PRAGMATISM, PREJUDICE, AND PRESUPPOSITIONALSM

By Greg Bahnsen

This essay cannot attempt to do justice to the multiple avenues traversed by twentieth-century philosophers; they constitute a maze of both overlapping and divergent lines of thought: idealism, realism, phenomenology, process philosophy, existentialism, positivism, pragmatism, and linguistic analysis. Each has a claim on the Christian scholar's attention. However, we must narrow the field. It is reasonably accurate to distinguish the emphasis on phenomenology and existentialism on the Continent from the dominance of pragmatism and analysis in England and America. Since the present study is being done in the context of Anglo-American scholarship, we shall focus our attention on the schools of pragmatism and linguistic analysis-all the while recognizing the affinities which can be seen between them and aspects of European thought. Three prominent philosophers in these traditions who have had distinctive proposals in the theory of knowledge are John Dewey, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and John L. Austin; as will be later exhibited; common elements in their approaches bind them together in various ways.

The present essay will aim to demonstrate that the central motivating inquiry of epistemology-the search for *certainty-has* not and cannot be satisfied by Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Austin. Fundamental issues in the theory of knowledge cannot be toned down or evaded, and yet due to certain shared problems-notably, arbitrariness, phenomenalism, and dialecticism-these three philosophers have supplied no adequate answers. At this point we shall observe the relevance of Christianity, for as the writings of Cornelius Van Til have shown, presuppositional epistemology avoids the pitfalls of pragrnatism and prejudice, finding a solid basis for epistemic certainty in God's self-attesting revelation.

Epistemology and Certainty

Bertrand Russell, perhaps the most prolific of the significant twentieth century philosophers, opened his treatment of *The Problems of Philosophy* (which has been continually reprinted since 1912) with these words:

> Is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reason-able man could doubt it? This question, which at first sight might not seem difficult, is really one of the most difficult that can be asked. When we have realized the obstacles in the way of a straightforward and confident answer, we shall be well launched oil the study of philosophy-for philosophy is merely the attempt to answer such ultimate questions.....[1]

The theory of knowledge, *epistemology,* is a critical issue in philosophy; the philosophical scholar not only discusses what reality is and what moral obligations we have, but he must ask *"how* do we *know* that these things are so?" One could no more avoid the questions of epistemology in studying philosophy than a marine biologist could avoid the ocean. While it is certainly not the whole of philosophy, epistemology has, for better or worse, dominated philosophy since the seventeenth century, and its crucial questions retain their intellectual challenge today.

[1] Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, reprinted 1973), p. 7.

Is there any knowledge in the world which is certain? Can anything be known for sure? Is there an answer to the skeptic? Such questions as these have been a key motivation in the development of epistemology. The guiding spirit of the Vienna circle and a founder of modern analytic philosophy, Moritz Schlick, wrote in his 1934 article, "The Foundation of Knowledge":

> All important attempts at establishing a theory of knowledge grow out of the problem concerning the certainty of human knowledge. And this problem in turn originates in the wish for absolute certainty.
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> The insight that the statements of daily life and science can at best be only probable . . . has again and again stimulated philosophers since ancient times to search for an unshakeable, indubitable foundation, a firm basis on which the uncertain structure of our knowledge could rest.[2]

The problem of epistemic certainty looms large in the theory of knowledge and, thereby, has determinative significance for all of philosophy. As Hamlyn says in his recent text: "The search for indubitable and infallible truths is therefore a common feature of traditional epistemology."[3]

Of what can one be certain? What justification is there for claims to knowledge? Every philosopher, indeed every person, faces these disquieting questions, for everyone distinguishes between sense and nonsense, adjudicates conflicting claims as to the truth, and acts upon fundamental convictions. Evaluations and decisions such as these are guided by some implicit theory of knowledge. One does not decide *whether* to form some epistemological view point and theoretical basis for certainty or not; he simply chooses whether lie shall do it self-consciously and well. Epistemological concerns then are unavoidable, and *in particular* we cannot escape asking after the basis for *certainty* in knowledge.

Dewey and Pragmatism

However, the fact that the search for epistemic certainty has been pervasive in the history of philosophy and has critically influenced the issues of epistemological theory docs not mean that the various positions which have been set forth have all been positive and constructive. In particular, the impact of evolutionary naturalism and scientific positivism has created a negative response to the search for certainty in the area of knowledge. For many, the mind has come to be viewed as a completely natural phenomenon, a mode of bodily behavior subject solely to the causal factors of one's brain organism, and important only in virtue of the historical struggle for survival. Moreover, early in this century the positivism of the Vienna circle (e.g., Schlick, Carnap, Feigl, Gödel, Neurath) and imperialistic bias of English-speaking philosophers like Russell and Wittgenstein generated strong anti-metaphysical sentiments and the rejection of unperceived entities and forces; this, of course, radically altered the conception of man, the objects of knowledge, and the knowing process. Speaking of such doctrines as the essential rationality of the universe, Russell declared:

> There can be no doubt that the hope of finding reason to believe such theses as these has been the chief inspiration of many life-long students of philosophy. This hope, I believe, is vain. It would seem that knowledge concerning the universe as a whole is not to be

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[2] "Uber das Fundament der Kerkenntinis," *Erkenntnis* IV (1934); reprinted in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A.J. Ayer, Trans. David Renin (New York: Free Press, Macmillan, 1959), p. 209.

[3] D.W. Hamlyn, *The Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Co., 1970), p. 14.

obtained by metaphysics….[4]

Consequently, Russell was led to adopt a decidedly negative attitude toward the search for certainty in epistemology. In the Introduction to his *Human Knowledge: It's Scope and Limits* he wrote:

> That scientific inference requires, for its validity, principles which experience cannot render even probable is, I believe, an inescapable conclusion from the logic of probability. . .. "Knowledge," in my opinion, is a much less precise concept than is generally thought, and has its roots more deeply embedded in unverbalized animal behavior than most philosophers have been willing to admit. . .. To ask, therefore, whether we "know" the postulates of scientific inference is not so definite a question as it seems. . .. In the sense in which "no" is the right answer we know nothing whatever, and "knowledge" in this sense is a delusive vision. The perplexities of philosophers are due, in a large measure, to their unwillingness to awaken from this blissful dream.[5]

One must give up the vain delusion of finding a theoretically adequate grounding for knowledge claims; *certainly,* as traditionally understood, is not to be found.

An extension of such a naturalistic and disparaging approach to epistemological issues was elaborated and popularized by the American school of philosophy known as *pragmatism.* Its foremost spokesman, John Dewey (1859-1952), called for a complete "Reconstruction in Philosophy."[6] The effect of this naturalistic reconstruction on the theory of knowledge was most clearly revealed by Dewey in his book *The Quest for Certainty*.[7] Dewey insisted that knowledge should no longer be understood in terms of *theoretical justification,* but rather in the context of man's *active struggle* to adapt to his environment and survive in the face of whatever threatens his life.

> Man, who lives in a world of hazards is compelled to seek for security. . .. The quest for certainty is a quest for a peace which is assured, an object which is unqualified by risk and the shadow of fear which action casts. . .. If one looks at the history of knowledge, it is plain that at the beginning men tried to know because they had to do so in order to live. In the absence of that organic guidance given by their structure to other animals, man had to find out what he was about, and he could find out only by studying the environment which constituted the means, obstacles and results of his behavior. The desire for intellectual or cognitive understanding had no meaning except as a means of obtaining greater security as to the issues of action.[8]

Knowledge should be viewed as practical, according to Dewey, but because practical activity is inherently uncertain and precarious, men have exalted pure intellect above practical affairs in their quest for a certainty which is absolute and unshakeable.[9] Therefore, "thought has been alleged to be

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[4] *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 141.

[5] Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scopes and Limits* (New York: Clarion Books, Simon and Schuster, 1948), pp. xv-xvi.

[6] See Dewey's book by the same name (New York: Mentor Books, New American Library, originally published 1921). It should be noted that Dewey's reconstruction was not met with complete approval by Russell: cf. his "Dewey's Logic" in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. P.A. Schilp (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1939; 2nd edition 1951). However, in broad perspective, it is clear that this was simply an internal family squabble within humanistic naturalism.

[7] John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action* (Gifford Lectures 1929), (New York: Capricorn Books, G.P. Putnam's Sons, reprinted 1960).

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 8, 38.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 33.

a purely inner activity, intrinsic to mind alone."[10] But this is misguided, Dewey thought; knowledge and intelligence are not determined by abstract thinking or mental justification for one's beliefs, but rather by problem-solving and methods of active control. "'Thought' is not a property of something termed intellect or reason apart from nature. It is a mode of directed overt action."[11]

No longer would scholars be pressed for an intellectually adequate account of their theory of knowledge and for a ratiocinative justification of their knowledge claims; theoretical considerations would become irrelevant. Dewey summarized his pragmatic position as

> …the theory that the processes and materials of knowledge are determined by practical or purposive considerations-that there is no such thing as knowledge determined by exclusively theoretical speculative, or abstract intellectual considerations.[12]

The quest for certainty should now take on a new character, unhampered by the epistemological problematics of the past with its theoretical preoccupation.

> Henceforth the quest for certainty becomes the search for methods of control; that is, regulation of conditions of change with respect to their consequences, Theoretical certitude is assimilated to practical certainty; to *security,* trustworthiness of instrumental operations…Knowing is, for philosophical theory, a case of specially directed activity instead of something isolated from practice. The quest for certainty by means of exact possession in mind of immutable reality is exchanged for search for security by means of active control of the changing course of events. Intelligence in operation, another name for method, becomes the thing most worth winning.[13]

What really counts is not that one's thinking corresponds to reality, but *practical success* in *adjusting to one's environment* and *responding to its* problems - security via control over future change.
"The first step in knowing is to locate the problems which need solution." Given this practical orientation, Dewey's directive is as follows:

> Drop the conception that knowledge is knowledge only when it is a disclosure and definition of the properties of fixed and antecedent reality; interpret the aim and test of knowing by what happens in the actual procedures of scientific inquiry. . ..[14]

Dewey's reconstruction of philosophy would thus have the dual attraction of being scientific as well as practical, avoiding the abstract and dead-end questions of past thinkers. "The question of truth is not as to whether Being or Non-Being, Reality or mere Appearance, is experienced, but as to the *worth* of a certain concretely experienced thing.[15] Science is problem-solving and useful, thereby *creating* the objects of "knowledge":

> All experimentation involves *overt* doing, the making of definite changes in the environment or in our relation to it. . .. Experiment is not a random activity but is directed

[10] *Ibid*., p. 7.
[11] *Ibid*., p. 166.
[12] *The Century Dictionary Supplement*, Vol. II (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1909), p. 1050.
[13] *The Quest for Certainty*, pp. 128, 204.
[14] *Ibid*., p. 103; cf. p. 131.
[15] *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays in Contemporary Thought* (New York: Peter Smith, 1951), p. 235.

> by ideas which have to meet the conditions set by the need of the problem inducing the active inquiry. . .. The outcome of the directed activity is the construction of a new empirical situation in which objects arc differently related to one another, and such that the *consequences* of directed operations form the objects that have the property of being *known.*[16]

Thus, the value of a mental operation is not tested by its accurate reflection of reality, but by its *practical consequences,* the *active controls* it affords us, and the *successful prediction* of future change (verification).

Basically, for Dewey, ideas are plans for action, provisional hypotheses for solving a concrete problem, and as such tested in experience:

> Ideas are anticipatory plans and designs which take effect in concrete reconstructions of antecedent conditions of existence…. Ideas that are plans of operations to be performed are integral factors in actions which change the face of the world.[17]

> The idea, or anticipation of *possible* outcome, must, in order to satisfy the requirements of controlled inquiry, be such as to indicate an operation to be *existentially* performed, or it is a means (called *procedural)* of effecting the existential transformation without which a problematic situation cannot be resolved.[18]

> Ideas have to have their worth tested experimentally . . . in themselves they are tentative and provisional.[19]

The meaning of ideas is determined by the practical consequences they have in experience. If a judgment's truth or falsity makes no difference in one's experience, then it is meaningless (the parallel here to analytic philosophy is conspicuous). A belief (judgment, idea) *predicts* certain future consequences and *generates a particular course of action* which aims to solve the problem which initially provoked inquiry. As Dewey's fellow pragmatist, William James, said: "The ultimate test for us of what a truth means is . . . the conduct it dictates or inspires. But it inspires that conduct because it first foretells some particular turn to our experience which shall call forth just that conduct from us."[20]

From this, the pragmatic theory of truth becomes evident. If a meaningful idea is useful in adjusting to a practical situation, if it helps to predict events and thus control what happens to us, it is deemed "true."

> According to experimental inquiry, the validity of the object of thought depends upon the *consequences* of the operations which define the object of thought. . .. The conceptions are valid in the degree in which…we can predict future events. . .. The test of the validity of any particular intellectual conception, measurement or enumeration is functional, its use in making possible the institution of interactions which yield results in control of actual

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[16] *The Quest for Certainty*, pp. 87-87.
[17] *Ibid*., pp. 166-167, 138.
[18] "Inquiry and Indeterminateness of Situations," *Journal of Philosophy* XXXIX (May 21, 1942), p. 293.
[19] *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1961), p. 189.
[20] William James, *Collected Essays and Reviews* (New York: David McKay Co., 1920), p. 412.

experiences of observed objects.[21]

An idea or belief is true if it is *verified* (with respect to the prediction it makes about the future turn of events) or *useful* (with respect to solving the initial problem which one faces). "This is the meaning of truth: processes of change so directed that they achieve an intended consummation."[22] A problem confronts a person, leading him to formulate a certain belief, the meaning of which is the practical action it calls for on his part; the belief thus predicts a certain turn of events and thereby a useful way to resolve the initial difficulty. *If the predicted consequences are realized,* the *hypothesis* (idea, belief) *is verified-which* is to say, true. "Verification and truth are two names for the same thing."[23]

> It is therefore in submitting conceptions to the control of experience, in the process of verifying them, that one finds examples of what is called truth. . .. Truth "means" verification. . .. Verification, either actual or possible, is the definition of truth.[24]

A belief proposes a plan of action which shall resolve a problem; if the belief is verified, the proposed plan was useful. Thus, the true is the useful. "The effective working of an idea and its truth are one and the same thing-this working being neither the cause nor the evidence of truth but its nature."[25]

However, one must be cautious and fair to Dewey here, for he does not mean useful in the sense of personally advantageous. The satisfaction required of a true belief is not just a personal one, but the "satisfaction of the conditions prescribed by the problem."[26] One should recall that "ideas are always working hypotheses concerning attaining particular empirical results, and are tentative programs (or sketches of method) for attaining them." In light of this, the usefulness relevant to establishing a truth is determined by the *kind of problem* engendering the belief which is tested:

> I have never identified any satisfaction with the truth of an idea, save *that* satisfaction which arises when the idea as working hypothesis or tentative method is applied to prior existences in such a way as to fulfill what it intends.[27]

With this in mind, then, we can summarize by saying that the criterion of truth for a belief (idea, judgment) is the degree to which it and the action based upon it are *useful* (practical) in *resolving the problem which elicited it.* A sentence is considered true when everyone who checked matters out would be satisfied with the sentence, that is, when it is validated, corroborated, or verified.

Therefore, according to Dewey, because the state of affairs *antecedent* to inquiry is *not* the object of knowledge,[28] one's judgments should no longer be taken as attempted copies of reality, but rather as *foresights toward future adjustment* to some environment (physical, psychological, social, etc.). Dewey's reconstructed theory of knowledge sees true judgments as generating behavior which brings predicted, useful results in adjusting to environment and its problems. Through scientific experimentation, we can gain control over the environment, thereby *producing* the objects of

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[21] *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 129.
[22] *Experience and Nature* (Chicago: Open Court, 1929), p. 161.
[23] *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, p. 139.
[24] *Philosophy and Civilization* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963), p. 23.
[25] *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, p. 143.
[26] "Experience, Knowledge, and Value: A Rejoinder," *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, p. 572.
[27] "What Does Pragmatism Mean by Practical?," *Journal of Philosophy* V (1908), pp. 85-99.
[28] *Experience and Nature*, p. 156; cf. *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 71.

"knowledge."

> The sum and substance of the present arguments is that if we frame our conception of knowledge on the experimental model, we find that it is a way of operating upon and with the things of ordinary experience so that we can frame our ideas of them in terms of their interactions with one another, instead of in terms of the qualities they directly present, and that thereby our control of them, our ability to change them and direct their changes as we desire, is indefinitely increased. Knowing is itself a mode of practical action and is *the* way of interaction by which other natural interactions become subject to direction.[29]

When a particular idea (plan for action) gains for us greater *control* in the environment, then it is warranted. "Knowledge is warranted assertion." "When there is possibility of control, knowledge is the sole agency of its realization."[30] Dewey's new objects of "knowledge" have a practical and future orientation: "Knowledge is always a matter of the use that is made of experienced natural events, … as indications of what will be experienced under different conditions."[31] He utterly disdained what he called "the spectator approach" to knowledge, with its theoretical headaches and misguided desire for intellectual certainty. Dewey aptly summarized his revolutionary approach to epistemology in *The Quest for Certainty* by saying "knowledge is the fruit of the undertakings that transform a problematic situation into a resolved one."[32] As traditionally understood, *certainty is not to be found.* But so what?

However, in response to Dewey's pragmatism, we can observe that one is not so easily absolved from the rigorous demands of epistemology; the key questions in the theory of knowledge have a recalcitrance which is not overcome by Dewey. The following line of critique will hopefully point this out.

It is to be noticed, first, that pragmatism places a peculiar strain on our use of language. On the one hand, the pragmatist uses language in a perplexingly extraordinary way, and on the other hand, in a deceptively vague manner. An understandably common reply to the proposal of pragmatism is this: even if a belief or idea does have a useful function (works well), is this not because it is first *true?* Just here it is evident that pragmatism is at variance with the way we use language, for Dewey took "effective working" to be, not the evidence of truth, but the very nature of truth. Yet there are many things which are ordinarily taken as true which are so taken *irrespective* of any pragmatic justification (e.g., that of those who died last year, some had brown eyes), and this is because we ordinarily take truth to be related to something *objective,* rather than as the valuable functioning of a belief. It seems as though the pragmatist wants us to adopt a very specialized use of key epistemic words, reserving them for those ideas which have the privileged status of being relevant, important, or practical. Such a programmatic reformation of our linguistic habits, however, is of little philosophic value, since traditional epistemic questions can still be asked - although with a new vocabulary; we still wonder whether certain statements or beliefs are "true" in the old sense, and linguistic renovation will not of itself prevent us from asking.

Moreover, when it is reported that such and such a solution to a problem is more useful ("true," new sense) than another proposal, one would be especially interested in asking whether this report is *true*

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[29] *The Quest for Certainty*, pp. 106-107, and "Propositions, Warranted Assertibility, and Truth" *Journal of Philosophy* XXXVIII (March 27, 1941), p. 173.
[30] *Experience and Nature*, p. 22.
[31] *John Dewey on Experience, Nature, and Freedom,* ed. R.J. Bernstein (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1960), p. 53.
[32] *The Quest for Certainty*, pp. 242-243.

(old sense). In response, the pragmatist will either be right back into the thick of it respecting traditional epistemological issue or he will prohibit the question (or just ignore it) as being pointless and impractical. But such a reply would he clearly ridiculous, because here we are not asking whether some *proposal* (e.g., "Quinine is a specific treatment for malaria") is true or useful, but rather whether a certain *conclusion* (e.g., "Quinine is more useful than salt tablets for treating malaria") is veridical. Certainly, it is *not* pointless to ask after the *accuracy* of the pragmatist's judgments about what works and what does not.

The ever-latent problem with schemes which require a sharp deviation from the ordinary use of words is that they covertly exclude perfectly legitimate and meaningful questions, such as the one asked above. But pragmatism's tendency to be a Procrustean bed is not its only difficulty. It also lacks requisite *clarity.* The emphasis upon a belief's usefulness or ability to work is very vague and ambiguous. Just what does it mean for a belief or idea to "work"? We readily understand the working of a machine or an employee, but the notion is odd when applied to a thought to which we give assent. Dewey's reply would be to treat beliefs as plans for action, and we do know what it is like for a plan to be successful. Yes, but then what comes of the *propositional attitude* traditionally called "belief"? Has it simply been obliterated from nature?[33] More to the point, though, is a specific question about the meaning of 'useful' in Dewey's instrumentalism. Just what is the nature of the *end* served by the usefulness of "true" beliefs? And how does one go about assessing usefulness? The pragmatists have been not at all unified in their answers to such questions. Their own respective leading interests (Pierce: math and science; James: psychology; Dewey: social reform) significantly colored and diversified their replies. Indeed, already in 1908 Arthur O. Lovejoy could distinguish thirteen different forms of pragmatism![34] Such ambiguity can be removed and inevitable relativism obviated, only by engaging in the questions associated with traditional disputes about objective truth. Failing this, pragmatism is an imprecise and unclear point of view.

A final observation should be made about the use of the words 'useful' and 'true' in pragmatism. Dewey sought to avoid the obviously defective view that truth is useful in the narrow sense of private expediency. This he did by correlating usefulness to the problem which raised a question for inquiry initially. When one examines, then, the way in which Dewey recommended that we verify the usefulness of judgments in relation to the questions which prompted them, it turns out that the *useful* is coextensive with that which meets the *empirical and coherence tests,* just as is demanded by common scientific procedure. That is, in order to salvage the credibility of pragmatism, Dewey had to trivialize its key notion, usefulness; in such a way that it amounted to what is commonly meant by 'true' (old sense) anyway. It appears, then, that Dewey's use of epistemic vocabulary is, first, contrary to ordinary and meaningful usage; second, it is far from precise and clear. But finally, in Dewey's novel approach to truth, its alleged equivalent ('useful' in the sense of 'confirmed') is deprived of any distinctive meaning in comparison to the way scientific secularism goes about determining truth and what it picks out as such.

In the long run, the novelty of Dewey's view of truth was not *how* it decided (or how it assessed) *what* is true; rather, it was Dewey's commentary on the *nature of truth.* Being content with well-established scientific procedure, he went on to speculate that truth does not exist antecedent to, or separate from, inquiry. Instead, it is a property which is *acquired* by an idea when investigation confirms it; when an idea becomes a warranted assertion through our experimentation, we have *made it true.* This is plainly false. The word 'true' is *not* functionally equivalent to the word 'confirmed'. The law of excluded middle leads us to agree that "Either p is true, or not-p is true."

[33] Like a city under nuclear attack? No, if anything, more like a viewpoint subject to brain-washing.
[34] Arthur O. Lovejoy, "The Thirteen Pragmatisms," *Journal of Philosophy* V (1908), pp. 29-39.

When 'confirmed' is substituted for 'true' we get: "Either p is confirmed, or not-p is confirmed"-and this is patently absurd (e.g., science has not confirmed the assertion "There were 17 billion ants in the world in 459 B.C.," but *neither* has it confirmed that there were not!). The fact is that 'confirmed' is a *lime-conditioned* word, whereas 'true' is not. That is why one does not usually hear the expression *"Today* it was true that Washington once crossed the Delaware,"[35] but we might have occasion to say "Today it was confirmed that Washington once crossed the Delaware." Again, if this has just now been *confirmed,* nevertheless five years ago it was just as *true* that Washington did it. Furthermore, it is hardly credible that we *make* a sentence true (e.g., "The wind is blowing southwesterly") unless, as G. E. Moore observed, we have control over what it describes! It thus appears that Dewey's novel approach to truth is in some respects trivial and in other respects false.

Beyond its linguistic difficulties, pragmatism comes to futility in the working out of its view of knowledge. We have been told that the sentences which are true (and hence knowable) are those whose predicted consequences are verified. Knowledge depends upon this confirmation. But this program for determining what *counts* as known and unknown already *presupposes* a *knowledge* of what results we can *expect* from the true sentences. Therefore, pragmatism requires that we *first know* the truth *in order to* indicate how we can know which sentences are true! This method is precariously circular. How can one *know in advance* what should count as verified consequences for a sentence? This question is especially telling for pragrnatism, since according to it one cannot *know* anything but the objects *created* as the *result* of experimentation. And yet if one does *not* know in advance, then he will be unable *after* experimentation to separate out the true sentences from the false ones (since Dewey identified truth with verification). Thus, pragmatism can know nothing at all.

However, overlooking this defect, even when the pragmatist knows what conditions must be met in order to accept a belief as true, he still has nq protection from error and wishful thinking. One need only *believe* that the satisfying conditions are met in order to be satisfied with a sentence or belief and thus take it as true. For instance, one believes that he is in Australia, and he wants to confirm it. He establishes this verification condition: if one is in Australia, then he can find kangaroos running wild. He then goes outside, and being in the Rocky Mountains, he comes across bears roaming wild. However, he *believes* that they are kangaroos. Thus, the verification condition is (albeit erroneously!) satisfied. What this indicates is that Dewey's pragmatism does not escape the traditional epistemological question known as the ego-centric predicament.[36]

We must further observe that Dewey fell far short of satisfying his own requirements of practicality and warranted assertion; his pragmatism, by attempting to suppress the standard problems of epistemological theory, failed to be useful or verified. *First,* it shortsightedly selected *which problem's* to concentrate upon and *what standard* to use in assessing the usefulness of certain answers. For instance, it is perfectly conceivable that some belief might work well for the present, but in the long run not really be useful ("true"). "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" might conceivably work well for someone; it might help him adjust to his secular social environment, ease his psychological frustrations, and be more efficient in attaining the securities and comforts of life, And, scientific investigation has verified that everyone does die. A sophisticated case for this "plan of action," then, might very well pass the pragmatist's test. Hence, he could accept it as "true" and ignore the "irrelevant, abstract, and (here-and-now) inconsequential" theories of the eschatological religions. Yet should the threat of an afterlife, where men's deeds are judged, accurately describe the

[35] Although it might have been stated on some day many years ago.

[36] Pragmatism is surely not *practical* if it fails to answer this question, for otherwise it would not make us secure against such things as man-eating wallabies!

real situation, "eat, drink, and be merry" would quite obviously be *impractical.* Dewey's quest for *security instead of certainty,* then, cannot be satisfied until one first arrives at *certainty*-for instance, as to the question of men's destinies. Since the problem of an after-life is not subject to the trial-and-error method of scientific experimentation, it must needs be resolved on somewhat other grounds, which means that Dewey would be forced to confront the difficult philosophic issues traditionally associated with epistemology just as his scholarly predecessors did. Pragmatism is extremely impractical and insecure if it abandons, as it does, the quest for intellectual certainty.

Secondly, even with respect to the more mundane problems of the present life, pragmatism turns out to be *impractical.* Dewey said that the first step in knowing is to locate the problems which need solution; this is eminently practical. However, he has also insisted that ideas are anticipatory plans for some *future* operation, tentative programs of action, and foresights for adjustment. Hence, one *cannot* have an idea or knowledge of the *preexisting* problem which must be the *starting point* for inquiry and knowledge? Since ideas are forward-looking, how can one know what a problem is, that a situation has certain features, or that these features are problematic? We need veridical ideas about the *present* before we can devise successful plans for the future. This again will bring us up against the necessity of answering standard epistemological problems, for the attempt to produce an accurate description of a real situation (and thereby know it as a problem to be resolved) assumes an adequate answer to various skeptical challenges. Dewey's theory, then, would make his own starting point unknowable and thereby preclude solving problems.

Thirdly, pragmatism is impractical for the reason that *standard intellectual problems* in the theory of knowledge are among those which we encounter in our environment and trouble us, and yet pragmatism arbitrarily relegates them to the classification of impertinence. But why should social reform be worth inquiry, but overcoming skepticism's nagging difficulties ignored? Intellectual problems are just as real problems as other kinds. Therefore, we can ask just how well Dewey's viewpoint "works" if it fails to give us a *coherent and unified conceptual mastery over the data of experience.* On this score, pragmatism must be rated quite low, for the coherence of Dewey's philosophy can be seriously questioned. Obviously, there is the problem mentioned in the previous paragraph.

It is clear that Dewey has overstated his case for a *consequentialist* approach to knowledge; ideas cannot be solely future oriented, and the objects of knowledge cannot be exclusively created as the outcome of experimentation. Not surprisingly, then, we find that Dewey attempted to salvage the common-sense conviction that objects of knowledge are not completely subjective, that existents have antecedent reality, and that what we experience is somewhat independent of our thinking about it. And yet he simultaneously wished to avoid the idea of "the total transcendence of knowledge."

> Any experienced subject-matter whatever may *become* an object of reflection and cognitive inspection. . . The emphasis is upon "become"; the cognitive never is all-inclusive: that is, when the material of a prior non-cognitive experience is the object of knowledge, it and the act of knowing are themselves included within a new and wider non-cognitive experience-and *this* situation can never be transcended.[37]

But we must ask whether Dewey, in his attempt to avoid the pitfall of idealism, has not smuggled into his account elements which he elsewhere explicitly denies. Although he wants to assert that we experience things *as* being antecedent to our experience of them, nevertheless he viewed "ex-

[37] *Experience and Nature*, p. 24.

perience" as a *reconstruction* of situations in such a way that it makes the world different from what it would have been *without* human operational thinking. What, then, are existents *it: themselves* when not the object of cognitive reflection? The status of objects when they are not being thought upon is a real problem for pragmatism. It seems to make the given - that aspect of reality which is antecedent to the operation of human thought upon it - into a mysterious thing-in-itself. Likewise, the objects of human cognition are unavoidably altered in character from those external objects which exist independent of our experience of them.[38] This leads us right back into the eradicable subjectivism of Kantian idealism with its nominal/phenomenal dichotomy.[39] Dewey was hopelessly caught in a *dialectical tension:* objects of knowledge are *created* by rational inquiry (the real is the rational), and yet the intended objects of experience exist *independently* of cognitive control and reconstruction (the cognitive is never all-inclusive). This reflects the rational-irrational antinomy of all secular thought.[40]

Such an antinomy is also illustrated in the *necessity-contingency* syndrome of Dewey's thought. *On the one hand,* Dewey spoke as though logic and science have certain *autonomous* norms characterized by universal necessity and invariance, norms which reflect the permanent structure of real existence. Hence, intellect demands that "contradictions" (i.e., unresolved problems) be overcome in accordance with the useful instruments of logic and scientific method.[41] If we are to arrive at warranted assertions, certain conditions *must* be satisfied. Knowing must be a "regulated course" of interaction with nature,[42] and inquiry must be subject to the *requirement* of logical forms.[43] "Logical forms are invariants . . . 'Invariants' are necessary for the conduct of inquiry."[44] The sole way of *control* was through *scientific knowledge,* and science was foremost "controlled inference,"[45] "regular methods of controlling,"[46] Inquiry is the "controlled and directed transformation of an indeterminate situation."[47] Thus, there are *universal prescriptions* which regulate our judgments about experience.[48] There are set controls on intelligent method. Moreover, Dewey could speak of *necessary conditions* of experience[49] and testing,[50] of laws (or relations) as "the constancy among variations,"[51] and of development according to "the structures of the world."[52] Indeed, *continuity and permanence* are studied by science as *imbedded in the conditions of nature:* "Constant relations among changes are the subject-matter of scientific thought,"[53] and "Nature and

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[38] Note: "Knowing …marks a transitional redirection and rearrangement of the real." *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 295.
[39] It is certainly not without significance here that Dewey's doctoral dissertation at Johns Hopkins in 1884 was written on the psychology of Kant.
[40] The antinomy takes various expressions in connection with different problems: the object of knowledge (reconstructed by thought/independent of thought), the subject of knowledge (must be omniscient/can know nothing with certainty), the standards of knowledge (there are universal norms/contingency precludes all criteria), nature of the external world (completely determined/thoroughly contingent), nature of values (there are objective guidelines/everything is relative to person judging).
[41] "The function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious." *How We Think* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1933), pp. 100-101.
[42] *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 295.
[43] *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1938), p. 5.
[44] *Ibid*., p. 390.
[45] *Essays in Experimental Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1953), p. 435.
[46] *Philosophy of Education* (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, and Co., 1958), p. 211.
[47] *Logic*, p. 104.
[48] Hence, e.g., "Logical Conditions of a Scientific Treatment of Morality," *Philosophy of Education*, pp. 211-249.
[49] *Art as Experience*, (New York: Capricorn Books, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958), p. 212.
[50] *Logic,* p. iv.
[51] *Experience and Nature*, p. 146.
[52] *Ibid*., p. 277.
[53] *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 248.

life manifest not flux but continuity, and continuity involves forces and structures that endure through change."[54] Hence, such things as mathematical relations "are derived from natural conditions" and *not* "fictions . . . called into being by that particular act of mind in which they are used."[55] Therefore, one cannot miss a commitment to necessary criteria, laws, and constant relations of nature (or permanent structures) in Dewey's writings.

And yet, *on the other hand,* Dewey's evolutionary naturalism *precludes* permanently fixed orders or norms, since all existence and experience are held to be radically *contingent.* He insisted that "Experience is *of* as well as *in* nature"[56] and that the human mind has *developed* in the context of a world of change.[57] It was his conviction "that reality *is* process, and that laws as well as things develop in the processes of unceasing change."[58] The future is always marked by contingency.[59] Thus "from the standpoint of existence, independently of its subjection to inquiry there is no criterion."[60] There are *no* objective necessities or norms, and what we take as invariants are, due to the contingency of reality, mere matters of cognition. *Prior* to the knowing activity of man, the world is *not* "intellectually coherent," but rather the knowing process *gives* relations to the world, just as it *gives* form to experienced objects, which the world of objects did not itself have.[61] In light of this, Dewey taught that "all logical forms arise within the operation of inquiry."[62] They are not ultimate invariants to which inquiry must conform;[63] thus no logical principles are absolute or immune from revision. Every law of logic is a result of inquiry, developed within contingent nature, and as such subject to change when human habits change.[64] *Logical rules* are a matter of *convention,* comparable to civil law.[65] As a matter of experience, we see that meeting certain conditions leads to valid conclusions, so that *experience* regulates the norms of inquiry and validates the standards of science. Logical operations have no autonomous status, but are defined by existential conditions and consequences-never *vice-versa.*[66] That is, logic is "relative to consequences rather than to antecedents," and its rules "like other tools . . . must be modified when they are applied to new conditions and new results have to be achieved."[67] *There simply can be no necessary relations or permanent laws in a world of constant change:* "That conditions are never completely fixed means that they are in process - that, in any case, they are moving toward the production of a state of affairs which is going to be different in *some* respect."[68] *Contingency precludes necessity:* "The necessary is always necessary for, not necessary in and of itself; it is conditioned by the contingent."[69] Thus, results of inquiry never attain the status of an "inherent *logical* necessity" but must always remain "a brute fact."[70]

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[54] *Art as Experience*, p. 323.
[55] *Essays in Experimental Logic*, pp. 56-57. Dewey went so far as to say that concrete things dictate what is necessary for an intellectual grasp of themselves: *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, pp. 107, 235.
[56] *Experience and Nature*, p. iii.
[57] *Ibid*., p. 277.
[58] *John Dewey on Experience, Nature, and Freedom*, p. 229.
[59] *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: The Modern Library, 1939), p. 208.
[60] *Logic*, p. 268.
[61] *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 295.
[62] *Logic*, pp. 3-4.
[63] *Ibid*, p. 11.
[64] *Ibid*., pp. 13-14, 82, 156-157, 328-329, 372, 374.
[65] *Ibid*., pp. 16-17, 102, 120, 372ff.
[66] *Ibid*., p. 15.
[67] *Philosophy and Civilization*, pp. 138-139.
[68] *Logic*, p. 500.
[69] *Experience and Nature*, p. 65.
[70] *Logic*, p. 279.

If the previous two paragraphs read like night and day, it is because Dewey has throughout his writings tried unsuccessfully to combine irreconcilable attitudes. He wants to hold onto both criteria *and* contingency. He wants science to control inquiry into experience, *and ye:* he wants experience to determine the controls of scientific inquiry. He wants a basically *incoherent* world to be amenable to the demands of *rational reflection.* He aims to make logic both autonomous from *and* dependent upon temporal process. He teaches that existence is both radically contingent *and yet* subject to the conditions lay down by developed logic. In short, Dewey has suppressed the theoretical issues of epistemology only to wind up being forced back and forth between rationalism and irrationalism, and hence his viewpoint is undeniably inadequate to satisfy or resolve the problems of intellect. As suggested above, this is further proof that pragmatism is thoroughly *impractical.* Epistemological futility is anything but useful.

Not only did Dewey's pragmatism fail to satisfy its own demand for practicality (at least in the three ways mentioned above), but finally it must be observed that Dewey never did in fact subject his pragmatic theory to the required test of consequences and prediction. That is, his viewpoint never was *verified* in the way it required every other claim to be. Indeed, he firmly *accepted* the pragmatic outlook admittedly prior to the ability to verify it.[71] Dewey simply did *not* put aside every putative authority and refuse to admit anything which could not first be validated. For instance, Dewey's naturalistic view of the world was assumed, not proven.[72] Again, his whole outlook stems from an evolutionary presupposition, but if the history of scholarship demonstrates anything about the theory of evolution, it is that this is an unscientific, speculatively preconceived *gestalt-a* philosophically rooted commitment which is immune to factual scrutiny.[73] Further, the philosophic and scientific challenges to behaviorism-another basic assumption of Dewey's pragmatism-are notorious even today; the debate over this theory continues unabated at present, more than two decades after Dewey's death. Thus, it can hardly be said that Dewey had confirmed his most elementary theses: naturalism, evolution, and behaviorism.

Moreover, Dewey's writings are permeated with a commitment to certain *values.* He taught that human experience discovers values in *nature,* just as it discovers other facts. However, he also had to admit the distinction between something being *valued* and something being valuable. What *is* desired may not be *desirable,* and Dewey never did demonstrate that his own values should be favorably evaluated by us. There have been plenty of values which have endured longer than his own, and they continue to be cherished today. Dewey aimed to produce a "better" social order, but not everyone is convinced that his order is better. For him merely to presume that there is a broad consensus on values would be unjustifiable. Thus, he could not legitimately escape the central epistemological question, *how* do you *know* that such is the case? as this is applied in the area of axiology. In the absence of any well-argued basis for the choice of values, Dewey's thought must be seen as the expression of an arbitrary preference.

It is not at all clear what *rules* Dewey followed in adopting or rejecting truths,' values, criteria, or operating methods. Therefore, his disdain for theoretical epistemology left his adoptions and rejections *arbitrary.* His standards and procedures were unjustified; they failed to pass Dewey's own self-proclaimed requirement of verification. The inescapable conclusion is that instrumentalism is not the result of a scholarly analysis but rests on a personal choice. It buys practical relevance and popularity at the expense of a thorough explication, examination, and justification of the foundations of its teachings. Like so many programs which are impatient with the exacting and hard issues of

[71] "The Problem of Truth," *Old Penn* IX (Feb. 11, 18, and March 4, 1911), pp. 522-528, 556-563, 620-625.
[72] That supra-naturalistic views were not instrumental in resolving social problems (*even if* true) would *not* verify naturalism.
[73] See my article, "On Worshipping the Creature Rather Than the Creator," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* I (Summer, 1974).

traditional epistemology, pragmatism, under the guise of down-to-earth practicality and progress, promotes a thoughtless dogma. Dewey was not doing philosophy; lie was writing a creed. But upon reflection this should not surprise us. At the beginning, we noted that pragmatism set forth the view that truth is that which "works." At that point, we could have asked whether the pragmatic theory claims to be *trite* in the older sense of a correct description of what is the case. if it does not (and it could not, given Dewey's disdain for a spectator approach to truth), then what could *pragmatism* be? It could only be a *recommendation.* And as such (prescriptive, rather than descriptive), we are free to reject it.

Consequently, we conclude that Dewey's pragmatism has not eliminated the need to confront the issues of epistemological theory. At best it is a trivial linguistic reform, and at worst it is a mere recommendation. Furthermore, between these two extremes, we have observed that it is unclear, circular, subject to self-delusion, shortsighted, self-defeating as to its practical interests, and incoherently dialectical. Dewey's position has been the most sophisticated attempt to escape the difficulties posed by the theory of knowledge and the traditional search for certainty, but it is clearly a dead-end. Epistemology has an incredible, and often unappreciated, recalcitrance. Dewey's philosophy was not adequate to its demands. Therefore, even though Dewey may have given philosophy a refreshing return to practical matters in contrast to curious and dubious soaring of absolute idealism, he had no successful answer to the skeptic.

Wittgenstein and Language-games

It is widely recognized that the most influential philosopher in recent years (and perhaps the most significant in this century) has been Ludwig Wittgenstein (l889-1951). In 1939 he succeeded G. F. Moore in the chair of philosophy at Cambridge University.[74] Along with Russell, Wittgenstein saw language as *the key* to unlocking basic philosophic problems. His earliest work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,*[75] pursued the "perfect language" of Russell's *logical atomism,* according to which each sentence should picture a fact in the world (taken to be comprised simply of things, properties, and relations) and each word should denote an element thereof. Thus, language would be made to mirror reality, and logic would determine the limits of meaningful expression-that is, circumscribe the boundaries of the "say able." The *Tractatus* understandably had a noteworthy influence on the Vienna Circle with its emphasis on the logical analysis of language (especially the language of the hard sciences) and the necessity for empirical verification of all cognitive propositions.

However, Wittgenstein later came to disagree with his early thinking about language. In the *Tractatus* the connection between language and reality depended upon a correlation between thought-elements and simple atoms of the experienced world. In the 1940's Wittgenstein composed

[74] It is of passing interest to note the various social relations of many eminent men of the past century. John Stuart Mill served as an informal godfather to Bertrand Russell, who became an atheist after reading Mill's *Autobiography*. Russell was converted to Hegelianism by McTaggart and Bradley, and subsequently to a modified Platonism by G.E. Moore. He co-authored *Principia Mathematica* with Alfred North Whitehead. When a court order cancelled Russell's appointment to the City College of New York in 1940, John Dewey was among those who wrote in his defense (as did Ducasse, Beard, Becker, Lovejoy, Perry, Brightman, Einstein, and so on). Russell carried on extensive correspondence with D.H. Lawrence. Wittgenstein, whose family numbered Johannes Brahms among its friends, was advised by Gottlob Frege to study under Russell at Cambridge. Wittgenstein often thought upon suicide (something which three of his four brothers actualized) but identified coming to study with Russell as his "salvation." While in prison camp during the First World War, he passed a completed manuscript to Russell through the good offices of their mutual friend, John Maynard Keynes. This was later given an introduction by Russell and published as the *Tractatus*. For it, in addition to an oral exam given by Schlick, Friedrich Waismann, and Frank Ramsey (all influential scholars in their own right). Subsequently he apostatized from Russell's salvation to head up his own philosophical cult.

[75] Translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1921, reprinted 1971).

observations which were published under the title *Philosophical Investigations,*[76] a work in which lie recognizes "grave mistakes" in his previous book and sets out a contrasting position. Here he argued that the notion of atoms which are absolutely simple is incoherent, and that a private correlation between items in reality and elements of thought is impossible. Whereas the ultimate data of the *Tractatus* are the atoms comprising reality or the world, the ultimate data of the *Investigations* came to be the "forms of life" in which language-games are embedded. Whereas Russell's logical atomism had formerly been the authority for determining meaningfulness, now the limits of the say able would be determined by ordinary linguistic use. Everything which has a real use or performs an important task in language counts as say able and meaningful.

From this vantage point Wittgenstein approached philosophy with an attitude very similar to Dewey's in many respects. Toward the end of his life Wittgenstein reflected: "In other words I want to say something that sounds like pragmatism." Dewey had been an instrumentalist who revolted against the traditional philosophical preoccupation with essences (rather than functions). Wittgenstein held that *"Essence* is expressed by grammar," and "Grammar … only describes and in no way explains the *use* of signs."[77] Accordingly, he took an *instrumentalist approach to language.* The thesis of the *Investigations* is well summarized in this directive: "Look at the sentence as an instrument, and at its sense as its employment.[78] Also like Dewey, Wittgenstein viewed the aim of philosophy as the *solving of problems* rather than the discovery of esoteric facts; one should never pursue philosophy for its own sake, but only in order to dissolve problems which have arisen through a misuse of ordinary language. "What is your aim in philosophy? - To shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle"; "the results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language."[79] Furthermore, as Dewey's pragmatism was behavior-oriented, so also Wittgenstein insisted that personal behavior, one's situation and responses, the full context of human living must be taken into account when analyzing meaning and solving the problems of philosophy via an examination of linguistic usage. The speaker's form of life is crucial: "the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." Indeed, "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life."[80] One must not forget the *social* nature of language.

In Wittgenstein's later way of looking at things, the meaning of words is not to be identified with their referents or mental images, but rather "for a *large* class of cases - though not for all - in which we employ 'meaning' it can he defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language."[81] And when we examine the various uses to which a word is put we see that it is not bound by strict criteria or rules; rather, a kind of "family resemblance" holds between the diverse functions (a complicated network of overlapping similarities instead of one underlying common feature)."[82] The philosopher must recognize the *inherent ambiguities of ordinary language* and the *multiple functions* which language serves; thereby he will resist the lure of an allegedly perfect language and the temptation to resolve problems through linguistic refinement or artificial usage. "What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (s. 116); "we remain unconscious of the

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[76] Third ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan Co., 1953).
[77] *Ibid*., sections 371, 496.
[78] *Ibid*., s. 421; cf. "Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments" (s. 596); see also the illustration of a tool-box (s. 11).
[79] *Ibid*., s. 309, 119; cf. s. 38, "Philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*" or is not *doing work* (s. 132).
[80] *Ibid*., s. 23, 19. "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it iw woven, the 'language-game'" (s. 7; cf. s. 489.
[81] *Ibid*., s. 43.
[82] *Ibid*., s. 65-69.

prodigious diversity of all the everyday language games" (p. 224e). Complexity and vagueness in the use of language cannot always be reduced to simplicity and precision. Language is too varied, fluid, messy for that.

However, this does not open the door to the possibility of completely *private,* individually unique, languages; languages follow a rough grammar, and *grammar* is always something *public.* One's definitions may *be* chosen according to his interests or purpose,[83] but all definitions are governed by *custom and function* within a *form of life* which determines the language-games utilized.[84] "Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning."[85] This is akin to the fact that a sign-post is in itself dead and does not indicate which way the arrow is supposed to point you;[86] only a regular use of it-a custom-gives it life. "Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are *trained* to do so; we react to an order *in a particular way."*[87] Hence *language-games* are *publicly determined,* are part of a common way of acting and responding. "To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order . . . are *customs* (uses, institutions). To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique."[88] Obeying a rule is a *practice* - which explains why someone cannot be said to obey a rule privately or only once in his life.[89] The reasons why we follow a rule in a certain manner (or use language the way we do) eventually give out, and we simply have a *convention:* "This is simply what I do."[90] Regular public practice determines the meaning of words; it requires common behavior and agreed-upon results—that is, the *sharing of a form of life.* "If language is to be a means of communication there must he agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. . .. They agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinion but in form of life."[91] And this form of life is the bedrock for all explanations, the place where all justifications give out. "When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule *blindly."*[92]

It is within one's language-game, i.e., his form of public life, that thinking and understanding are defined. Hence *knowledge* is taken as one's *ability to use the language-game,* and what counts as justification for propositions is *internally determined* by the language-game itself: "The chain of reasons has an end. . .. Is our confidence justified? -What people accept as justification-is shewn by how they think and live."[93] Thus different standards or norms will be used in different Systems, different situations, or different language-games. The *criteria for certainty* will be *internal* and a *matter of practice* or *form of life.* Without the con text provided by the language-game there would be no sense to doubting, testing, concluding, etc. There are points where doubt is completely lacking, for "doubting has an end."[94] This should be identified as the place where reasons and justifications have an end as well: the paradigms which guide the grammar of our language, our language-games.

Toward the end of his life, while in New York during 1949, Wittgenstein was stimulated to reflect further on the subject of certainty by rereading G. E. Moore's "Defense of Common Sense" and

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[83] *Ibid*., s. 560-570; cf. 17, 132, 499.
[84] *Ibid*., e.g., s. 257, 344; p. 18e.
[85] *Ibid*., s. 198.
[86] *Ibid*., s. 432.
[87] *Ibid*., s. 206.
[88] *Ibid*., s. 199.
[89] *Ibid*., s. 199, 202.
[90] *Ibid*., s. 211, 217.
[91] *Ibid*., s. 242, 241.
[92] *Ibid*., s. 217, 219.
[93] *Ibid*., s. 326, 325; cf. 353, 486; 143-242; 316-341, 75.
[94] *Ibid*., II v (p. 180e).

"Proof of an External World." He wrote extensive notes about certainty up until two days before his death.[95] While elsewhere in the book differing with Moore, in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein agreed with him *against* Descartes' procedure of methodological doubt. Wittgenstein exhibited the unintelligibility of the procedure which calls for us to *doubt everything* in order to arrive at certainty; unintentionally he also showed the impossibility of skirting the traditional questions of epistemology.

Wittgenstein insightfully noted that *doubt presupposes the mastery of a language, its procedures, and rules.* Doubt cannot be so radical that it calls into question the very meanings of the words used to express it; to doubt a sentence, you need first to understand what is meant by the sentence.[96] Thus "if you are not certain of any fact, you cannot be certain of the meaning of your words either."[97] So also, a *reasonable* suspicion about some assertion requires *specific-not* just imaginable-grounds.[98] One could always imagine that what is described in some indicative sentence, p, is actually the contrary, not-p; yet doubting p would be idle unless a concrete reason against p could be offered. Therefore, the very activity of doubting requires a context of accepted beliefs; one can doubt only if he first has learned to handle a language and to use some judgments to call other judgments into question. *Learning precedes doubt,* and *learning precludes doubting everything;* to get on with learning, the student must not doubt certain things.[99] "For how can a child immediately doubt what it is taught? That could mean only that he was incapable of learning certain language games."[100]

These observations have important epistemological consequences. "The child learns by believing the adult. Doubt comes *after* belief."[101] Also "doubt itself rests only on what is beyond doubt."[102] Thus, "a doubt that doubted everything would not be a doubt."[103] In short, Wittgenstein has shown universal doubt to be impossible. Doubt requires the testing of assertions[104] but testing comes to and end and thus assumes something which is not tested;[105] therefore, "the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn."[106] Wittgenstein's conclusion on this point is surely one with which we should agree: "If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. *The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty."*[107]

Wittgenstein wanted to distinguish between *madness* and making a *mistake.*[108] Being mistaken requires that there are a modicum of judgments on which you agree with the rest of mankind,[109] but when you cannot imagine what it would be like to convince the skeptic of p, or to correct his mistake about p, or what other propositions should be any more trust-worthy than p, then what we have is

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[95] Subsequently they were organized and edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, being published as: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, 1969).
[96] *Ibid.*, sections 3-6. 360. 456/
[97] *Ibid.*, s. 114.
[98] *Ibid.*, s. 120, 247, 323, 458; e.g., s. 4.
[99] *Ibid.*, s. 329, 310-315. "Learning is based on believing," s. 170.
[100] *Ibid.*, s. 283.
[101] *Ibid.*, s. 160.
[102] *Ibid.*, s. 519.
[103] *Ibid.*, s. 450.
[104] *Ibid.*, s. 125.
[105] *Ibid.*, s. 163-164, 337.
[106] *Ibid.*, s. 341.
[107] *Ibid.*, s. 115, emphasis mine.
[108] *Ibid.*, e.g., s. 71, 75, 155, 196.
[109] *Ibid.*, s. 156.

madness.[110] When doubts can never be corrected, no sense can be attached to them.[111] Now, what Wittgenstein wanted to hold is that you can doubt each sentence one by one, but you can never doubt them all.[112] To doubt *everything* is not a mistake; it is madness.[113] Furthermore, there are particular places where doubt is simply senseless; there are propositions which are, for us, indubitable-that is which stand fast for us and are regarded as absolutely solid.[114] With respect to such indubitable beliefs, it makes no sense to doubt them; we are not ready to let anything count as disproof of them, and their contradictories cannot be seriously considered.[115] Wittgenstein offered many examples of such indubitable propositions which might lead the uncritical reader toward agreement with him.[116] To doubt, e.g., that I had great grandparents might indeed be brushed off as madness.

We are ready to agree that there *are,* and must be, *indubitable propositions;* and *universal* doubt is, true enough, senseless. However, we must demur when Wittgenstein starts talking about the *madness* of those who fail to recognize *his* indubitables. Here we have a damaging pointer to how Wittgenstein settled upon his most basic commitments. Before exposing it, though, one needs to recognize Wittgenstein's *proper* assessment of the *role* which each person's indubitable beliefs play for him.

Wittgenstein was correct in holding that the system of propositions one accepts as certain are the unmoving foundation, the essential presuppositions, of his language games - the basis for his actions and thoughts.[117] These indubitables comprise one's world-picture, his way of looking at the world, his *Weltanschauung.*[118] As such, they are not taken one by one as indubitable, but rather as a connected *system:* "A *totality* of judgments is made plausible to us. When we first begin to *believe* anything, what we believe is not a single proposition; it is a whole system of propositions . . . It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another mutual support."[119] The grounds for adopting some world-picture are not experience or outstanding success;[120] our indubitable propositions have a "peculiar logical role in the system" *bordering* on being logical (methodological) *and* empirical (i.e., within a method),[121] rather than arrived at as the result of investigation.[122] Instead, these *indubitable propositions* themselves "form the foundation of all operating with thoughts,[123] "the matter-of-course foundation for research ,"[124] and "the substratum of all enquiring and asserting."[125] Therefore, they are the hinge on which disputes turn,[126] providing *rules for testing* and the *foundation for all judging.*[127] "All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this

[110] *Ibid.*, s. 300-304; e.g., s. 257, 420.
[111] *Ibid.*, s. 383, 642, 676.
[112] *Ibid.*, s. 232.
[113] *Ibid.*, s. 217.
[114] *Ibid.*, s. 112, 116, 151.
[115] *Ibid.*, s. 2, 93, 245, 226, 657.
[116] *Ibid.*, e.g., every human being has a brain (s. 4, 159, 281); I have here two hands (s. 3, 125); the earth has existed for the past hundred years (s. 138) and is round (s. 299); the sun is not a hole in the vault of heaven (s. 104; motor cars do not grow out of the earth (s. 279); 12X12=144 (s. 651); water boils at 100°C (s. 599); I had great grandparents (s. 159).
[117] *Ibid.*, s. 403, 411, 524, 558.
[118] *Ibid.*, s. 92, 422.
[119] *Ibid.*, s. 140-142.
[120] *Ibid.*, s. 131.
[121] *Ibid.*, s. 136, 318-319.
[122] *Ibid.*, s. 138.
[123] *Ibid.*, s. 401.
[124] *Ibid.*, s. 167; cf. s. 87.
[125] *Ibid.*, s. 162; cf. s. 88.
[126] *Ibid.*, s. 655.
[127] *Ibid.*, s. 96, 98, 614.

system is … the element in which arguments have their life."[128] One's indubitable propositions, his world-picture, thus function as *the rules of a game.*[129] When the rules change, so does the (language-) game or system. Hence, about the statements which one accepts as certain Wittgenstein says, "if I speak of a possible mistake here, this changes the role of 'mistake' and 'truth' in our lives";[130] consequently, anyone who doubts these presuppositions "does not accept our whole system of verification."[131]

Therefore, we see that one cannot doubt everything, for doubting assumes certainty, and we all hold to *some* system of propositions taken as certain. They form a *worldview* which functions as the *presuppositional starting point* for inquiry and determines our *standards of verification.* These were Wittgenstein's incisive observations and merit our agreement.[132] However, Wittgenstein did not do so well by them, for he was led by them to arbitrariness at best, and to prejudice at worst. Above, it was noted that Wittgenstein wanted to settle the rigorous questions of epistemology by saying that, with respect to one's indubitable beliefs, doubts entertained about them can be brushed off as madness. One's presuppositions are correlated with what he personally deems madness.[133] This tips us off to the fact that Wittgenstein would, in the long run, hold that there are no *absolutely correct* presuppositional certainties; there are only *deep convictions* which some society ingrains in us as the indubitable propositions for sane and reasonable men. There is no way to settle *disagreements* at the most basic presuppositional level; one cannot know for sure that his certainties are the correct ones to hold, but can only resort to name-calling with his opponent. "Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and heretic."[134] Reasoning ends and *persuasion* takes over.[135] One who is skeptical about what you take as certain cannot be *answered;* he can only be *silenced.*

Wittgenstein may have seen the necessity and function of presuppositional certainties, but he was wrongly led to think that epistemological reasoning had to be abandoned at this point between differing philosophers. Where did he go wrong? I propose that it was with confusion here: "I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness."[136] This observation is true-for Wittgenstein and many others. But it does not properly imply either that one *should not,* or that one *cannot,* be satisfied (intellectually, not merely emotionally) with the correctness of his pre-supposition (or worldview) in the face of skepticism or a competing system. That one does *not* verify or prove his presuppositions in any *ordinary manner* (i.e., like hypotheses to be experimentally and logically tested-which would be deceptively circular since the presuppositions themselves set the standards and starting point for verification) does *not* mean that some cannot be seen to be wrong and others right; it simply indicates that philosophical argumentation here must take a different, yet legitimate, tack-namely, examining *which* presuppositions provide the *necessary preconditions* for *any* intelligent reasoning and which presuppositions *scuttle* man's epistemic endeavors. Wittgenstein (and others) may not have satisfied himself about the correctness of his presuppositions precisely

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[128] *Ibid.*, s. 105.
[129] *Ibid.*, s. 95.
[130] *Ibid.*, s. 138.
[131] *Ibid.*, s. 279.
[132] Of course, long before the later Wittgenstein was forced to these conclusions by an observation of ordinary language, Professor Cornelius Van Til had expounded to Christian scholars the critical importance of one's own presuppositions for all his subsequent thought, questioning, verification, standards, conclusions, and behavior. When Van Til was beginning to teach Christian apologetics from this decisive standpoint, Wittgenstein was submitting the *Tractatus* for his Ph.D. at Cambridge.
[133] *Op. cit.*, s. 420.
[134] *Ibid.*, s. 611.
[135] *Ibid.*, s. 612.
[136] *Ibid.,* s. 94.

because they *were not* correct. In that case, he could avoid reforming his thinking and admitting error by placing everyone in the same (sinking) ship of presuppositional arbitrariness, that is, by teaching that one's certainties were not a matter of truth and intellectual grounding but sociological conditioning.

"What we believe depends on what we learn."[137] As a matter of training, men can he led to hold, what to others appears to be, strange positions (e.g., that men can make rain); they may be *induced* to change them, but *not* on the grounds of correctness.[138] This is all relative to the society in which one learns to do his judging. What one takes as certain is *not learned,* said Wittgenstein, but *implicitly* swallowed *along with* what is learned.[139] Presuppositions are smuggled in with our learned beliefs and not argued for or against. Thus, one's system of indubitable propositions is "acquired" - but not "learned" - by instruction;[140] that is, they are simply "inherited background."[141] One's presuppositions, then, are not known as true; they are merely voluntaristically acted upon. Argumentation comes to an end at one's language game or worldview, "but the end is not certain propositions' striking us as immediately true, i.e., it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting,* which lies at the bottom of the language game[142]—an *ungrounded* way of acting."[143] Therefore, one can sum up by saying that the concept of knowing is coupled with that of the language game (embodying a presuppositional worldview),[144] and "you must bear in mind that the language game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there-like our life."[145] The epistemological quest for certainty is eventually washed away in the flood of intellectual arbitrariness and radical skepticism *at* tile presuppositional level. The following note by Wittgenstein tells the whole story: "The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing."[146]

The procedure described by Wittgenstein above may very well be an accurate reflection of what actually happens as one *initially* forms his presuppositions. However, it does *not* lay down what *should* happen when men philosophically reflect upon serious questions about knowledge or certainty-when there is a conflict over foundational certainties. To leave matters where Wittgenstein did is not to finish the task of the philosopher, but to descend to the sociology of prejudice. Wittgenstein too quickly abandoned epistemological theorizing and capitulated to a skeptical relativism which chooses to follow those teachings bolstered by some group's esteem for them. He should have pressed on and considered the question: Which propositions *should* be most trusted, obvious, and indubitable to us (not merely which propositions *are* most indubitable in this society)? As we have seen previously, epistemology has a recalcitrance that is not appreciated.

The *necessity* for Wittgenstein to keep on asking deep questions about certainty and not stop short epistemologically is clearly revealed in considering one of his illustrations of a bed-rock position to be accepted as certain. Remembering that Wittgenstein's only defense for his indubitable beliefs was finally to declare that anyone who doubted them was mad (in terms of commonly accepted linguistic

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[137] *Ibid.,* s. 286.
[138] *Ibid.,* s. 92, 132. Wittgenstein said that one can be "converted" (in a special sense) to a changed way of looking at things, but this new perspective is not *proved:* s. 92, 279. That is, it cannot be shown to be true over against the former perspective.
[139] *Ibid.,* s. 152, 476.
[140] *Ibid.,* s. 279.
[141] *Ibid.,* s. 94.
[142] *Ibid.,* s. 204.
[143] *Ibid.,* s. 110, emphasis mine.
[144] *Ibid.,* s. 560.
[145] *Ibid.,* s. 559.
[146] *Ibid.,* s. 166.

practice and world-picture), we need to note that lie asserted that "our whole system of physics forbids us to believe" that someone could ever go to the moon![147] We believe this, he said, on the grounds of what we learn.[148] It is instilled in us, and no reasonable man doubts it. Those who think contrary are to be, in terms of the thinking of our system, straightforwardly dismissed as mistaken.

> We believe that it isn't possible to get to the moon; but there might be people who believe that that is possible and that it sometimes happens. We say: these people do not know a lot that we know. And, let them be never so sure of their belief - they are wrong and we know it. If we compare our system of knowledge with theirs then theirs is evidently the poorer one by far.[149]

Surely this is embarrassing today, but our point is not to shame what Wittgenstein thought. Rather, this infelicitous example is adduced in order to demonstrate that epistemology *cannot end* with the recognition that we all have, and operate upon, presuppositions accepted as certain-even when one enjoys the social support of the current intelligentsia. Skepticism's challenge is not thereby met, even though important points about the impossibility of universal skepticism and the critical function of presupposed worldviews in epistemological disputes have been made. Wittgenstein has insisted that one cannot avoid entertaining *some* propositions as certain, but he did not go on to show *which* propositions they must be. How should one distinguish the genuinely indubitable propositions from the others? In light of the above illustration, Wittgenstein cannot dismiss this crucial question. Having not answered it, Wittgenstein has not even *silenced* the skeptic, much less satisfied the quest for certainty by answering him. The traditional problems of epistemology must still be entertained.

This arbitrariness which we have discerned in Wittgenstein's philosophy as expressed in *On Certainty* was reflected in the *Philosophical Investigations* as well. There he pointed out that reasons, justifications, and explanations (not to say doubts) must end somewhere. But where? Contrary to what he thought, we do *not* find an ultimate epistemological bed-rock, a final resting place which needs no explanation, in our form of life or behavior. One must press on and ask, what justifies these practices and purposes? "That's just the way we live" offers no adequate response to those who prefer to live differently.

In reply to philosophical perplexities, Wittgenstein recommended that we seek to get words back into their own everyday language-games, proposed that we thereby engage the clearest or best uses of language, and insisted that philosophy not let its language go on holiday or simply idle like an engine. However, he failed to follow through with his program, for he could not specify *which norms* should govern the proper use of terms. *Which are* the best uses? *When is* language on holiday? What *counts* as a word operating in an alien language-game? *Whose* ordinary language is superior? Are some language-games being *arbitrarily* cut off? Such critical questions leave Wittgenstein very much in the same condition as Dewey: namely, recommending an arbitrary personal choice to us. In this light, we can uncover new significance in Wittgenstein's statement that there is no single philosophic method, just different *therapies.*[150] He likened his work to persuasion and propaganda: "I am in a sense making propaganda for one style of thinking as opposed to another. I am honestly disgusted with the other. . .. Much of what I am doing is persuading people to change their style of thinking."[151] However, philosophy is deeper than a recommendation about

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[147] *Ibid.,* s. 108.
[148] *Ibid.,* s. 171.
[149] *Ibid.,* s. 286.
[150] *Philosophical Investigations*, s. 133.
[151] *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett Berkeley: University of California Press,

forms of life; it pursues not merely the sociology of knowledge but the justification of knowledge. Otherwise, it becomes concealed prejudice.

Also, like Dewey, Wittgenstein said things which suggest strong parallels to Kantian idealism.[152] One's language-games are determined and regulated by his form of life; we must get outside of language to determine and define it (while staying within the world), that is, get to the bed-rock of a form of life, which is itself not explained. Thus, *reality is finally inexpressible.*[153] No less than with the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein could conclude that "There are, indeed, things that are inexpressible. They *show* themselves. They are what is mystical."[154] Wittgenstein saw his investigation as directed toward the *possibilities of phenomena.*[155] The limits of my world of experience are the limits of language.[156] *What is possible is bounded by what is say-able;* thus, understandable phenomena are what one's structure of language (for Kant, thought) allows them to be. Hence the notion of an ideal of clarity and truth to be found in reality "is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at."[157] However, try as we may, *our understanding is limited by our language;* the substratum of an experience, the context in which it is possible, is the mastery of some technique, some language-game.[158] And these language-games are set by our forms of life which are brute, unexplained, givens: "What has to be accepted, the given, is-so on could *say-forms of life."*[159] There is no way to get outside, to achieve an objective perspective on, our language-games: "Man has the urge to thrust against the limits of language. ... This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless.[160]

Finally, we must observe that Wittgenstein, again like Dewey, was caught in a rational-irrational dialectical tension. On the one hand Wittgenstein had a revolutionary outlook: "The spirit of this book is a different one from that of the mainstream of European and American civilization, in which we all stand."[161] A certain therapy was required in philosophy; the fly needed to be let out of the bottle, language had to be called back from its holiday and useless idling, men needed to be shown that their intellectual bumps are due to violating the boundaries of sense. According to him, philosophers put false interpretations on expressions and then draw the queerest conclusions from them;[162] thus he taught that philosophy must become "a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language."[163] Wittgenstein aimed to achieve *complete clarity* in order that philosophical problems would *completely* disappear.[164] To do this he sought to draw tile boundaries between sense and nonsense,[165] to apply a pragmatic criterion of meaning in order to judge the sensibility of philosophical utterances,[166] and spoke strongly against metaphysical statements.[167]

1966), p. 28.

[152] Cf. the parallels drawn between Kant and Wittgenstein in modern commentators: e.g., S. Morris Engel, "Wittgenstein and Kant," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30 (1970), pp. 483-513.

[153] Cf. *Zittel*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), s. 144: "How words are understood is not told by words alone."

[154] *Tractatus*, s. 6.522.

[155] *Investigations*, s. 90.

[156] *Ibid.,* e.g., s. 119.

[157] *Ibid.,* s. 130.

[158] *Ibid.,* pp. 208-209e.

[159] *Ibid.,* p. 226e.

[160] *Philosophical Review* 74, no. 1 (1965), pp. 13, 11-12.

[161] Foreword to *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, ed. R. Rhees (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965).

[162] *Investigations*, s. 194.

[163] *Ibid.,* s. 109.

[164] *Ibid.,* s. 133.

[165] *Ibid.,* e.g., s. 499.

[166] *Ibid.,* s. 268.

[167] *Ibid.,* e.g., s. 116, 216, 271; *Zittel*, s. 458.

Therefore, we cannot avoid concluding that Wittgenstein held that there are norms or standards for use and misuse of language; he aimed to purify illegitimate usages and to decree what is legitimate and what is not. *Linguistic use* would guide him to the limits of the say-able.

However, on the other hand, Wittgenstein took a very non-revolutionary attitude toward his philosophizing. He determined to leave language just as it,[168] for ordinary language leaves nothing to explain, already possesses perfect order, and is adequate for our needs.[169] Hence *he definitely renounced the goal of reforming language.*[170] Moreover, such reform would be impossible, since linguistic situations are not completely bounded by rules,[171] and with the countless different kinds of use of language and their fluidity[172] no universal norms could be found. Thus, *there is no specific standard for linguistic use,* and everyone is left to follow his own language-games - blindly.[173] Therefore, we cannot avoid concluding the Wittgenstein denied any definite guide for the limits of the say-able.

In light of the two previous paragraphs, we can understand the failure of Wittgenstein's philosophy; it has created its own antinomy or self-vitiation. Wittgenstein was simultaneously being a rationalist and an irrationalist, an absolutist and relativist; he set out to do prescription, *but* limited himself to description. Linguistic use was to be guided by rules in order to achieve clarity; *yet* usage was completely open-ended and immune to permanent standards. He promoted a new method for philosophy, *but* denied that philosophy had any one method; his position led him both to castigate previous philosophies *and* to endorse them as one practice or custom among many. This dialectic in his thought, along with his inherent (post-Kantian, idealistic) skepticism, and in the long run the arbitrariness with which his epistemology ends up, all point out his failure to lay the disquieting questions of the theory of knowledge to rest.

Wittgenstein has not set forth a well-argued theory; he has composed what can best be likened to religious *confessions.*[174] Dewey had his creed, Wittgenstein his confessions. However, unlike Augustine, Wittgenstein (as all his biographers testify) could never say that his heart had found rest. "The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. - The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *it* in question."[175] Because of the difficulties we have explored above, Wittgenstein's thought could never find this peace; he had no escape from eventual skepticism, and his philosophy was never released from the torment of calling itself into question. He did not press to, and did not find, the self-attesting starting point, the certain presuppositions, of knowledge. He wanted to have a beneficial and healing influence on philosophy: not long before he died, Wittgenstein quoted Bach's inscription on his *Little Organ Book,* "To the glory of the most high God, and that my neighbor may be benefited thereby." Pointing to his own pile of manuscripts he said, "That is what I would have like to have been able to say about my own work."[176] He never achieved the helpful *end* for which he

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[168] *Ibid.,* s. 124.
[169] *Ibid.,* a. `15, 98, `10.
[170] *Ibid.,* s. 132.
[171] *Ibid.,* s. 84.
[172] *Ibid.,* s. 23.
[173] *Ibid.,* s. 219.
[174] K.T. Fann has convincingly exhibited the likeness between the likeness between the *Philosophical Investigations* and religious confessions like Augustine's in *Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 105-107. He also indicates parallels with the Zen Buddhist procedure for achieving enlightenment, pp. 104, 110.
[175] *Investigations*, s. 133.
[176] M. Drury, "Wittgenstein: A Symposium*," Wittgenstein, The Man and His Philosophy, an Anthology*, ed. K.T. Fann (New York: Dell, Delta Books, 1967), p. 71.

hoped, for he never *started* with the presuppositions which alone can successfully complete the quest for certainty.

Austin and Performative Utterances

G. J. Warnock has said that no recent philosopher "has been more influential or more original" than J. L. Austin (1911-1960); he has been designated an "extremely influential pioneer" (Peterfreund and Denise), the "most brilliant member of the Oxford group" (William P. Alston), and "the archetypal linguistic philosopher" (Antony Flew). Austin's approach to epistemology is particularly worth investigation as a contemporary and unique outlook on traditional problems.

Like Dewey, Austin viewed the traditional problems associated with the debates between rationalism and empiricism, monism and dualism, realism and idealism, representationalism, or phenomenalism as artificial. Both men aimed to make such problems disappear through an examination and rejection of certain key presuppositions of the debate; these assumptions, held Dewey and Austin, generate unresolvable difficulties due to misconceptions (said Dewey) or confused conceptions (said Austin). Austin thus complemented Dewey in calling for a quite different approach to epistemology and challenging the mistaken foundations of traditional theorizing. Where Dewey thought that philosophy was sidetracked by the illusory goal of conceptual stability and the misguided view of experience as intrinsically private, Austin felt philosophers had been misled by the conceptual confusions which arise through the abuse of everyday or ordinary language. However, Dewey and Austin were both agreed in their negative attitude toward the fundamental error of epistemologists. Dewey rejected the misconceived quest for certainty; similarly, Austin rejected the confused pursuit of the incorrigible. Philosophers have asked the wrong questions and bypassed their proper roles because they set out to establish basic items of knowledge as absolutely certain - truths which will serve as the secure foundation for every other knowledge claim. The task of discerning such basic certainties is too general, tangled in confusion, and ultimately unprofitable.

> The general doctrine about knowledge which I have sketched . . . is *radically* and *in principle* misconceived. For even if we were to make the very risky and gratuitous assumption that what some particular person knows at some particular place and time could systematically be sorted out into an arrangement of foundations and super-structure, it would be a mistake in principle to suppose that the same thing could be done for knowledge *in general.* And this is because there *could* be no *general* answer to the questions: what is evidence for what, what is certain, what is doubtful, what needs or does not need evidence, can or can't be verified. If the Theory of Knowledge consists in finding grounds for such an answer, there is no such thing.[177]

The full-scale and serious attack which had earlier in this century been brought against *metaphysics* has now been extended to a similar charge against general *epistemology.* Austin proposed to undermine skepticism by challenging its assumption that knowledge requires that absolute certainty (the elimination of all possible error) be found in some realm, object, source, method, or basic premise of knowledge.

The parallels with Dewey which we have noted should have added to them certain obvious parallels between Austin and Wittgenstein. Both were renowned for taking ordinary language analysis as crucial to philosophic method. Both saw common philosophical perplexities as arising from *abuses*

[177] *Sense and Sensibilia*, ed. G.J. Warnock (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 123-124.

of everyday language, muddled uses of words outside of their natural environment, and quixotic philosophical technicalities or causes. Failing to give careful attention to the correct uses of language, philosophers have created insoluble pseudo-problems that linguistic analysis must now dissolve by exposing artificiality and elucidating the best uses of ordinary language. Thus, philosophy should become *therapeutic,* agreed Austin and Wittgenstein. However, Austin wished to proceed beyond Wittgenstein's singular attention to particular difficulties in philosophy; Wittgenstein thought that analysis only had a point when an actual problem had arisen for it to treat. Everyday linguistic use was studied only as *a* means toward correcting pre-existing philosophic prejudice and perplexity. But Austin saw positive merit in examining ordinary language as an end in itself. He pressed *linguistic analysis* beyond a therapeutic function into *constructive service.* Its positive role was to reveal the *basic concepts embedded in ordinary speech;* there is not only something to be *dissolved by* ordinary language analysis, there is definitely something to be *learned from* it. Hence Austin's efforts were more systematic and attuned to fine detail than were Wittgenstein's, in order that by it he could gain insight into the well-established facts and distinctions which have made everyday use what it is. He hoped to break open the *inner structure of words* having related meanings and thereby contribute something positive toward philosophical field-work and toward traditional philosophic inquiries. He was not merely trouble-shooting.

> When we examine what we should say when, what words we should use in what situations, we are looking again not *merely* at words. . . but also at the realities we use the words to talk about: we are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of, though not as the final arbiter of, the phenomena. For this reason, I think it might be better to use, for this way of doing philosophy . . . 'linguistic phenomenology'. . ..[178]

Language sets traps for us and can be like blinkers as we look at the world; thus "words are our tools, and, as a minimum, we should use clean tools: we should know what we mean and what we do not."[179] Attention to linguistic analysis will aid us in using clean tools; moreover,

> our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connections they have found worth marking, in the lifetimes of many generations: these surely are likely to be . . . more sound since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our arm-chairs of an afternoon-the most favored alternative method.[180]

This disdain for speculative (spectator) philosophy, this instrumentalist outlook, and this emphasis upon the survival of the fittest in the adaptations necessary for living, all bring Dewey's creed back to mind. Further, Austin joined in Wittgenstein's confession by making ordinary language analysis the indispensable prerequisite for philosophy: "Certainly, then, ordinary language is *not* the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplemented and improved upon and superseded. Only remember, it *is* the *first* word.[181]

As a philosopher, Austin is perhaps best remembered for drawing attention to the distinctively *per formative function* of many utterances. There are some utterances in ordinary usage which are

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[178] "A Plea for Excuses," reprinted in *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 130.
[179] *Ibid.,* p. 129.
[180] *Ibid.,* p. 130.
[181] *Ibid.,* p. 133.

perfectly legitimate, but which do *not* purport to *describe* some state of affairs; such utterances are used to *do* something in speaking, to *perform* an action; for example, when the groom says "I do" at the wedding, he is not describing anything, but rather performing a vow. Here *tile saying is the doing;* as a speech-action it is no more susceptible to being true or false than any other action (e.g., running). Austin applied his theory of per formative utterances to knowledge, thereby setting forth an extremely novel thesis, in his well-known article "Other Minds."[182] This is one of the most highly regarded pieces in the genre of linguistic analysis and deserves our attention as a unique approach to a central issue in epistemology. When all is said and done, however, it will be apparent that Austin no more avoids the traditional questions in the theory of knowledge than did Dewey or Wittgenstein. The challenge of skepticism will remain unmitigated.

First, Austin contends that *knowledge* is to be distinguished from *belief.* When someone makes a statement of fact, lie can be challenged in two ways: *'How* do you *know* that p?' or *'Why* do you *believe* that p?' These interrogatives are never interchanged; that is, the person is not asked *why* he *knows* or *how* he *believes.* There is a further difference to be found in the way we respond to someone whose claim is that p cannot be adequately supported. We conclude that he *did not know* after all, or that he really *ought not to have believed;* again, these judgments (just like the previous interrogatives) are never reversed. The crucial difference is that "The 'existence' of your alleged belief is not challenged, but the 'existence' of your alleged knowledge *is* challenged.[183] Therefore, says Austin, in ordinary language 'I believe' functions differently from 'I know'.[184]

Now the fact that inadequate grounds can jeopardize the existence of one's knowledge might suggest that we should view knowledge as some kind of *certitude.* Hence Austin shifts his concern and proceeds to eliminate the supposed *incorrigibility of knowledge* in its various forms. When someone is asked 'How do you know?', he does not improperly use the word 'know' if he answers by citing some authority, for knowledge at second hand is one of the main points of talking with others. Since (cautiously accepted) authoritative testimony is a source of knowledge, Austin dismisses the view that knowledge is a variety of *immediate experience* (direct apprehension) of the stated fact.[185] Moreover, it is often the case that we know something quite well without being able to state the precise grounds for our knowledge-claim; for instance, you may know that a particular car is a given model and year without being able to put your finger on just which feature of the car is your evidence. Because one's vagueness in answering the question 'How do you know?' does not disqualify his knowledge, we must *not* identify knowledge with the *provability* of the claim.[186]

Furthermore, Austin dismisses the skeptic's taunt that what *appears* to be so may not actually be so *in reality.* According to Austin, such doubts about reality must have a particular and specifiable basis. Despite our general fallibility or the possibility of outrages in nature (e.g., the future being radically different from the past), *there are recognized procedures* appropriate to various types of cases for allaying these doubts; indeed, the doubts are meaningful only in correlation with the accepted ways of answering them in ordinary language. If standard procedures have been observed, fallibility does not prevent us from speaking of people 'knowing' what appears to be the case.[187]Still further, Austin disagrees with the view that one can only claim to know that of which he is completely sure (e.g., his own sense-statements). There are obvious and normal instances where

[182] Reprinted in *Philosophical Papers*, pp. 44-84.
[183] *Ibid.,* p. 46.
[184] *Ibid.,* p. 47.
[185] *Ibid.,* pp. 50-51.
[186] *Ibid.,* pp. 51-53.
[187] *Ibid.,* pp. 54-57.

someone is hesitant or baffled by his sensations and wishes to avoid misnaming them (discriminating and identifying them improperly). Thus, one can even doubt his own sense-statements. If certainty were required in order to make knowledge-claims legitimate, there would be few if any instances of knowledge at all.[188] Therefore, *knowledge is not to be identified with the certitude of immediacy, provability, or incorrigibility.* The traditional view of knowledge has held that it is *true justified belief.* Austin has, however, indicated that knowledge is *not a* variety of *belief* at all, much less *justified* belief.

Moreover, and most surprisingly, Austin does not even think that the third element (namely, truth) of the traditional view of knowledge is requisite. He disagrees with the statement 'If I know, then I cannot be wrong'. "We are often right to say we *know* even cases where we turn out subsequently to have been mistaken. . . ."[189] Here Austin's clear divergence from the ordinary philosophic use of 'knowledge' is most pronounced, for if anything is nearly universally held as a condition for 'X knows that p', it is p be *true.* Most philosophers would say that, after all, we *know* only *truths.* From Austin's perspective, this maxim is confused.

P. F. Strawson wrote that the utterance 'is true' is logically superfluous; it does not ascribe a property or relation to p, but instead it *is* used to express personal assent to p. Austin strongly disagreed, holding that 'is true' is a non-superfluous predicate of statements which indicates that they *correspond to the facts* in a *linguistically conventional manner.*[190] Austin maintained that to say 'p is true' is to *assess* p in a particular way,[191] and this assessment is concerned with both a state of affairs and a verbal description.[192]

However, the case is completely otherwise when one says 'I know that p'. Here he does not mean to describe two things as corresponding to each other; indeed, according to Austin, 'I know' does *not describe* anything at all. Thus, he denies the necessity for knowledge to be free from error and allows that *we can "know" statements which are mistaken.* Hereby Austin hoped to salvage the ordinary use of the verb 'to know' in the face of the intellect's ability to err: "It is futile to embark on a 'theory of knowledge' which denies this liability; such theories constantly end up admitting the liability after all, and denying the existence of 'knowledge'."[193] Using 'to know' must be *compatible with error.*

The common error lying behind traditional epistemologies is the assumption that 'I know' *describes* something, states something which corresponds to a fact in the world, or that can be assessed as true or false. "To suppose that 'I know' is a descriptive phrase, is only one example of the *descriptive fallacy,* so common in philosophy."[194]

> Not merely is it jejune to suppose that all a statement aims to be is 'true', but it may further be questioned whether every 'statement' does aim to be true at all. The principle of Logic, that 'Every proposition must be true or false', has too long operated as the simplest, most persuasive and most pervasive form of the descriptive fallacy. . .. Recently it has come to be realized that many utterances which have been taken to be statements . . . are not in fact

[188] *Ibid.,* pp. 58-65.
[189] *Ibid.,* p. 66.
[190] "Truth," *Philosophical Papers*, esp. pp. 89-90; see also Austin's reply to Strawson's rejoinder (namely, that Austin wrongly treats facts as pseudo-objects) in *How to Do things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 144, 148.
[191] Cf. J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 144, 148.
[192] "Truth" p. 92n.: "It takes two to make a truth."
[193] "Other Minds," *loc. cit.*
[194] *Ibid.,* p. 71.

> descriptive, nor susceptible of being true or false. . .. It is simply not the business of such utterances to 'correspond to the facts'.[195]

Some utterances do not describe an activity being performed; they *constitute* the *actual performance* of that activity (e.g., naming, swearing, apologizing, inviting, promising, guaranteeing, etc.). These "performative utterances" *do* something as opposed to *reporting* something truly or falsely. For example, 'I name you X' is not the description of a naming process; it is the actual naming.

Throughout his scholarly career, Austin developed and refined the notion of performatives.[196] It was most thoroughly discussed in his *How to Do Things with Words,* the William James Lectures at Harvard University for 1955.[197] Therein Austin gradually gave up some former distinctions (e.g., between constative and performative) as well as former criteria for picking out performative utterances (e.g., grammatical criteria); lie developed instead a theory of illocutionary and perlocutionary speech-acts. However, despite the extensive modification, Austin still retained the classification of *explicit* performatives.[198] In their case there is no ambiguity as to whether the designated act was performed simply by means of speaking or not.[199] Austin proposed four criteriological characteristics of explicit performatives:[200]

(1) When the performative is uttered under appropriate (felicitous) circumstances, it makes no sense to ask 'But did he (do you) *really?'* (i.e., 'Couldn't he (you) be mistaken?').
(2) The utterance is essential to the action performed.
(3) The action performed by the utterance must be able to be done willingly or deliberately.
(4) Although I may be insincere, it cannot literally be false that I X-ed if I said 'I X'.

That is, a verb is a performative if it follows that I *have performed* the designated act simply by *saying* that I do.

Now then, we have seen above that the descriptive fallacy leads people to think that 'I know' is incompatible with error. Austin proposes, instead, that the reason we are prohibited from saying 'I know that p, but p is false' is not because knowledge entails truth, but because the statement is parallel to 'I promise to q, but I might fail to q'. In *particular* cases where *we are aware of specific reasons* why we might be mistaken or unable to do something, we *ought not* to say 'I know' or 'I promise'. This explains our bewitching feeling that knowledge must be incorrigible. 'To know' functions like 'to promise.

Consequently, in "Other Minds" Austin held that the first-person, present active indicative, 'I know that p' has a non-descriptive function, the function of *guaranteeing* or *authorizing the acceptance* of p. Like 'I promise,' the utterance 'I know that p' performs the task of giving my word so that another person might rely upon it. I do not give information about p, but assure you or authorize you to

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[195] "Truth," pp. 98-99.
[196] It was first introduced in "Other Minds'" subsequently Austin described the features of this class of utterances and the rules for their use in "Performative Utterances" (reprinted in *Philosophical Papers*). The distinction between these utterances and those which are considered true or false can be pursued in "Performative-Constative" in *The Philosophy of Language*, ed. J.R. Searle (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 13-22.
[197] *Op cit., passim.*
[198] *Ibid.,* p. 149.
[199] *Ibid.,* pp. 32-33, 57, 69-70, 91, 130-131.
[200] *Ibid.,* pp. 83-84.

accept p. When someone says 'I promise' or 'I know', "a new plunge is taken. . .. I have bound myself to others, and staked my reputation in a new way. [201] Austin goes through a number of putative parallels between the verbs 'to promise' and 'to know'.[202] This then is Austin's performative theory of knowledge. It rests on two main considerations: (1) '1 know' functions in parallel fashion to the performative 'I promise', and (2) analysis shows that 'I know' means 'I give my authority (or assurance)', which is an action performed in speaking.

Austin's thesis is thoughtful and provocative, but it must finally be evaluated as defective. In significant respects the verb 'to know' does *not* function in parallel fashion with 'to promise'. For instance, 'to promise' has a normal (albeit rare) continuous present tense (e.g., interrupted with the question "What are you doing now?", someone might say "I am promising [to come more often, to practice my lessons, etc.]"), whereas 'to know' does not (i.e., 'I am knowing that the book is blue' is a locutionary abnormality). More importantly, we must observe that insincere promises are *still* considered promises (i.e., when you have said 'I promise' we always report that 'You promised'), but a groundless knowledge-claim is *not* viewed as an instance of knowing (i.e., we do not say 'You knew but were wrong', but rather 'You *said that* you knew but were wrong'). These examples show us that saying 'I promise' is sufficient to promise, but saying 'I know' is insufficient to know. A truth-claim is at stake in the latter case which is not in the former. A consideration of correspondence with the facts might be used to bolster or challenge the statement 'I know', but correspondence with the facts is not used to challenge a promise. We *reproach* someone who breaks his *promise,* but we *refute* someone who mistakenly claims to *know* something. Therefore, these two verbs differ significantly in their grammar, logic, and effects of use.

Let it be noted that the similarities between 'I know' and 'I promise' would outweigh the dissimilarities between them *only if* in fact 'I know' *is* a performative utterance. However, according to *Austin's own criteria,* 'I know' should *not* be classified as one.[203] (1) Certainly we *can* (and often do) ask 'Do you really? Couldn't you be mistaken?' when someone claims 'I know that p'. (2) It makes perfect sense to hold that someone knows his address even when he has never bad occasion to utter it out-loud; utterance is not essential to knowledge. (3) While someone might say 'I hereby (willingly, deliberately) promise to q', it does not make good sense to say 'I hereby' (willingly, deliberately) know that p'. Knowledge is a matter of truth, not volition. Finally, (4) it cannot strictly be false that 'you promised' if you said 'I promise'; however, it most certainly is strictly false that 'you knew' if (when p is false) you said 'I know that p'. Furthermore, it should be noted that 'know' cannot be substituted for X in the formula to say 'I X' is to X (Austin's simple test for an explicit per-formative). It is plainly false that to *say* 'I know' is *to know!* The action is no more performed by simply stating it than jumping is performed by saying 'I jump'.

Austin might reply to these observations by pointing out that they all derive their force from the presupposition that 'I know that p' entails that p is true; hence we have *begged* the entire question. For Austin 'I know' means 'I assure you', and the *latter* expression clearly passes the test for an explicit performative. However, ironic as it may seem in the case of Austin, his claim that 'I know that p' is a performative utterance is *inaccurate as an analysis of ordinary language.* Many examples come to mind where the utterance 'I know' is not used to guarantee, assure, or give one's word for something (e.g., the child impresses his father, saying "I know that Sacramento is in California"; clearly this is not giving authorization for the father to believe the statement). *If* people ordinarily understood your statement 'I know that p' as the performing of an assurance to them, then they

[201] "Other Minds," p. 67.
[202] See *ibid*., pp. 66-71.
[203] The following observations follow the order of Austin's criteria as listed above; cf. footnote 200.

would *not* say 'You did not know that p' when it turned out you were wrong about p - because even in that case you still *would* have given your assuring word to them. Consider also that 'I promised but did not come through' is a legitimate statement in ordinary usage, but there simply is no normal occurrence of 'I knew but was wrong'; this exhibits the fact that people ordinarily assume that being correct is essential to an acceptable knowledge-claim.

Therefore, we cannot but conclude that Austin's performative theory embodies an unacceptable epistemology. There are notable differences between the grounds called for in saying 'I know that p' and saying 'I give my assurance that p'. The latter can be said just in case you are prepared to take~ responsibility for error or misleading your hearers, but the former statement requires that you be *in a position* to know that p (e.g., have certain evidence, etc.). Conversely, if something (say, p) is within one's cognizance, then he knows p whether he ever assures someone of it or not. One cannot silently promise something to someone (that is, promising requires words, written or spoken), but there are many things that everybody knows in silence (indeed, some of their deepest secrets). Knowing is not a performative because it is *not an action* at all, much less a speech-action. One does not decide to perform a feat of knowledge, but he can decide to give assurance to someone.

This is not to say that 'I know 'is never used with a performatory element in it (e.g., the doctor says to the distraught wife, 'I know that your husband shall live' after the husband has undergone surgery). However, just as Austin observed that Strawson (who thought that 'is true' does nothing except confirming or granting a point) improperly confined himself to the performatory aspect of a phrase which also functions to describe something,[204] we must conclude that Austin himself wrongly confined his attention to the performatory aspect of the phrase '1 know' even though it commonly functions to describe as well. A wedge can be driven between knowledge-claims and knowledge which cannot be driven between explicit performatives (e.g., 'I promise') and their designated actions (e.g., promising). Thus, it has not been demonstrated that traditional epistemological theories commit a descriptive fallacy. The fact that 'I know' can be either true or false, that it corresponds to the facts or does not, that it is a descriptive phrase is sufficiently shown by the fact that it functions perfectly well in syllogistic arguments (e.g., If I know that Jones is guilty of the crime, my life is in danger. I know that Jones is guilty. Therefore, my life is in danger). *Actions* like promising and running, however, *cannot* operate within a standard logical proof. 'I know' is not an action but a straightforward descriptive phrase, a report, a claim which can be true or false. 'I know', therefore, is not an explicit performative utterance, and the charge of descriptive fallacy must be withdrawn.

The preceding critique of Austin's analysis demonstrates that he cannot simply dismiss traditional epistemological issues on the ground that they rest on muddled assumptions. He has failed to show this to be the ease. No escape from skepticism, therefore, has been uncovered by Austin. The search for certainty-for a firm, indubitable foundation or source of knowledge-is still a necessity in order to salvage knowledge and avert relativism. Basic certainties must be found, not haphazardly assumed, but Austin offered no answer as to how we could be certain of our ultimate convictions. Austin's response to the possibility of ultimate disagreements between people (reflected in their linguistic usage) is noteworthy for exhibiting the weakness of his philosophy:

> Nevertheless, *sometimes* we do ultimately disagree: sometimes we must allow a usage to be, though appalling, yet actual. . .. But why should this daunt us? . . . If our usages disagree . . . your conceptual system is different from mine, though very likely it is at least equally consistent and serviceable. . .. A disagreement as to what we should say is not to be shied

[204] "Truth," p. 101.

> off, but to be pounced upon: for the explanation of it can hardly fail to be illuminating. If we light on an electron that rotates the wrong way, that is a discovery, a portent to be followed up, not a reason for chucking physics: and by the same token, a genuinely loose or eccentric talker is a rare specimen to be prized.[205]

This approach results either in *relativism* (our conceptual systems are equally serviceable) or *prejudice* (like Wittgenstein, Austin suggests treating someone whose linguistic usage differs from his own as an eccentric specimen, thus merely presuming that this *other* speaker-rather than Austin-is "loose" or "wrong"). Either way, *objectivity* is lost in epistemology. The skeptic can continue to challenge and question the claims made by Austin, then, and rightly so; Austin could not know for sure that he was correct in what he thought, but only that he harmonized with the usage of some *subsection* of the linguistic community.

It turns out that, in the name of ordinary language analysis, Austin's outlook on knowledge actually *reforms* everyday linguistic usage - and mistakenly at that. Moreover, reducing 'I know' to a performative utterance would still not cancel the need to answer traditional epistemological questions. When does a person have the *right* to *claim truth* for his assertions? He may go about assuring us that p, but when can he rightly say that p is true? That is, we still want to ask whether Austin *knew* (old sense) his conclusions to be true. If he did *not,* then what could those conclusions, those assertions he made, have been? Indeed, they would be mere *personal recommendations,* one which were prejudicial against the pervasive, deep, and general questions of the theory of knowledge. Like Dewey, Austin gave no good reason to abandon the quest for certainty; he simply decreed it. Like Wittgenstein, Austin's position was rooted in a sociological preference for his own linguistic community.

Arbitrariness of his position shows up in a number of other ways which can be briefly mentioned. First, on what *grounds* could Austin establish his philosophic method as the *necessary preliminary* to *all* other kinds of philosophic investigation? Did ordinary language analysis establish *its own* foundational character? Second~ Austin offered no argument for the isomorphism between the form of ordinary language and external reality. Does grammar get us to reality? Or, perhaps, is it rather that common linguistic usage reflects only a pervasive *way of looking* at (or interpreting) reality? Third, Austin personally trusted the time-tested distinctions which he said were embedded in ordinary language. But why should he? *Disputes* over distinctions, inferences, evaluations, etc., *also* carry down through history in the vehicle of language; thus, one cannot directly appeal to linguistic use but must first actually *resolve* the conflicts between ultimately different language-games (to use Wittgenstein's phrase). Fourth, why did Austin recommend that we concentrate our analysis on *ordinary* language and exclude the linguistic usage of the *philosophers?* After all, philosophical discussion is also a time-honored tradition and has stood the' long test of the survival of the fittest (men have from ancient times searched for answers to the "big questions" of axiology, ontology, and epistemology)," Finally, we should indicate that, while there is some benefit in Austin's point that a skeptic must offer *specific* reasons for questioning our assertions (rather than throwing out the general question, "how do you know that' what you have identified is *'real'?*"), nevertheless such specific questions; only arise *within* systems of thought and linguistic usage. A general question addressed from someone in *one* system to another person in a *different* system must not be arbitrarily ruled out; there is no good reason (at least offered by Austin) why scholarly questioning must be restricted to the lower-level issues peculiar to one philosophic position and not rise to the higher and more general questions concerning *competing* systems.

[205] "A Plea for Excuses," p. 132.

To this point we have seen that Austin shares fundamental defects with Dewey and Wittgenstein (namely, an inadequate epistemology, an unwise abandonment of objective certainty, a failure to resolve ultimate disagreements, and personal arbitrariness). In concluding our critique of him it must be pointed out that the dialectical tension in which Dewey and Wittgenstein were caught was a pitfall for Austin as well. This is evident in three illustrations. First, there is an antinomy which has the shadow of Kant cast over it. On one hand Austin portrayed ordinary language as something which imposes a particular order on experience, thus operating as a "phenomenal filter" which stands between us and the world. "Ordinary language *blinkers* the already feeble imagination"; indeed, the imagination is enslaved by words."[206] Hence "there may be extraordinary facts, even about our everyday experience, which plain men and plain language overlook."[207] Language can keep us from apprehending the noumenal realm it seems. The attempt to compare our ordinary usage with the world itself will only shift the problem to the *other language* used now to describe the world (and then compare to ordinary language); we cannot get beyond language-conditioned experience in order to stand outside and test that language itself. Yet on the other hand, Austin also treated ordinary language as the road to revelation. Words show us the realities beyond them.[208] Analysis of ordinary language must be used to discover facts and thereby remove confusions;[209] it can unveil the inner kernel of truth which has been ingrained through time in our language. For instance, because it is not consistent with what we ordinarily say, determinism can be disputed[210] - which assumes that ordinary language is a source and standard for truth, Therefore, Austin treated ordinary language as *both* a screen from and an unveiling of reality.

A second illustration of dialectical tension in Austin's thought is related to his "survival of the fittest" test for linguistic use. On the one hand Austin assumes *continuity* because, as seen previously, ordinary language allegedly gives us truths that have passed the test of time. That is, there are distinctions which have been firmly embedded in language and continued there through the passing years. Yet on the other hand, Austin holds that grammar is "in a state of flux"[211]—an obvious indication that he worked on the assumption of *discontinuity.* In fact, this presupposition was strong enough that Austin in effect undermined the survival test altogether: "Superstition and error and fantasy of all kinds do become incorporated in ordinary language and even sometimes stand up in the survival test."[212] Therefore, Austin simultaneously affirmed the normative value of the test of time and recognized its untrustworthy character. It was a standard which was also no standard.

Finally, another way in which we can express the antinomy of Austin's epistemology is through his attitude toward ordinary language. According to him ordinary language analysis was the greatest and most salutary revolution in history, one which maintained that it was wrong to attempt to escape philosophical tangles by invoking new linguistic uses.[213] Logical grammar should ultimately not be different than ordinary grammar.[214] The mistakes in philosophy, then, were to be cleared up through ordinary language analysis,[215] for ordinary language embodies uses and distinctions which are more

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[206] "The Meaning of a Word," *Philosophical Papers*, pp. 36, 35; cf. "A Plea for Excuses," p. 130.
[207] *Ibid.,* p. 37.
[208] "A Plea for Excuses," p. 130.
[209] "Ifs and Cans," *Philosophical papers*, p. 179.
[210] *Ibid.*
[211] *Ibid.*
[212] "A Plea for Excuses," p. 133.
[213] "Performative Utterances," pp. 221-222.
[214] "Ifs and Cans," p. 180.
[215] "Performative Utterances," p. 239.

sound than those of armchair speculation.[216] Because there was genuine value buried in it, ordinary language must become our *guide*[217] —showing us how to reach agreement with respect to scholarly discoveries.[218] For all these reasons, then, ordinary language analysis was absolutely necessary at the outset of all philosophizing.[219]

Here Austin was saying that correct usage was to be discovered through ordinary language analysis; he suggested that ordinary language should be left as it is because ordinary language was assumed to be a necessary guide for philosophers. Yet Austin was just as bold to maintain, on just the opposite hand, that ordinary language is *not* authoritative, and that there are *no* final standards. Ordinary language does not have the last word, for there is *no such thing.*[220] Ordinary language is in fact inadequate and arbitrary,[221] in need of being straightened out.[222] (At this point we want to ask, straightened out *what?* The confusions in it must be removed.[223] Quite bluntly, ordinary language *fails* us,[224] slows us our need for a better language,[225] must be overridden,[226] supersede and improved.[227] Ordinary language cannot he a standard for our philosophy because it is infected with error, superstition, the jargon of extinct theories, and other own prejudices.[228] So then, Austin has again confronted us with a self-vitiating attitude: ordinary language is our guide to resolving philosophic problems (it is a standard more sound than speculation) , and yet the philosopher must correct the failing, infected, error-infested usage of ordinary discourse. In the long run there is no last word. 'Therefore, just like Dewey and Wittgenstein, Austin attempted to be both a rationalist and an irrationalist, an absolutist and relativist, assuming continuity along with flux, teaching the categorizing (enslaving) and yet revelatory nature of ordinary language.

Austin hoped to dissolve the general questions of epistemology which had been inspired by skeptical challenges, but his performative theory of knowledge was not adequate to the task. He promoted ordinary language analysis as the method for philosophy, but it has turned out to be prejudicial and arbitrary at best and dialectically incoherent at worst. *Twentieth-century epistemology, under the direction of pragmatism and linguistic analysis, has undergone a silent but sure demise.*

Van Til and Revelation

Four basic issues can be distilled from the preceding discussion of Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Austin with respect to epistemology. First, there is the question of the *necessity of facing up to standard epistemological* problems. We have seen that the quest for certainty cannot be arbitrarily dismissed. General questions about the theory of knowledge are still legitimate philosophic fare, for knowledge cannot be treated as anything less than descriptive of the truth moreover, one cannot capitulate to doubt because even that presupposes certainty. Thus, philosophers and indeed all men need to have dependable norms and must seek infallible or indubitable truths. All important and self-conscious attempts to establish a theory of knowledge must seek a defense against skepticism and must ask

[216] "A Plea for Excuses," p. 130.
[217] *Ibid.,* p. 129.
[218] *Ibid.,* p. 131.
[219] *Ibid.,* p. 133.
[220] *Ibid.*
[221] *Ibid.,* p. 130.
[222] "How to Talk," *Philosophical Papers,* p. 181.
[223] "Ifs and Cans," p. 179.
[224] "The Meaning of a Word," p. 36.
[225] *Ibid.,* p. 37.
[226] "A Plea for Excuses," p. 134.
[227] *Ibid.,* p. 133.
[228] *Ibid.,* pp. 130, 133.

what our certainties should be. What is the unshakeable foundation, the knowledge which is so certain that no reasonable man should doubt it?

This brings us, secondly, to the major epistemological question or *verification.* The justification for knowledge-claims is a critical issue. We have observed, though, that verification procedures and standards of testing function within a system of thought or discourse-that is, they are *internal to a worldview.* Justifications come to an end; procedures for testing are rooted in the indubitable presuppositions which undergird the system or worldview in which they operate. What one accepts is an interrelated system of truths (rather than adopting each proposition one by one), a system which is interwoven with a form of life or pattern of behavior. Thus, circularity in support of specific truths and actions (in relation to other specific truths and actions) will be inevitable.

What this raises, thirdly, is the question of the *objectivity of truth.* The problem of subjectivity, prejudice, or arbitrariness with respect to one's presuppositional worldview now looms large over the epistemic enterprise. How can one be certain of his foundational assumptions or avoid self-delusion? Is there any way to settle conflicts between competing systems with their respective circular patterns of thought and forms of life? Is epistemology doomed to prejudice, so that truth becomes what works for you or what is adopted by some particular linguistic community? The critical issue, then, becomes the attainment of correspondence with objective facts in order to avert skeptical relativism.

Finally, then, if certainty in epistemology will be a matter of one's worldview or presuppositions, there is the question of a *self-attesting worldview.* Is there a philosophical position which can finally gain peace for the philosopher, which escapes the damaging need to call itself into question eventually? Such an ultimate grounding for objective epistemology will need to: (a) avoid the ego-centric predicament and phenomenalism, (b) prevent self-vitiating dialectical tension or incoherence, and (c) have practical relevance or instrumental value in solving concrete problems in philosophy and other areas, thus being beneficial to our neighbor who struggles with intellectual tangles and practical difficulties.

The theory of knowledge, and thereby all philosophy in some respect, eventually comes down to this point. And at this point we can turn our attention to the teaching of Cornelius Van Til in the area of epistemology. The only worldview which salvages epistemology, the objectivity of truth, and genuine certainty is that which *presupposes the revelation of God,* according to Van Til. Systems of thought which refuse to begin with God and His revealed truth make nonsense out of human experience, succumb to skepticism or prejudice, and in the final analysis have to promote human reason to the place of God as expounded in Christian theology. Only within the biblical worldview where man is to think God's thoughts after Him can infallible truths and norms be found and can arbitrariness be avoided at the presuppositional level. Van Til has done a great service to philosophical scholarship by pointing out how to meet the deep-set needs in an adequate theory of knowledge; the quest for certainty must end with God and His self-attesting, infallible word. Here we find the foundations not only of *Christian* scholarship but of *any* genuine scholarship whatsoever.

In the Introduction to *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* Van Til said, "The present work seeks specifically to show the relevance of Christianity to modern thought. Its main contention is that Christianity has the answer that modern thought seeks in vain." Van Til's writings have persistently argued that the quest for certainty must begin and end with God's revelation. In his Preface to *A Survey of Christian Epistemology* Van Til says that when the syllabus was written (1932) he

recognized the drift toward positivism in the new day, and

> The answer is that then, as now, I was convinced that only if one begins with the self-identifying Christ of Reformation theology, can one bring the "facts" of the space-time world into intelligible relation to the "laws" of this world. Science, philosophy and theology find their intelligible contact only on the presupposition of the self-revelation of God in Christ-through Scripture understood properly by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.[229]

Van Til's *Survey* is recommended to the reader for a more detailed account of the position which we can only summarize here.

Van Til indicates that "the core of our system of philosophy is our belief in the triune God of Scripture, and in what he has revealed concerning himself and his purposes for man and his world."[230] This means that the Christian has a *revelational epistemology:* God has revealed Himself both in the created realm and in the mind of man; when man's reasoning is carried on in this atmosphere it expresses the truth as established by God, The *impress of God's plan* is upon both the "facts" and man's mind and thus they are adapted to each other. "True human knowledge corresponds to the knowledge which God has of himself and his world." What is all-important in epistemology is the *completely self-conscious God,* one who is surrounded by no ignorance or mystery at all; thus "God is the ultimate subject of knowledge."[231] Accordingly, as Van Til said in the *Defense of the Faith,* "the only method that will lead to the truth in any field is that method which recognizes the fact that man is a creature of God, that he must therefore seek to think God's thoughts after him."[232] Knowing must *begin with God* who self-sufficiently determines and hence knows all reality and history; God's knowledge is revealed in the created realm and apprehended by man's mind which itself operates in terms of God's revelation of Himself. God, as the *original subject of knowledge,* must be the *final reference point* for man's knowledge, which is accordingly a receptive reconstruction of God's thinking. "Human knowledge of anything presupposes God's ultimate self-consciousness as the point of reference for man's knowledge of anything."[233] This goes to indicate the fundamental difference between Christian and non-Christian epistemologies: "according to the Christian position, the basis of human investigation is in God, while for the antitheistic position the basis of human investigation is in man."[234] The Christian recognizes that all explanation must end somewhere and that only if it ends in the self-sufficient Creator of all things whose revelation is expressed through the facts as well as man's mind can genuine knowledge be attained.

> The Protestant doctrine of God requires that it be made foundational to everything else as a principle of explanation. If God is self-sufficient, he alone is self-explanatory. And if he alone is self-explanatory, then he must be the final reference point in all human predication. He is then like the sun from which all lights on earth derive their power of illumination.[235]

In his *Survey of Christian Epistemology,* Van Til argues that in the theory of knowledge all options reduce down to a choice between a Christian and non-Christian epistemology; each position finally

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[229] Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Ripon, Calif.: den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1969), p. iii.
[230] *Ibid.,* p. xiii.
[231] *Ibid.,* pp. 1, 133.
[232] Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 19550, p. 119.
[233] *Survey of Christian Epistemology* (hereafter *SCE*), p. 109.
[234] *Ibid.,* p. 9.
[235] Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed publishing Co., 1969), p. 12.

understands different things by the standard epistemological vocabulary. The *most significant contrast* between them lies in how each conceives of the *relation of tile human mind to the divine mind.* The key question in epistemology can be variously put as: *can the human mind or consciousness function independently of God,* or *is tile mind hi itself able to interpret reality intelligently?* The options which the philosopher faces are these: he can attempt to interpret reality in terms of (1) the sense world, (2) an ideal world, (3) a mixture of these two, or (4) instead in terms of the mind (revelation) of God. Van Til exposes the deficiencies of the first three positions, showing that throughout, the antitheist has taken for granted what he is supposed to prove. According to the Christian philosopher, the objects of knowledge exist and derive their meaning from the presupposed absolute self-consciousness of God (His all-encompassing, self-sufficient understanding of reality and sovereign direction over historical eventuation). The secondary subject of knowledge, man, does *not* have a mind which is independent, ultimate, or self-sufficient; he must take God's revealed word as his starting point and standard for knowledge.

The foregoing has been a very brief and general outline of the epistemological position taught by Van Til. Becoming more specific, we can observe how Van Til's revelational epistemology replies to the four basic questions which the discussion of pragmatism and linguistic analysis has left to be answered. Van Til notes that "every man educated or not educated has an epistemology implied in his practice."[236] It is this which each man must give an account of. "Every system of philosophy must tell us whether it thinks true knowledge to be possible. Or if a system of philosophy thinks it impossible . . . it must give good reasons for thinking so."[237] Because "the very possibility of error presupposes the existence of truth,"[238] no philosopher (not even the critic or skeptic) will be able to ignore the necessity of answering basic epistemological questions-in particular, how do you account for knowledge (its nature, possibility, assumptions, and validation)? As we have noted previously, there is no escape from confrontation with such a major question, whether through Dewey's pragmatism, general skepticism, or Austin's novel linguistic analysis. An indubitable foundation for knowledge must be found.

Van Til has been bold to recognize from the outset of his career that, contrary to the impression given by pragmatism, when it comes to verifying one's knowledge-claims or giving an account of his conclusions, the starting point, method, and conclusions will all *mutually require* each other; they go hand in hand. Consequently, what one takes as the proper test, origin, or result of knowledge will be internally dictated by his overall worldview or his general presuppositions.[239] Because one's conclusion and starting point require each other, "every system of thought necessarily has a certain method of its own," one which corresponds to its idea of knowledge.[240] Hence *circularity* will be operative in every man's thinking, creating a fundamental philosophy of life which is contrary to any system having different presuppositions.[241] The most basic doctrines of a system are interdependent and color each other, thus giving a distinctive method to the system.[242] This in turn means that *neutrality is an impossible illusion;* every thinker will in the nature of the case begin with a certain bias.[243]

However, unlike other philosophers in this century who have come to recognize this truth, Van Til

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[236] *SCE*, p. 15.
[237] *Ibid.,* p. xiii.
[238] *Ibid.,* p. 23.
[239] *The Defense of the Faith* (hereafter *DF*), p. 118.
[240] *SCE*, pp. 4-5, 6.
[241] *Ibid.,* pp. 7, 12.
[242] *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (hereafter *CTK*), p. 11.
[243] *SCE*, pp. 5-6, 19.

has refused to capitulate to relativism. "We cannot choose epistemologies as we choose hats. Such would be the case if it had been once for all established that the whole tiling is but a matter of taste.... That is exactly the point in dispute."[244] On the same page, Van Til notes that the attitude which allows for epistemological or presuppositional relativity rests on the conviction that man can have no knowledge of ultimate things; however, this conviction must be made reasonable, which due to its very content is going to be impossible. When two systems which have fundamentally antithetic presuppositions come into conflict, says Van Til, the opponents *can* and *trust reason* with each other;[245] the worldview which is contrary to your own "ought to be refuted by a reasoned argument, instead of by ridicule and assumption."[246] Here it is evident that Van Til will not allow himself to slip into the damaging arbitrariness and prejudice of Wittgenstein. Van Til has consistently taught that the ultimate question in the last analysis concerns one's most basic assumptions or presuppositions, and these *must not be left unchallenged* when systems disagree.[247] Instead, the two opponents must seek to determine which presuppositions are necessary for the intelligibility of the objects of knowledge, the intelligibility of facts and laws, the interpretation of experience, the foundations of logic, the task of predication, or the consciousness of self, objects, or time.[248] To put if briefly, *what are the necessary preconditions of knowledge?* To settle this question is to see which worldview corresponds to the facts, which is of necessity true, which gives an adequate answer to the perennial quest for certainty.

The fundamental question in epistemology turns out to be this: can reality be intelligibly interpreted in exclusively immanent or temporal categories? That is, the pivotal question is this: *which mind, man or God's, is to be taken as original and epistemologically ultimate?*[249] "There can be no more fundamental question in epistemology than the question whether or not facts can be known without reference to God . . . whether or not God exists."[250] Because Christianity forces us to face such questions, and because Christianity has an adequate answer to them, Christian epistemology need not degenerate into unreasoning presuppositional arbitrariness. "If the Christian position with respect to creation, that is, with respect to the idea of the origin of both the subject and the object of knowledge is true, there is and must be objective knowledge."[251] "Only the Christian theist has real objectivity, while the others are introducing false prejudices or subjectivity."[252] This last comment has been abundantly illustrated in our discussions above of Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Austin. *Objectivity* becomes possible only with *revealed presuppositions.* Hence the objectivity of an epistemological position is a matter of whether it places things in relation to the *absolutely self-conscious God,* "we must call any system of thought subjective if it sets up human thought or the human consciousness as the ultimate standard of truth."[253]

Therefore, in the last two chapters of *A Survey of Christian Epistemology,* Van Til teaches that Christians, in order to be consistent with their position, must reason by thinking God's thoughts after him, taking His revelation as their most basic certainty, and reducing all other positions to absurdity-indeed, showing that even antitheism must presuppose theism in order to reason against it! The Christian method in epistemology should be the "transcendental" method of "implication", seeking

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[244] *Ibid.,* p. xiv.
[245] *Ibid.,* chap. XIV.
[246] *Ibid.,* p. 23.
[247] *DF*, pp. 94, 110.
[248] *SCE*, pp. 189, 201, 204, 206; *DF*, pp. 94, 110, 117.
[249] *SCE*, pp. 15, 107, 133.
[250] *Ibid.,* p. 4.
[251] *DF*, p. 60.
[252] *SCE*, p. 201; cf. p. 103.
[253] *Ibid.,* pp. 4, 134.

to bring every fact which is investigated into the illuminating context of God's revealed truth and plan.[254] This method takes any *fact* and recognizes the presuppositions which are necessary for it to be what it is. When worldviews collide, the Christian transcendental epistemology calls for us to ask what foundations knowledge must have in order for man intelligibly to understand the facts at all. Van Til calls this *"spiral reasoning"* because "we are not reasoning about and seeking to explain facts by assuming the existence and meaning of certain other facts on the same level of being with the facts we are investigating, and then explaining these facts in turn by the facts with which we began. We are presupposing *God,* not merely another fact of the universe."[255] This is not circular; it is transcendental. Nor is it autonomous, seeking to establish the groundwork of knowledge by means of a scholarly investigation which is carried on independently of God's revealed word. The Christian begins with an interrelated system, a revealed worldview, and from *that vantage point* examines all facts, competing systems, and the transcendentals of knowledge. Therefore, we can say that Christian epistemology is *revelationally transcendental* in character.

According to Van Til, then, epistemology is not abandoned to skeptical relativism in the end. Instead, there is a self-attesting worldview which supplies an objective foundation for epistemic certainty. That Wittgenstein so much wanted, but could not find on his own, has been provided by God's revelation. Peace can finally come to the philosopher when he realizes that Christianity is the presupposition without which predication would be unintelligible, for nothing can be known of any fact except by way of one's fundamental knowledge of God; nothing can be known unless the Creator and Redeemer is first known, thereby enabling successful rational inquiry based on his revelation, in terms of which reason and fact are intelligible or meaningful.[256] "If it be said to such opponents of Christianity that, unless there were an absolute God their own questions and doubts would have no meaning at all, there is no argument in return. There lie the issues."[257] This must count, according to Wittgenstein, as the *real discovery* because it establishes a philosophy that is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* into question or jeopardy.

When one refuses to presuppose this self-attesting revelation of God in his overt or conscious reasoning, he must eventually exalt man's mind to a functional equivalence with God. What God does in terms of the Christian's system, autonomous man must claim the prerogative to do in his own system.[258] But of course he is unable to do this in any adequate fashion. Therefore, observes Van Til, modern philosophy is afflicted with *phenomenalism* wherein *all systems of interpretations become relative to the mind of man;* what the autonomous thinker takes to be true is simply *his own imposition of order* on a chaotic or irrational realm of factuality.[259] Because Christianity begins with the revelation of the living God who created all things and knows them completely, it alone does not end up legislating for reality.[260] Because the autonomous epistemologist must make his mind determinative for reality while simultaneously admitting that reality is beyond his rational control and characterized by brute, interpreted, chance eventuation, the non-Christian is unavoidably led into *dialectical tensions* between rationalism and irrationalism.

> It was thus that man, in rejecting the covenantal requirement of God became at one an(l the same time both irrationalist and rationalist. These two are not, except formally,

[254] *Ibid.,* pp. 4, 134.
[255] *Ibid.,* p. 201; cf. p. 12.
[256] *Ibid.,* pp. 5, 116, 117, 123, 183; *CTK*, pp. 18, 41, 45.
[257] *SCE*, p. 11.
[258] *CTK*, p. 15.
[259] *DF*, p. 144.
[260] *CTK*, p. 51.

> contradictory of one another. They rather imply one another. Man had to be both to he either. . .. In ancient philosophy the rationalistic motif seemed to dominate the scene; in modern times the irrationalistic motif seems to he largely in control. But the one never lives altogether independently of the other.[261]

Abundant evidence of antinomy in secular thought was found in our discussion of pragmatism and linguistic analysis above; a rational-irrational dialectic was firmly embedded in the positions of Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Austin. None was immune, and thus each of their respective epistemological positions was unsatisfactory. This tension in non-Christian theories of knowledge is inevitable given their assumed autonomy or independence from God's revelation. "we would maintain that all of the antinomies of anti-theistic reasoning are due to a false separation or man from God."[262] The attitude of autonomy must finally posit the ultimacy of mystery and thereby capitulate to skepticism in the long run.[263] Autonomy is inherently destructive of human experience, for it makes impossible demands of the finite and dependent human intellect.[264]

In sharp contrast to the fate of twentieth-century pragmatism and linguistic analysis, Christian presuppositionalism in epistemology faces up to standard problems in the theory of knowledge, recognizes the critical function of presuppositions in one's worldview with its interrelated starting point, method, and conclusions, and yet fully holds to the objectivity of truth and the need for conflicting systems to reason with each other, seeking the self-attesting and transcendental groundwork for epistemology-an intelligible position which untangles philosophical problems, does not crumble under dialectical tensions, and averts the skepticism of phenomenalism. As Van Til has so beneficially expounded, "Christianity can be shown to be, not 'just as good as' or even 'better than' the non-Christian position, but the *only* position that does not make nonsense of human experience."[265] In God's word, we find the indubitable and infallible truths which have been sought throughout the history of epistemological theorizing; in His revelation, the philosopher finds that knowledge which is so certain that no reasonable man should doubt it. Modern epistemology points up the continued necessity for philosophy to find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ *(Col.* 2:3), for aside from Him and His self-attesting word man can produce nothing but the vain opposition of "knowledge falsely-so-called" (I Tim. 6:20). Therefore, we conclude that the quest for certainty can be successful only as one takes the fear of the Lord as the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7). *Presuppositionalism secures knowledge while eschewing the errors of both pragmatism and prejudice.*

Harry Frankfurt once wrote, "The claim that a basis for doubt is inconceivable is justified whenever a denial of the claim would violate the conditions or presuppositions of rational inquiry."[266] What Van Til has contributed to the theory of knowledge is an acute awareness that a reasonable basis for doubt is inconceivable with respect to God's revelation, and apart from *this* sure foundation all other ground is sinking sand (Matt. 7:24-27; Prov. 1:29).

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[261] *Ibid.,* pp. 49, 50; cf. *DF*, pp. 133, 142.
[262] *SCE*, p. 109.
[263] *CTK*, p. 50; see also *The Reformed Pastor and Modern Thought* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971), e.g., p. 89.
[264] *CTK*, pp. 12-13.
[265] *Ibid.,* p. 19.
[266] "Doubt," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophia*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Co., The Free Press, 1967), II, p. 414.