

## TEACHING EVALUATION COMMITTEE—PEER EVALUATIONS

The Teaching Evaluation Committee arranges classroom observations for untenured faculty members (tenure-track, clinical track, or part-time). These observations by tenured faculty members are intended to be both *helpful* for the teacher observed (a chance to talk over classroom issues or to obtain a letter on teaching for a job file) and *evaluative* (the department collects evidence on the effectiveness of its teachers). The process usually involves a classroom observation arranged at a time that is mutually convenient to the teacher and the observer, a discussion before or after the class (related to the teacher's goals, the course syllabus, and so on), and a letter written by the observer and turned in to the Department Chair.

The faculty member observing should speak to the following issues, either in the form of a letter or by filling out this report.

### CLASS OBSERVATION PEER REPORT

Faculty member observed: William Myatt  
Course PHIL 171 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION  
Faculty member observing Tom Regan, S.J.

Date: November 9, 2012

**Please write a description of what you observed in the class.**

This was a course that met on a Friday from 10:25 until 11:15 A.M. Thirty five students were in attendance. The class had a real logical and coherent "flow" to it. The professor presented a masterful interplay between an interactive use of PowerPoint, Blackboard, oral class presentation and discussion. The time seemed to fly by.

**Briefly comment on the following:**

**a. Syllabus**

The syllabus and course calendar (see below) present clearly articulated goals for the course and all of the relevant material that students need to know in order to negotiate their way successfully through the semester. Judging by the material covered in the class that I attended, the course is right on schedule.

**b. Material taught**

In this particular class students were finishing off a discussion of a reading excerpted from Hume's *Dialogues on Natural Religion* and then proceeded into a discussion of an excerpt taken from Søren Kierkegaard's *Unscientific Postscript*. The question under consideration was the manner in which one can speak about knowledge of God. The three characters in Hume's account offer three different perspectives, while Kierkegaard offers a fourth.

**c. Preparation and delivery of lecture, if appropriate**

As the class commenced, the professor already had a PowerPoint slide projected which directed the students' attention to the key facets of Hume's argument. The interactive slides which featured a fill in the missing answer and slides asking "is this statement true or false," really seemed to engaged the class. The professor has a very easy going style. Nonetheless he kept the entire fifty minutes tightly focused and on topic.

**d. Class discussion, if appropriate**

A number of student asked question and followed up on the questions of others. At one point one student confessed that he had really struggled trying to make sense of the Hume reading on his own, but when he consulted the questions that the professor had posted in advance on Blackboard, he was able to understand the points that Hume was making.

**e. Response to student questions, if appropriate**

Professor Myatt gave clear and cogent answers to student questions. It was clear that over the course of the semester he has established a real rapport with his students. The questions that they asked were well-thought out and articulately phrased.

**What did you find particularly effective about this teacher?**

The class featured several different pedagogical approaches, i.e. Powerpoint, discussion, having the students read aloud the key passages from the text ,and posing and answering questions. The class really flowed quite nicely. When he transitioned from Hume to Kierkegaard, he took five minutes to explicate Kierkegaard's relevant biographical information with a single PowerPoint slide which served to give the students some clue as to who this author was and what prompted him to write.

**What would you suggest needs to be improved? What suggestions can you offer on how to implement improvements?**

I was thoroughly impressed. Professor Myatt clearly demonstrated not only a genuine mastery of his material but also a real command of his multi-faceted pedagogical style. The students were clearly engaged and able to discuss in a highly intelligent manner some of the more highly nuanced aspects of Hume's argument. When the professor wanted to demonstrate Kierkegaard's notion of the passionate way in which one must invest oneself in a process of knowing of and relating to God, he simply showed a slide of his four children in their Halloween costumes. Point made! Touché! Who could compete with that?

**Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?**

Although professor Myatt is pursuing his doctorate in Theology I would highly recommend that he continues to offer this Philosophy of Religion course in the Philosophy department as long as possible! Loyola is well served by him!

**Philosophy of Religion  
PHIL 171 – Fall, 2012**

**Instructor: William Myatt, Ph.D. Candidate**  
**Course Details: MWF 10:25-11:15; Cuneo 104**  
**Office: TBD**  
**Phone: 773-383-4997 (cell)**  
**E-Mail: wmyatt@luc.edu**  
**Office Hours: MWF 2:30-3:30**

**SUMMARY**

**Short Description:** This course explores the development, not only of some classic positions within the philosophy of religion, but also of how these views have affected the formulation of more contemporary discussions.

**Outcome Statement:** Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the enterprise of using reason, broadly construed, to articulate issues arising out of religious belief and practice and to formulate and defend positions with respect to those issues.

**THIS COURSE AND THE UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM**

<b>Knowledge Area(s) satisfied:</b>	Philosophical Knowledge, Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge
<b>Skill(s) Developed:</b>	Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions
<b>Values Requirement(s) satisfied:</b>	Understanding Spirituality or Faith in Action in the World

**CORE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**First Knowledge Area (Philosophical Knowledge):**

Philosophy of religion is the enterprise of using reason, broadly construed, to articulate issues arising out of religious belief and practice and to formulate and defend positions with respect to those issues. The issues that practitioners of this discipline consider are (roughly) of three kinds:

- A. Those that pertain to particular questions of religious belief, such as
  - whether God, gods, goddesses, or anything that can fairly be called 'divine' exists; or
  - whether there is continued existence after death in the form of personal immortality, reincarnation or something else altogether;
- B. Those that pertain to the nature of religious belief itself, such as
  - whether, in what way, and under what conditions religious belief is rational, or
  - whether and to what degree evidence may be available to support religious belief;

- C. Those that pertain to value questions that derive from religious belief, such as
- how human freedom and responsibility are maintained in the context of divine power;
  - how “good” and “evil” may be characterized.

**Second Knowledge Area (Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge):**

NOTE: A course in the philosophy of religion is an appropriate option for Loyola students who may not be committed to any specific faith tradition, but who are nevertheless spiritually and theologically inquisitive.

The objectives associated with the second knowledge areas are to enable the student to develop the following competencies:

- (a) Analyze and interpret religious texts, beliefs, and practices using standard scholarly methods and tools. (This course focuses on the nature, content and variety of religious belief and will employ “standard scholarly methods and tools” appropriate to the philosophical analysis of religious beliefs and concepts.)
- (b) Demonstrate knowledge of the intersections between religion and selected contemporary issues, including ethics, social, political, economic, or cultural issues. (This course will not seek an understanding of religion in a cultural or conceptual vacuum. That is, religion will be examined within the context of larger views concerning the nature of reality, human identity, human culture, the capacities of human knowledge, and moral value. This perspective has immediate relevance for a concrete philosophy of life.)
- (c) Evaluate one's own religious perspective and the religious perspectives of others. Demonstrate knowledge of central ethical teachings and perspectives of a religious tradition. (A course in the philosophy of religion may be somewhat distinct from a traditional course in theology in that it adopts an essentially comparative perspective, examining the problem of how individuals with disparate religious beliefs can share a common view of reality and the world. In this respect, an “ethics” that tries to rise above religious differences, while recognizing the value of the ethical principles within those traditions, may in the end provide a greater opportunity for cultural harmony.)

**Objectives common to both Knowledge Areas:**

Specifically, students will develop the following competencies:

- (a) Distinguish among various basic conceptions of divine being.
- (b) Provide examples of arguments for the existence of a divine being.
- (c) Analyze the problems that beset the relation between “religious belief” and “knowledge”; for example, is religious belief to be taken to be superior or inferior to knowledge?; to what extent is religious belief subject to the same requirements of justification as knowledge-claims?
- (d) Distinguish among differing theological conceptions of “good” and “evil,” drawing out their implications for our understanding of human identity and human destiny, and showing how these different conceptions may derive from different faith traditions.

- (e) Explain the strengths and weaknesses of all these various approaches, evaluating and criticizing them in a balanced way while defending their own point of view (that is, to "think critically" about all of these arguments and points of view). (This is a competency shared with "skills").
- (f) Understand some of the issues related to inter-religious dynamics, particularly as those dynamics are borne from "Eastern" and "Western" understandings of the divine.

#### **Skills (Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions):**

Students will be able to

- (a) Read and interpret philosophical texts, demonstrating their comprehension by their ability to explain them when asked to do so, either in examinations, essays or other format.
- (b) Analyze relationships among concepts and claims made in these philosophical texts (or among philosophical ideas and positions developed in class) and distinguish among even subtly differing philosophical positions.
- (c) Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses among the varying points of view they will encounter. It is of the essence of philosophical inquiry, of course, that such diversity of viewpoint be developed within the context of every philosophy course and be presented to students precisely as a means of enhancing their ability to evaluate in this way.
- (d) Not only grasp the concepts, positions and arguments of the viewpoints they encounter, but to develop their own points of view—a process that encourages the exercise of their own imagination, resources and creativity by requiring them to strike out on their own.
- (e) Examine both their own philosophical positions and those of others with balance and a critical eye, weighing reasons for and against, examining them and defending them with arguments of their own devising.
- (f) Examine not only the arguments they put forward in this way, but also be aware of the motivation behind those arguments through critical self-reflection.

#### **Values Area (Understanding Spirituality or Faith in Action in the World):**

A significant part of the course will be devoted both to the evaluation of faith claims from the standpoint of reason and to the examination of the rationality of faith or religious belief generally. A by-product of this will be a heightened understanding of the nature of religious belief and practice.

Students will also be introduced to issues related to religious diversity, particularly as those issues are derived from cultural conflicts related to religious belief.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **Required Readings:**

Andrew Eshleman (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: East Meets West* (Walden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2008). ISBN: 1405147172

Shusaku Endo, *Silence*, trans. William Johnston (New York: Taplinger, 1980). ISBN: 0800871863

#### Periodic Blackboard Readings

#### Course Requirements:

Class Participation	20%
Blackboard Assignments	20%
Integrative Paper	20%
Four Quizzes (drop lowest one)	20%
Final Exam	20%

#### Grading Policy:

A = 100-94

A- = 93-90

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76

C- = 70-72

D+ = 66-69

D = 60-65

F = 59 and below

#### Attendance and Class Participation (20%):

Each class will begin with an attendance check. Students are permitted one unexcused absence and two excused absences during the semester. An absence is excused, when the professor knows in advance that you will not be in attendance and has approved the reason for your absence. An absence is not excused, when the professor is notified after or during the class session, and/or when the professor does not regard the reason for absence a legitimate reason for missing class. Morning-of requests for absence are not guaranteed approval.

All students start with full credit for class participation. Your grade will be decreased based on the following criteria: (1) You offer no attempt to answer a question raised by Mr. Myatt (-5 points). An incorrect answer will be rewarded for "good faith effort." (2) You are obviously not engaged in class discussions (-5 points). (3) You fall asleep during class (-5 points). (4) You are disruptive during class (-10 points). (5) You are consistently late to class (-5 points). (6) You accrue more than one unexcused or two excused absences.

**Blackboard Assignments (20%):**

Students will be assigned various blackboard tasks throughout the semester. These assignments will be graded. Assignments may include discussion board posts, group discussions, and journal entries. Each assignment will include a detailed description. **Pay attention to due date and time.** Blackboard will not receive late assignments. It is in your best interest to complete the assignment the night before class. Failure to submit an assignment by the required time will result in a failing grade for the assignment.

**Integrative Paper (20%):**

Students will be required to write one integrative paper. The goal of this assignment is to compare and contrast two approaches to belief in God. One approach must be taken from the assigned text *Silence*, and one approach must be taken from the assigned text *Readings in Philosophy of Religion*. The paper will be structured as follows: (1) summarize the belief in God derived from *Silence* (1.5-2 pages); (2) summarize the belief in God derived from *Readings* (1.5-2 pages); (3) summarize the most salient points of agreement and disagreement between these two positions. "The most salient issues" may be determined by an evaluation of how the points could cause either commonality or confusion, respectively.

**\*\*PAPER DUE: Nov 21, via "turnitin"\*\***

**Four Quizzes (20%):**

Four quizzes will be administered throughout the semester. Questions will be derived from both class discussions and assigned readings. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Questions could include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay.

**\*\*QUIZ DATES\*\* Sept 14, Oct 5, Oct. 26, Nov. 16**

**Final Exam (20%):**

The final exam will be cumulative. Some questions will be derived from quizzes, others from blackboard assignments; many will be new. Questions could include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay.

**\*\*FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 10, 9:00-11:00am.\*\***

**Course Schedule:**

SEE BLACKBOARD FOR FULL SCHEDULE. Schedule may shift to accommodate class needs.

Key Dates:

Sept 3 – No class (Labor Day)

Oct 8 – No class (Fall Break)

Nov 2 – Last Day to withdraw with a grade of "W"

Nov 23 – No class (Thanksgiving)

Dec 7 – Last day of class

**Technology in the Classroom:**

Texting and other mobile device usage will not be permitted while in class. Laptops may be used for note-taking. A primary media for course lectures will be powerpoint presentations saved on the blackboard, course website. This policy may be changed at



the discretion of the instructor.

**Cheating:** Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher
  - Providing information to another student during an examination
  - Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination
  - Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor
  - Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted
  - Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom
  - Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines
  - Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious form of violation of the standards of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. Examples of Plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as print, internet, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.
  - Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material
  - Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit
  - Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper

*Plagiarism, Cheating, or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the chairperson of the department involved, and to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The chairperson may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending upon the seriousness of the misconduct.*

**Special Needs:** Any student needing a special accommodation in this course due to a documented disability is asked to bring this to the attention of the instructor at the

beginning of the semester so that needs can be appropriately addressed. For more information, please see: <http://www.luc.edu/depts/lac/disabilities>.

PHIL 171  
Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion  
William Myatt  
Loyola University Chicago  
Fall 2012  
Calendar

Part 1: Religious Experience

Week 1: Transcendence, Contemplation (Rilke), and Classics  
Week 2: Sept 5-7 Plato's Cave analogy, Teresa in Ecstasy  
Week 3: Sept 10-14 al-Ghazali, Ehei Dogen, Quiz #1

Part 2: Who is God? Answers from "The West"

Week 4: Sept 17-21 Philosophy, Religion, and God  
Week 5: Sept 24-28 Classic Theism, Feminism  
Week 6: Oct 1-5 Process theism, anti-realist faith, Quiz #2

Part 3: Who is God? Answers from "The East"

Week 7: Oct 10-12 Buddhism  
Week 8: Oct 15-19 Emptiness in Mahayana Buddhism, Brahman in Hinduism  
Week 9: Oct 22-26 Hinduism (cont'd), Chinese philosophy, Quiz #3

Part 4: Proving God: Reason and Faith

Week 10: Oct 29-Nov 2 Anselm, Aquinas, al-Ghazali  
Week 11: Nov 5-9 Hume, Kierkegaard  
Week 12: Nov 12-16 William James, Zhuangzi, Quiz #4

Part 4: East meets West: *Silence* by Shusaku Endo

Week 13: Nov 19 Introducing *Silence*  
Week 14: Nov 26-30 *Silence*  
Week 15: Dec 3-7 *Silence*  
FINAL EXAM

1 words

# Readings in Philosophy of Religion

East Meets West

Edited by Andrew Eshleman



be exactly similar, they repose no perfect confidence in applying their past observation to any particular phenomenon. Every alteration of circumstances occasions a doubt concerning the event; and it requires new experiments to prove certainly, that the new circumstances are of no moment or importance. A change in bulk, situation, arrangement, age, disposition of the air, or surrounding bodies; any of these particulars may be attended with the most unexpected consequences: And unless the objects be quite familiar to us, it is the highest temerity to expect with assurance, after any of these changes, an event similar to that which before fell under our observation. The slow and deliberate steps of philosophers, here, if any where, are distinguished from the precipitate march of the vulgar, who, hurried on by the smallest similitudes, are incapable of all discernment or consideration.

*Admitted*  
 But can you think, CLEANTHES, that your usual phlegm and philosophy have been preserved in so wide a step as you have taken, when you compared to the universe houses, ships, furniture, machines; and from their similarity in some circumstances inferred a similarity in their causes? Thought, design, intelligence, such as we discover in men and other animals, is no more than one of the springs and principles of the universe, as well as heat or cold, attraction or repulsion, and a hundred others, which fall under daily observation. It is an active cause, by which some particular parts of nature, we find, produce alterations on other parts. But can a conclusion, with any propriety, be transferred from parts to the whole? Does not the great disproportion bar all comparison and inference? From observing the growth of a hair, can we learn any thing concerning the generation of a man? Would the manner of a leaf's blowing, even though perfectly known, afford us any instruction concerning the vegetation of a tree?

*READ*  
 But allowing that we were to take the operations of one part of nature upon another for the foundation of our judgement concerning the origin of the whole (which never can be admitted) yet why select so minute, so weak, so bounded a principle as the reason and design of animals is found to be upon this planet? What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call *thought*, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe? Our

partiality in our own favour does indeed present it on all occasions; but sound philosophy ought carefully to guard against so natural an illusion.

So far from admitting, continued PHILO, that the operations of a part can afford us any just conclusion concerning the origin of the whole, I will not allow any one part to form a rule for another part, if the latter be very remote from the former. Is there any reasonable ground to conclude, that the inhabitants of other planets possess thought, intelligence, reason, or any thing similar to these faculties in men? When Nature has so extremely diversified her manner of operation in this small globe; can we imagine, that she incessantly copies herself throughout so immense a universe? And if thought, as we may well suppose, be confined merely to this narrow corner, and has even there so limited a sphere of action; with what propriety can we assign it for the original cause of all things? The narrow views of a peasant, who makes his domestic economy the rule for the government of kingdoms, is in comparison a pardonable sophism.

*READ*  
 But were we ever so much assured, that a thought and reason, resembling the human, were to be found throughout the whole universe, and were its activity elsewhere vastly greater and more commanding than it appears in this globe; yet I cannot see, why the operations of a world, constituted, arranged, adjusted, can with any propriety be extended to a world, which is in its embryo-state, and is advancing towards that constitution and arrangement. By observation, we know somewhat of the economy, action, and nourishment of a finished animal; but we must transfer with great caution that observation to the growth of a fetus in the womb, and still more, in the formation of an animalcule in the loins of its male parent. Nature, we find, even from our limited experience, possesses an infinite number of springs and principles, which incessantly discover themselves on every change of her position and situation. And what new and unknown principles would actuate her in so new and unknown a situation as that of the formation of a universe, we cannot, without the utmost temerity, pretend to determine.

A very small part of this great system, during a very short time, is very imperfectly discovered to us: and do we then pronounce decisively concerning the origin of the whole?

own favour does indeed present us; but sound philosophy ought to stand against so natural an illusion. admitting, continued PHILO, that a part can afford us any just discerning the origin of the whole, any one part to form a rule for the latter be very remote from there any reasonable ground to the inhabitants of other planets, intelligence, reason, or any thing faculties in men? When Nature diversified her manner of operation all globe; can we imagine, that copies herself throughout so diverse? And if thought, as we may be confined merely to this narrow even there so limited a sphere of propriety can we assign it for use of all things? The narrow view makes his domestic economy government of kingdoms, is inardonable sophism.

ever so much assured, that a reason, resembling the human, is found throughout the whole universe, activity elsewhere vastly greater than it appears in this world, not see, why the operations of a deity, arranged, adjusted, can with ease be extended to a world, which is in progress; and is advancing towards that final arrangement. By observation, that of the economy, action, and of a finished animal; but we must take caution that observation to the world as it is, not to the world as it was in the womb, and still more, not to an animalcule in the loins of Nature, we find, even from our own species, possesses an infinite number of principles, which incessantly disengage on every change of her position. And what new and unknown causes actuate her in so new and a variation as that of the formation we cannot, without the utmost care, be able to determine.

part of this great system, during its progress, is very imperfectly discovered: then pronounce decisively concerning the whole?

Admirable conclusion! Stone, wood, brick, iron, brass, have not, at this time, in this minute globe of earth, an order or arrangement without human art and contrivance: therefore the universe could not originally attain its order and arrangement, without something similar to human art. But is a part of nature a rule for another part very wide of the former? Is it a rule for the whole? Is a very small part a rule for the universe? Is nature in one situation, a certain rule for nature in another situation, vastly different from the former?

[...]

When two *species* of objects have always been observed to be conjoined together, I can *infer*, by custom, the existence of one where-ever I see the existence of the other: and this I call an argument from experience. But how this argument can have place, where the objects, as in the present case, are single, individual, without parallel, or specific resemblance, may be difficult to explain. And will any man tell me with a serious countenance, that an orderly universe must arise from some thought and art, like the human; because we have experience of it? To ascertain this reasoning, it were requisite, that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance. . . .

[...]

Now, CLEANTHES, said PHILO, with an air of alacrity and triumph, mark the consequences. *First*, By this method of reasoning, you renounce all claim to infinity in any of the attributes of the Deity. For as the cause ought only to be proportioned to the effect, and the effect, so far as it falls under our cognisance, is not infinite; what pretensions have we, upon your suppositions, to ascribe that attribute to the divine Being? You will still insist, that, by removing him so much from all similarity to human creatures, we give in to the most arbitrary hypothesis, and at the same time weaken all proofs of his existence.

*Secondly*, You have no reason, on your theory, for ascribing perfection to the Deity, even in his finite capacity; or for supposing him free from every error, mistake, or incoherence in his undertakings. There are many inexplicable

difficulties in the works of Nature, which, if we allow a perfect author to be proved *a priori*, are easily solved, and become only seeming difficulties, from the narrow capacity of man, who cannot trace infinite relations. But according to your method of reasoning, these difficulties become all real; and perhaps will be insisted on, as new instances of likeness to human art and contrivance. At least, you must acknowledge, that it is impossible for us to tell, from our limited views, whether this system contains any great faults, or deserves any considerable praise, if compared to other possible, and even real systems. Could a peasant, if the *ÆNEID* were read to him, pronounce that poem to be absolutely faultless, or even assign to it its proper rank among the productions of human wit; he, who had never seen any other production?

But were this world ever so perfect a production, it must still remain uncertain, whether all the excellences of the work can justly be ascribed to the workman. If we survey a ship, what an exalted idea must we form of the ingenuity of the carpenter, who framed so complicated, useful, and beautiful a machine? And what surprise must we feel, when we find him a stupid mechanic, who imitated others, and copied an art, which, through a long succession of ages, after multiplied trials, mistakes, corrections, deliberations, and controversies, had been gradually improving? Many worlds might have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out: much labour lost: many fruitless trials made: and a slow, but continued improvement carried on during infinite ages in the art of world-making. In such subjects, who can determine, where the truth lies; nay, who can conjecture where the probability lies; amidst a great number of hypotheses which may be proposed, and a still greater number which may be imagined?

And what shadow of an argument, continued PHILO, can you produce, from your hypothesis, to prove the unity of the Deity? A great number of men join in building a house or ship, in rearing a city, in framing a commonwealth: why may not several deities combine in contriving and framing a world? This is only so much greater similarity to human affairs. By sharing the work among several, we may so much further limit the attributes of each, and get rid of that extensive power and knowledge, which must be supposed

cluded from those numerous  
Behold then the theogony of  
right back upon us.

become a perfect Anthro-  
not assert the deity or deities  
d to have eyes, a nose, mouth,  
us maintained, that no man  
son but in a human figure;  
; must have a human figure.  
; which is deservedly so much  
), becomes, according to you,  
hical.

THES, a man, who follows your  
le, perhaps, to assert, or  
re universe, sometime, arose  
like design: but beyond that  
t ascertain one single circum-  
afterwards to fix every point  
r the utmost licence of fancy  
is world, for aught he knows,  
nperfect, compared to a supe-  
was only the first rude essay  
y, who afterwards abandoned  
me performance: it is the work  
ndent, inferior deity; and is  
ion to his superiors: it is the  
age and dotage in some sup-  
and ever since his death, has  
es, from the first impulse and  
it received from him. You justly  
or, DBMEA, at these strange  
these, and a thousand more  
re CLEANTHES's suppositions,  
ae moment the attributes of  
posed finite, all these have  
t, for my part, think, that so  
a system of theology is, in  
ible to none at all.

# Truth is Subjectivity

Søren Kierkegaard

1813-1855

## Concluding Unscientific Postscript

In an attempt to make clear the difference of way that exists between an objective and a subjective reflection, I shall now proceed to show how a subjective reflection makes its way inwardly in inwardness. Inwardness in an existing subject culminates in passion; corresponding to passion in the subject the truth becomes a paradox; and the fact that the truth becomes a paradox is rooted precisely in its having a relationship to an existing subject. Thus the one corresponds to the other. By forgetting that one is an existing subject, passion goes by the board and the truth is no longer a paradox; the knowing subject becomes a fantastic entity rather than a human being, and the truth becomes a fantastic object for the knowledge of this fantastic entity.

When the question of truth is raised in an objective manner, reflection is directed objectively to the truth, as an object to which the knower is related. Reflection is not focussed upon the relationship, however, but upon the question of whether it is the truth to which the knower is related. If only the object to which he is related is the truth, the subject is accounted to be in the truth. When the question of the truth is raised subjectively,

reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true.<sup>1</sup> Let us take as an example the knowledge of God. Objectively, reflection is directed to the problem of whether this object is the true God; subjectively, reflection is directed to the question whether the individual is related to a something in such a manner that his relationship is in truth a God-relationship. On which side is the truth now to be found? Ah, may we not here resort to a mediation, and say: It is on neither side, but in the mediation of both? Excellently well said, provided we might have it explained how an existing individual manages to be in a state of mediation. For to be in a state of mediation is to be finished, while to exist is to become. Nor can an existing individual be in two places at the same time - he cannot be an identity of subject and object. When he is nearest to being in two places at the same time he is in passion; but passion is momentary, and passion is also the highest expression of subjectivity.

How do we know in an objective manner

"Truth is Subjectivity" from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* by Søren Kierkegaard, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 177-82. © 1992 Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

<sup>1</sup> The reader will observe that the question here is about essential truth, or about the truth which is essentially related to existence, and that it is precisely for the sake of clarifying it as inwardness or as subjectivity that this contrast is drawn.

#2

in one deity, and which, according to you, can only serve to weaken the proof of his existence. And if such foolish, such vicious creatures as man can yet often unite in framing and executing one plan; how much more those deities or daemons, whom we may suppose several degrees more perfect?

To multiply causes, without necessity, is indeed contrary to true philosophy: but this principle applies not to the present case. Were one deity antecedently proved by your theory, who were possessed of every attribute, requisite to the production of the universe; it would be needless, I own (though not absurd) to suppose any other deity existent. But while it is still a question, Whether all these attributes are united in one subject, or dispersed among several independent beings: by what phenomena in nature can we pretend to decide the controversy? Where we see a body raised in a scale, we are sure that there is in the opposite scale, however concealed from sight, some counterpoising weight equal to it: but it is still allowed to doubt, whether that weight be an aggregate of several distinct bodies, or one uniform united mass. And if the weight requisite very much exceeds any thing which we have ever seen conjoined in any single body, the former supposition becomes still more probable and natural. An intelligent being of such vast power and capacity, as is necessary to produce the universe, or, to speak in the language of ancient philosophy, so prodigious an animal, exceeds all analogy, and even comprehension.

But farther, CLEANTHES; men are mortal, and renew their species by generation; and this is common to all living creatures. The two great sexes of male and female, says MILTON, animate the world. Why must this circumstance, so universal,

so essential, be excluded from those numerous and limited deities? Behold then the theogony of ancient times brought back upon us.

And why not become a perfect Anthropomorphite? Why not assert the deity or deities to be corporeal, and to have eyes, a nose, mouth, ears, &c.? EPICURUS maintained, that no man had ever seen reason but in a human figure; therefore the gods must have a human figure. And this argument, which is deservedly so much ridiculed by Cicero, becomes, according to you, solid and philosophical.

In a word, CLEANTHES, a man, who follows your hypothesis, is able, perhaps, to assert, or conjecture, that the universe, sometime, arose from something like design: but beyond that position he cannot ascertain one single circumstance, and is left afterwards to fix every point of his theology, by the utmost licence of fancy and hypothesis. This world, for aught he knows, is very faulty and imperfect, compared to a superior standard; and was only the first rude essay of some infant deity, who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance: it is the work only of some dependent, inferior deity; and is the object of derision to his superiors: it is the production of old age and dotage in some superannuated deity; and ever since his death, has run on at adventures, from the first impulse and active force, which, it received from him. You justly give signs of horror, DEMA, at these strange suppositions: but these, and a thousand more of the same kind, are CLEANTHES's suppositions, not mine. From the moment the attributes of the Deity are supposed finite, all these have place. And I cannot, for my part, think, that so wild and unsettled a system of theology is, in any respect, preferable to none at all.

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The existing individual who chooses to pursue the objective way enters upon the entire approximation-process by which it is proposed to bring God to light objectively. But this is in all eternity impossible, because God is a subject, and therefore exists only for subjectivity in inwardness. The existing individual who chooses the subjective way apprehends instantly the entire dialectical difficulty involved in having to use some time, perhaps a long time, in finding God objectively; and he feels this dialectical difficulty in all its painfulness, because every moment is wasted in which he does not have God.<sup>2</sup> That very instant he has God, not by virtue of any objective deliberation, but by virtue of the infinite passion of inwardness. The objective inquirer, on the other hand, is not embarrassed by such dialectical difficulties as are involved in devoting an entire period of investigation to finding God - since it is possible that the inquirer may die tomorrow; and if he lives he can scarcely regard God as something to be taken along if convenient, since God is precisely that which one takes *à tout prix*, which in the understanding of passion constitutes the true inward relationship to God.

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It is at this point, so difficult dialectically, that the way swings off for everyone who knows what it means to think, and to think existentially; which is something very different from sitting at a desk and writing about what one has never done, something very different from writing *de omnibus dubitandum* and at the same time being as credulous existentially as the most sensuous of men. Here is where the way swings off, and the change is marked by the fact that while objective knowledge rambles comfortably on by way of the long road of approximation without being impelled by the urge of passion, subjective knowledge counts every delay a deadly peril, and the decision so infinitely important and so instantly pressing that it is as if the opportunity had already passed.

PASSION

Now when the problem is to reckon up on which side there is most truth, whether on the side of one who seeks the true God objectively, and pursues the approximate truth of the God-idea; or on the side of one who, driven by the infinite passion of his need of God, feels an infinite concern for his own relationship to God in truth (and to be at one and the same time on both sides equally, is as we have noted not possible for an existing individual, but is merely the happy delusion of an imaginary I-am-I): the answer cannot be in doubt for anyone who has not been demoralized with the aid of science. If one who lives in the midst of Christendom goes up to the house of God, the house of the true God, with the true conception of God in his knowledge, and prays, but prays in a false spirit; and one who lives in an idolatrous community prays with the entire passion of the infinite, although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol: where is there most truth? The one prays in truth to God though he worships an idol; the other prays falsely to the true God, and hence worships in fact an idol.

When one man investigates objectively the problem of immortality, and another embraces an uncertainty with the passion of the infinite: where is there most truth, and who has the greater certainty? The one has entered upon a never-ending approximation, for the certainty of immortality lies precisely in the subjectivity of the individual; the other is immortal, and fights for his immortality by struggling with the uncertainty. Let us consider Socrates. Nowadays everyone dabbles in a few proofs; some have several such proofs, others fewer. But Socrates! He puts the question objectively in a problematic manner: if there is an immortality. He must therefore be accounted a doubter in comparison with one of our modern thinkers with the three proofs? By no means. On this "if" he risks his entire life, he has the courage to meet death, and he has with the passion of the infinite so determined the pattern of his life that it must be

like a death

<sup>2</sup> In this manner God certainly becomes a postulate, but not in the otiose manner in which this word is commonly understood. It becomes clear rather that the only way in which an existing individual comes into relation with God, is when the dialectical contradiction brings his passion to the point of despair, and helps him to embrace God with the "category of despair" (faith). Then the postulate is so far from being arbitrary that it is precisely a life-necessity. It is then not so much that God is a postulate, as that the existing individual's postulation of God is a necessity.

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immortality of the soul? But those who have the  
three proofs do not at all determine their lives  
in conformity therewith; if there is an immor-  
tality it must feel disgust over their manner of life:  
can any better refutation be given of the three  
proofs? The bit of uncertainty that Socrates had,  
helped him because he himself contributed the  
passion of the infinite; the three proofs that  
the others have do not profit them at all, because  
they are dead to spirit and enthusiasm, and their  
three proofs, in lieu of proving anything else,  
prove just this. A young girl may enjoy all the  
sweetness of love on the basis of what is merely  
a weak hope that she is beloved, because she  
rests everything on this weak hope; but many  
a wedded matron more than once subjected to  
the strongest expressions of love, has in so far  
indeed had proofs, but strangely enough has not  
enjoyed *quod erat demonstrandum*. The Socratic  
ignorance, which Socrates held fast with the  
entire passion of his inwardness, was thus an  
expression for the principle that the eternal truth  
is related to an existing individual, and that this  
truth must therefore be a paradox for him as long  
as he exists; and yet it is possible that there was  
more truth in the Socratic ignorance as it was in  
him, than in the entire objective truth of the  
System, which flirts with what the times demand  
and accommodates itself to *Privatdocents*.

*The objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective accent on HOW it is said.* This distinction holds even in the aesthetic realm, and receives definite expression in the principle that what is in itself true may in the mouth of such and such a person become untrue. In these times this distinction is particularly worthy of notice,

for if we wish to express in a single sentence the difference between ancient times and our own, we should doubtless have to say: "In ancient times only an individual here and there knew the truth; now all know it, except that the inwardness of its appropriation stands in an inverse relationship to the extent of its dissemination.<sup>3</sup> Aesthetically the contradiction that truth becomes untruth in this or that person's mouth, is best construed comically: In the ethico-religious sphere, accent is again on the "how." But this is not to be understood as referring to demeanor, expression, or the like; rather it refers to the relationship sustained by the existing individual, in his own existence, to the content of his utterance. Objectively the interest is focussed merely on the thought-content, subjectively on the inwardness. At its maximum this inward "how" is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is the truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity becomes the truth. Objectively there is no infinite decisiveness, and hence it is objectively in order to annul the difference between good and evil, together with the principle of contradiction, and therewith also the infinite difference between the true and the false. Only in subjectivity is there decisiveness, to seek objectivity is to be in error. It is the passion of the infinite that is the decisive factor and not its content, for its content is precisely itself. In this manner subjectivity and the subjective "how" constitute the truth.

But the "how" which is thus subjectively accentuated precisely because the subject is an existing individual, is also subject to a dialectic with respect to time. In the passionate moment of decision, where the road swings away from objective knowledge, it seems as if the infinite

<sup>3</sup> *Stages on Life's Way*, Note on p. 426. Though ordinarily not wishing an expression of opinion on the part of reviewers, I might at this point almost desire it, provided such opinions, so far from flattering me, amounted to an assertion of the daring truth that what I say is something that everybody knows, even every child, and that the cultured know infinitely much better. If it only stands fast that everyone knows it, my standpoint is in order, and I shall doubtless make shift to manage with the unity of the comic and the tragic. If there were anyone who did not know it I might perhaps be in danger of being dislodged from my position of equilibrium by the thought that I might be in a position to communicate to someone the needful preliminary knowledge. It is just this which engages my interest so much, this that the cultured are accustomed to say: that everyone knows what the highest is. This was not the case in paganism, nor in Judaism, nor in the seventeen centuries of Christianity. Hail to the nineteenth century! Everyone knows it. What progress has been made since the time when only a few knew it. To make up for this, perhaps, we must assume that no one nowadays does it.

decision were thereby realized. But in the same moment the existing individual finds himself in the temporal order, and the subjective "how" is transformed into a striving, a striving which receives indeed its impulse and a repeated renewal from the decisive passion of the infinite, but is nevertheless a striving.

When subjectivity is the truth, the conceptual determination of the truth must include an expression for the antithesis to objectivity, a memento of the fork in the road where the way swings off; this expression will at the same time serve as an indication of the tension of the subjective inwardness. Here is such a definition of truth: *An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual.* At the point where the way swings off (and where this is cannot be specified objectively, since it is a matter of subjectivity), there objective knowledge is placed in abeyance. Thus the subject merely has, objectively, the uncertainty; but it is this which precisely increases the tension of that infinite passion which constitutes his inwardness. The truth is precisely the

venture which chooses an objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite. I contemplate the order of nature in the hope of finding God, and I see omnipotence and wisdom; but I also see much else that disturbs my mind and excites anxiety. The sum of all this is an objective uncertainty. But it is for this very reason that the inwardness becomes as intense as it is, for it embraces this objective uncertainty with the entire passion of the infinite. In the case of a mathematical proposition the objectivity is given, but for this reason the truth of such a proposition is also an indifferent truth.

But the above definition of truth is an equivalent expression for faith. Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith.