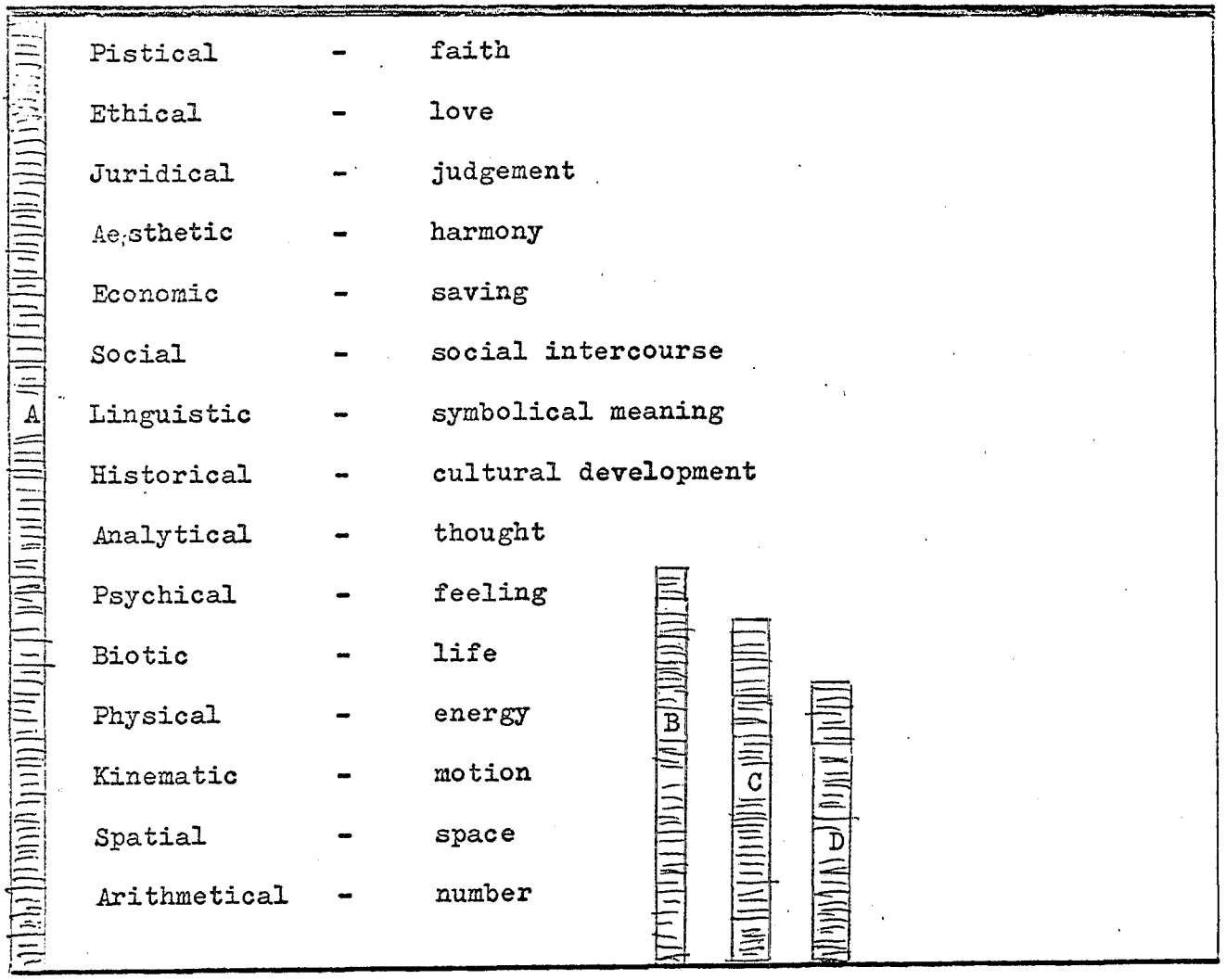
[4] Consider, for example, the words of an American Humanist, Dr. Corliss Lamont, in his book The Philosophy of Humanism (New York, Philosophical Library, 1957.) p.236. "In the meaningful perspectives of Humanist philosophy man, although no longer the darling of the universe or even of this earth, stands out as a far more heroic figure than in any of the supernaturalist creeds, old or new. He has become truly a Prometheus Unbound with almost infinite powers and potentialities. For his great achievements man, utilizing the resources and laws of Nature yet without Divine aid, can take full credit. Similarly, for his shortcomings he must take full responsibility. Humanism assigns to man nothing less than the task of being his own saviour and redeemer." The Vienna Circle seem to have held a similar commitment if we may accept the account given by Carnap in The Philosophy of Rudolph Carnap. (p.83.)

DIAGRAM OF THE LAW-SPHERES OR MODALITIES

BOUNDARY BETWEEN GOD AND COSMOS



Spier explains his scheme as follows. "The uppermost thick horizontal line represents the boundary between God and cosmos. Everything above this boundary is God and everything underneath is the cosmos, which is subject to God's law. There is of course no spatial division but a law division. For God is above all his creatures and with His divine power He also dwells in His creation, but as Law-Giver He is only above His laws and never under them."

The horizontal compartments represent the law-spheres which traverse concrete reality in a cosmic order. A man is vertically portrayed by the vertical line A. The smaller vertical columns are schematical representations of an animal (B), a plant (C) and a physical thing (D). The lowest law sphere is the least complicated and the highest the most complicated. The latter pre-suppose all earlier spheres.[5] These law spheres or modal aspects of the temporal horizon of our experience form the irreducible ontical apriori foundation upon which are enacted all the changing phenomena of temporal reality. The law spheres traverse the individuality structures which we encounter in our pre-theoretical integral experience. In the class of individuality structures there are both individual things such as represented by the vertical lines on our diagram and various societal structures such as the family, the state, the school, the business etc. The law spheres form the fields of investigation of the various special sciences.

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[5] An Introduction to Christian Philosophy p.44

On the one hand these aspects possess sphere sovereignty in that they cannot be reduced to aspects of other aspects (regarded as more fundamental) without involving thought in antinomies. On the other hand each aspect also possesses sphere universality in that it is linked to the other spheres by anticipating and retrocipatory moments. The situation accounts for both the initial plausibility and the eventual destruction of immanence standpoint philosophies which seek to reduce all modalities to aspects of an absolutized one. Such an absolutization (one could say theoretical idolatory) can never be justified theoretically, and it involves thought in antinomies. Again, because of this structure, these resulting-isms play a confusing role in the different branches of science as well as in philosophy, for this state of affairs imposes on every scientist the task of not only pursuing his specific research, but also of ascertaining the significance of even more embracing perspectives for his specific investigation. Professor H. G. Stoker gives the following illustration which may clarify this point:

> "Imagine two paintings, each having an identical patch of blue, identical in form and size, as well as in quality, and intensity. Let us analogically equate this particular colour patch with the particular mathematical truth that 2 + 2 = 4. However, as soon as each of the patches is seen in its aesthetically functional relations to the whole of the painting concerned, these patches look different. Analogically in the same way "2 + 2 = 4" may have an identical meaning for all mathemeticians, but viewed in its relations to the theoretical mathematical framework (theoretic "paintings") of e.g. formalism, logicism, intuitionism, neo-positivism

> and pragmatism, etc., "2 + 2 = 4" acquires in each of these cases a (mathematically significant!) different meaning as well. In other words: the patricular truth of "2 + 2 = 4" is neither an isolated nor an absolute truth, but has a relevantly selective meaning within a more embracing meaningful context or perspective, in the light of which its specific meaning should be investigated." 6

[illegible] deeper and more embracing than the various theoretical visions of reality are the religious ground-motives which shape them and direct them. Thus the true starting point of any possible philosophy is always a fundamentally religious motive which is guaranteed by the nature of theoretical thought itself. Each motive establishes a community among those who start from it. Dooyeweerd maintains that there have been four great religious motives which have dominated the evolution of western philosophical thought. He rapidly summarises them as follows:

> "In the first place there was the great motive of Matter and Form which was the fundamental motive of Greek thought. It originates in an endless conflict in the religious consciousness of the Greeks between the natural religion of antiquity and the cultural religion of the Olympian Gods. Matter corresponds to the faith of the ancient natural religion, according to which divinity was the great vital current without stable or personal form, out of which emerge all beings of individual form, which are subject to the great law of birth and death by a blind necessity, Ananke. The motive of form corresponds to the later religion of the Olympic gods who are only [illegible] cultural forces who have left their Mother Earth with its vital current to receive an

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6 Outlines of a Deontology of Scientific Method in Philosophy and Christianity (Kampen: J.H. Kok and Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1965), p. 76.

> immortal, personal and invisible form. But the Olympic gods have power against Ananke, which dominates the stream of life and death. Ananke is their great antagonist.
>
> The second fundamental motive was introduced into western thought by the Christian religion. It is the motive of the Creation, the radical Fall due to Sin, and Redemption in Jesus Christ. The third is that of Nature and Grace, introduced by Catholicism, which originated in an attempt to reconcile the opposed religious motives of Greek and Christian thought. The fourth is that of Nature and Liberty, introby modern Humanism, which originated in an insoluble conflict between the religious cult of human personality in its liberty and autonomy and the desire to dominate reality by modern natural science, which seeks to construe it as a rational and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects. The humanist motive has absorbed into itself the three earlier fundamental motives, secularizing the Christian motive and the Catholic motive." 7

In doing this brief appendix, it may be remarked that a critical study of the influence of these groundmotives on scientific and philosophical thought should open the door to a profounder view of the history of philosophy. Here it can be argued are the profound roots of thought which are hidden by theoretical masks under the reign of the dogma of the autonomy of reason. Here also appears the only way to establish real contact or discussion between the different schools, which at present seems impossible for lack of any notion of the true starting points of philosophy.

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7 "Introduction to a Transcendental Criticism of Philosophic Thought", Evangelical Quarterly (Jan., 1947), pp. 50-1. For a more detailed sketch of these groundmotives see In the Twilight of Western Thought, (Nutley, New Jersey, 1965), pp. 38-51, or D.H. Freeman's Recent Studies in Philosophy and Theology (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 55-63.

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