

I. Chapter One: Introduction

A. The Purpose and Limits of This Book

1. Christianity and the West

At one time, Christian theism was the default worldview for western civilization, especially at it related to unanimity of opinion and educational aims. This has changed. This has been a detriment to our culture. Note the Report of the Harvard Committee that found that a stable society depends on a common philosophy, “the lack of which produces social disintegration and war.” [Gordon Clark, 14] We have been stripped of an integrating purpose.

2. Philosophy of History

As a result of finding such philosophies as humanism lacking, a small number of philosophers have moved to a more conservative worldview. Included are C. E. M. Joad, A. E. Taylor, and C. S. Lewis.

3. The Development of Theism into System of Philosophy

“Philosophy, as the integration of all fields of study, is a wide subject and if theism is to be more than imperfectly justified, it will be necessary to show its implications in many of these fields. . . . What theism needs therefore is an application to all phases of learning. [16]

B. The Questions of Philosophy

1. The “Puzzle” of Men and Things

a. Philosophy is difficult because of its complexity

b. Philosophy is difficult because of its reputation as being a dull academic discipline

2. The Questions of our Age

What philosophical view gives the best answers to our questions regarding things such as history, politics, civilization, God, causation, and revelation?

3. History and Ethics

History includes factors such as politics and none of these factors may be divorced from ethics. “Ethical distinctions can be maintained for man only if he is an inhabitant of a world in which morality is possible.” [22] There can be no true morality in a universe that consists of mere machines: “. . . if man is the evolutionary product of a chance collocation of inanimate particles, can any sacredness be assigned to life?” [22]

4. Do We Succumb to Skepticism?

C. The Unity of Truth

There is an integral unity to truth as it pertains to every sphere and category of life. Some philosophers have disagreed with this. Noteworthy is William James who stressed the disconnectedness of things. Contrast the God of the Bible who demands a rational, logical, ordered view of all things (a unity of truth). Yet, the unity of truth does not necessitate someone know *everything* in order to know *anything*.

D. Method: The Law of Contradiction

1. Some start their philosophical defense of theism with a defense of God's existence

a. Are arguments for God's existence valid?

(1) Ontological argument

(2) Cosmological argument (Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke)

Hume argued against the cosmological argument proving the existence of an infinite God on the basis of a finite universe. The cause need only be equal to the effect.

2. The argument for the biblical God cannot be deduced from "traditional" proofs of God's existence

3. Every argument is based on an axiom

"... even though some sequences of thought are logically valid, they all depend on original assumptions." [29]

a. Those original assumptions, or axioms, cannot be proved

4. Skepticism

In resignation to the unprovable axiom, some will give themselves over to skepticism. But skepticism is itself unprovable: "Skepticism refutes itself because it is internally self-contradictory. If skepticism is true, it is false." [30]

5. Non-contradiction

a. Contradictory systems of truth cannot cohere into a valid philosophy

E. Method: Choice

We are faced with choices as to which worldview we will follow, in whole or in part. It is impossible to live with an agnostic neutrality. One's worldview should be grounded in a non-contradictory organization of reality.

“No philosopher is perfect and not system can give man omniscience. But if one system can provide plausible solutions to many problems while another leaves too many questions unanswered, if one system tends less to skepticism and gives more meaning to life, if one worldview is consistent while others are self-contradictory, who can deny us, since we must choose, the right to choose the more promising first principle?” [34]

II. Chapter Two: The Philosophy of History

Clark begins with an overview of history in light of the uniqueness of the United States. The question is, can the United States escape the demise of past empires, including present-day Europe which leads the way in the decay of western civilization? Will history repeat itself?

A. Karl Marx

1. Many of the great minds of the past had little interest in history
 - a. This changed with Hegel at the beginning of the 19th century

(1) The *Communist Manifesto*

After Hegel's death, his students divided into right and left wings. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were the leaders of the left wing. Together they published the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. In that work, they postulated a theory of dialectic materialism as a theory of the universe. Dialectical materialism "predicts the extinction of life and a time when only the aimless atoms shall continue to move through space." [40]

(a) Economics

Marx believed that history was the unfolding of one civilization after another, each one succeeding on the basis of economic pressure. "The principle of the *Communist Manifesto* is that the whole intellectual tone of an age is completely explained by contemporary methods of production and exchange." [41]

B. The Philosophy of Progress

Marx contributed to a radical new worldview that replaced the old order. During the middle ages, the prevailing worldview was a mixture of Christianity, Platonism, and Aristotelianism. This worldview began a shift toward secularism.

1. Francis Bacon popularized opposition to Aristotle and the inherent value of knowledge

Bacon taught that the purpose of knowledge was to control nature for the increase of human happiness. The motif of Christianity was gone.

2. Descartes and Spinoza

"Descartes by his scientific work and Spinoza by his logic developed the concept of inviolable mechanical law. This concept both undermined belief in providence also promised assurance that nothing could prevent indefinite scientific progress." [44]

- a. Optimism about the future prevailed, in spite of the French Revolution

b. Science replaced religion as a dominant social force

3. Darwin's *Origin of the Species*

4. Progress as a natural process

“Negatively, progress is the denial of divine providence; or, positively, progress is a natural process.” [46]

a. Progress as a natural process must have always been (cf. evolutionism)

(1) This natural progress is seen as including social and moral improvement

5. Three proposed causes of natural progress

a. Scientific knowledge

(1) However science cannot make ethical judgements

b. Political / Social planning

(1) However history shows that political and social planners have the ability to reduce people to the status of mere animal

c. Biological evolution

(1) Two false assumptions: that morality has a survival value and that acquired moral characteristics are inherited

6. The teleological question

What is the goal of progress? If there is no goal, progress is difficult to measure. Some have proposed human happiness as a goal. Others have postulated an unknown goal! Still others deny any goal. Change without direction cannot be called progress.

C. Spengler and Toynbee

1. Spengler and the problem of Eurocentrism

a. The optimism of the 19th c. was shattered by WW1

b. History is not a linear process - as proven when one looks beyond Europe

c. Culture as an organism: it is born, grows strong, deteriorates, and then dies

“Spengler bursts into popularity not by reason of any reconstruction of vanished epochs but by reason of his prediction of the collapse of western civilization.” [55]

d. Spengler’s distinction between culture and civilization

Spengler believed that western man would never again produce great music, art, or poetry. He believed Kant to be the last systematic philosopher.

“In the western world, as Spengler views it, the transition from culture to civilization occurred in the nineteenth century. Of the many signs of an approaching death and of the multitude of comparisons among various epochs, perhaps the most infallible indication is the growth of large cities. It is a recurrent theme in Spengler’s work and one which he elaborates in great detail. Culture is found in provinces and towns. Orphism and the Protestant Reformation, both of which were full of life, considered every hamlet important. But city people are traditionless, matter of fact, religionless, clever, unfruitful, and contemptuous of the gentleman, especially of the country gentleman.” [55]

2. Toynbee

a. Professed to be more optimistic than Spengler

b. His work “A Study of History”

(1) Toynbee gives the impression that his focus is entirely empirical

3. Critique

a. No such thing as empirical objectivity

b. Empirical history is inherently impossible

c. The chapter divisions of history are not so neatly divided

4. Contrasted

a. Toynbee rejects Spengler’s living organism analogy of an individual civilization

b. Toynbee does use biological analogies - as well as others

c. Toynbee held that humans cannot exist apart from social relationships

(1) Clark rejects this assertion

d. Toynbee believed that societies grow through individual “superhumans” (mystics) who are compelled to recreate ordinary men in their own image

- e. Spengler was a determinist; Toynbee was not

D. An Appraisal

1. Present social breakdown evidenced by wars
 - a. War is evidence of an underlying problem: brutality and coercion
2. The love of liberty grows dim under the suffocation of socialism

“Today, however, the disadvantages of absolute government have been forgotten, and so-called liberals, who are truly reactionaries, aim to establish a so-called democracy on the principles of Louis XIV. To this end taxation is imposed, not so much to pay for legitimate governmental expenses, not on the basis of services rendered and received, but with the avowed aim of impoverishing one class of people and of enriching another class. One might say that taxation is becoming legalized theft. These apostles of absolutism propose the reconstruction of society according to their own superior ideals. And one by one the liberties that were gained a century or two ago are being lost to governmental coercion. The public school systems are being used more and more as propaganda agencies for this reactionary totalitarianism.” [71]

3. Karl Marx
 - a. Misery a powerful instrument for gaining social goals
 - b. A clever social planner will provoke violence and conflict
 - c. Weak, wretched men can be stirred to action
 - d. Class must be played against class
 - e. Hatred must be stimulated
 - f. The economy of the nation must be ruined by big government leading to bankruptcy
 - g. Demagogues will promise the people freedom from want and fear
 - h. Dictatorship can then ensue
4. Evidences of the decay of western civilization
 - a. Immorality
 - b. Sexual offenses
 - c. Destruction of the family and divorce

Clark cites Sorokin:

“An illiterate society can survive, but a thoroughly anti-social society cannot. Until recently the family . . . was the principal school of socialization for the new-born human animals, rendering them fit for social life. At present this vital mission is performed less and less by the family . . . because the young are turned over at a very early age to such agencies as nursery schools and kindergartens, and because an increasingly unstable family is a poor school of socialization. Instead of inculcating in its offspring a strong sense of moral and social integrity, it teaches them lessons of moral laxity and loose relationships. . . . If outside agencies performed efficiently the former functions of the family, the defect might be remedied. Unfortunately, they haven not successfully replaced the family in its mission. Even an illiterate mother, endowed with kindness and common sense, appears to have been a better moral educator of children than most of the highly trained educators of schools and correctional institutions. The result is a rapidly mounting juvenile delinquency, and increasing number of people without moral integrity . . . who swell the ranks of criminals . . . from common murderers to the praetorian guards of the dictators.” [72-73]

d. Increase of suicide

E. The Significance of History

1. Does history repeat itself? Does history have any significance?

a. Karl Marx and Bertrand Russell say “no”

(1) Russell’s skepticism:

"That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins — all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built. . . .

"Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; . . . proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power." [Bertrand Russell, cited on page 76]

2. The Stoics and Nietzsche

a. Both were more optimistic

(1) After world history has run its course, it will repeat in endless cycles

3. Pessimism?

4. Progress is possible only when there exists a goal

“The goal cannot be merely the end of a cycle that is to be repeated again. It is foolish to assert that Sisyphus was making progress.” [78]

F. A Christian Philosophy of History

1. Scientific secularism

“It was the scientific secularism of Spinoza, of Marx, of Russell that assured men of final frustration.” [80]

2. Christianity

a. Has always emphasized history (God’s sovereign and providential working)

b. Must be correctly defined

(1) Christianity is simply what the Bible teaches

c. Creation

“The different conception of God begins to affect the philosophy of history with the doctrine of creation. None of the Greek philosophies had any notion of creation.” [85]

(1) Aristotle and Plotinus argued for the eternity of the world

(2) In these false philosophies of creation, man becomes a minor detail

d. Augustine’s “two cities” (cf. *The City of God*, XIV 28)

(1) The city of the world and the city of God

(a) Two cities with separate destinies

(2) The centrality of Christ

(3) God controls history

3. Summary

“The two views, however, have been sketched as two pictures in outline. If the secular standpoint is chosen, history has no significance; human hopes and fears are to be swallowed up in oblivion; and all men, good, evil, and indifferent, come to the same end. Anyone who chooses this view must base his life on unyielding despair. If however, he chooses the Christian view, then he can assign significance to history; human hopes and fears in this life contribute to the quality of a life after death, when two types of men will receive their separate destinies. Anyone who chooses this view can look at the calamities of western civilization and say, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." There has been no proof, but there is a choice.” [93]

III. Chapter Three: The Philosophy of Politics

It is logically impossible to adopt a political theory apart from presupposing some view of history---that history is rational. History, politics, and ethics are interrelated.

A. Normative versus Descriptive Politics

1. Key questions:

- a. Does history have a goal?
- b. What form of the state / government is best?
- c. Are there timeless absolutes in regard to politics?

“ . . . we may yet see that if there are no norms, then one government cannot be better than another. The majority of Americans want something they call democracy, and they may possibly know the techniques and propaganda that will efficiently get them what they want; but the Nazis wanted something else, and the communists want something else. Without standards or norms no one state can be said to be better than any other.” [106]

B. The Function of Government

1. According to Aristotle: totalitarianism

Aristotle . . . in Book VIII of the *Politics* . . . prescribes that the citizen should be molded to suit the form of government under which he lives. By a system of public education the government is to impress its own type on each of the citizens. Parents are not to be permitted to educate their children. Private schools would be made illegal, and everybody would be indoctrinated by the State Board of Education. The reason is that no citizen belongs to himself; all citizens belong to the state; and the care of each one is inseparable from the care of the whole.” [107-108]

- a. The state is to govern the size of the family (and population control) via infanticide

C. Analysis and Criticism

1. Questions:

- a. What is the state and what is its purpose?
- b. Does the state really have a basis for morality?

(1) “Truth [is] the majority vote of the nation that could like all the others.” [former Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, cited on p. 111, fn. 10]

c. What form of the state is best?

d. What is good for one man?

(1) This can only be answered by knowing what man is

2. Anarchy: against both capitalism and despotism

D. Justification of Coercion

1. J.J. Rousseau

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (June 28, 1712 – July 2, 1778) was a Genevan philosopher, largely active in France. His political philosophy influenced the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the overall development of modern political and educational thought.

a. What justifies violence or coercion on the part of the state?

Rousseau begins the *Social Contract* with the question: “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. . . . How did this happen? I do not know.” [116]

b. Coercion is not self-justifying

Force cannot create morality and ethics. There is no natural right to rule. Social order can be established only by voluntary agreement, including an agreement to submit to majority rule. “The general will is found by counting votes.”

c. Rousseau’s “social contract” and the surrender of individual rights

“A concourse of people, thus threatened by natural conditions, faced the problem of framing a social contract by which the group would ‘defend and protect the person and the goods of each associate, and in which each, while united himself with all, would obey himself alone and remain as free as before.’ The chief clause of this contract is ‘the total alienation of each associate together with all his rights to the whole community; for, in the first place, since everyone gives himself entirely, the condition is equal for all; and since the condition is equal for all, no one has any interest in making it burdensome to the others.’” [118]

d. Yet Rousseau often deviates from the “majority rules” doctrine

“Majority voting is a procedure easily understood, but it does not correspond to all that Rousseau has said of the general will.” [120]

e. Rousseau believed that the social compact creates a new moral person with a will of its own

Yet he appears torn between an infallible general will that cannot express itself and a majority vote that is not infallible.

“[The] assertion that all rights are founded on the social compact seems to be inconsistent with the compact itself, for if man in his natural state has no rights because all rights are founded on the social convention, how can Rousseau consistently assert that in the social compact each associate alienates all his rights to the community? A man surely cannot alienate or surrender what he does not possess.” [121-22]

f. Inalienable rights?

Rousseau takes a position that implies the inalienability of natural rights. But if that be true, it would contradict the social contract. The signers to the Declaration of Independence affirmed inalienable rights and thus exercised their right to rebel.

Note that Rousseau seems to be unable to give an historical account of a social contract that was formed by universal surrender of rights to the universal rule of all as one. For example, neither of France nor the U.S.A. were neither formed by unanimous consent, leaving Rousseau with no historical support.

E. The Consent of the Governed

1. Consent of the governed

“The social contract theory can be made more plausible by discarding some of Rousseau’s particularities and by attempting to see its value in the notion that a legitimate government depends on the consent of the governed.” [127]

“[T]o treat the notion of the consent of the governed is to ignore the basic question: By what right does the majority coerce the minority?” [128]

2. The necessity of having a “Bill of Rights” to amend the Constitution

a. Does this conflict with the concept of inalienable rights?

Those who adopted the Constitution could repeal it. The Bill of Rights could be used for evil. No government rules by right.

3. Spengler

a. Power explains politics

(1) End result of totalitarianism

4. The common problem: a non-theistic worldview

“If there is no source of rights other than the state, whether with Rousseau it is based on a social convention or with Aristotle it is as natural a development as the family, if there is no force more powerful than the state, if there is no God who controls states, then totalitarianism is the conclusion to be expected. Both Aristotle and Rousseau made some profession of belief in God, but neither of them thought of God as a real factor in political science.” [135]

F. A Theistic View

1. The best starting point: Romans 13:1-7

- a. Government is a divine institution
- b. The authority of government does not come from social contract but from God
- c. God is the source of all rights

“These rights are best exemplified in the powers of capital punishment and taxation. Without these no government could continue in existence.” [137]

2. The fall and depravity

“Sinful man needs to be restrained, it is in connection with man’s acquired evil nature that the ideas of master, servant, and ruler enter. . . . All the nontheistic systems assume that the present condition of man is normal; the Christian system views actual humanity as abnormal. . . . The Christian answer is that the state is not a positive or unconditional good, but rather a necessary evil.” [138]

3. Taxation

4. Civil disobedience

- a. The rights of a given government are limited by God

5. Only a Christian worldview can avoid anarchy and totalitarianism

6. The necessity and existence of absolutes

“Democracy is best, not because a majority is wiser than a dictator, but because a large number of evil people working at cross purposes does less harm than a single irresponsible ruler. Then in the second place, a belief in unchanging truth does not imply totalitarianism because something depends on what these truths are. One may believe that it is unchangeably true that human nature is evil and that no man should be trusted with unlimited power. Such an absolute belief is patently inconsistent with totalitarianism.” [146]

IV. Chapter Four: Ethics

A. Classification of Sciences

The various disciplines have common areas of inquiry. Ethics comes to the fore. Politics truly cannot be discussed apart from ethical inquiry; however, ethics may be discussed apart from politics. Ethics is the foundational or axiomatic subject.

B. The Question of Ethics

1. What is the basis for morality?

C. Teleological Ethics

1. The morality of an act depends on its consequences
2. Contrasted with ateleological ethics: an act is inherently virtuous regardless of consequences
3. Objections
 - a. It is obviously false as the moral value of an act cannot be judged by consequence

As an example, Clark speaks of a hypothetical donation to a seemingly reputable charitable organization. The donation was made with good will. However, hidden corruption in the organization used the funds for evil. Does that make the initial act evil? Of course not.

- b. It is positively vicious in that it could be seen as a theory of immorality

Apart from ethical absolutes, teleological ethics may devolve into “the ends justify the means.”

D. Egoism

“Teleological theories of ethics may be divided into two groups. The one group centers its attention on the individual human being and judges conduct by its efficacy in obtaining the individual’s good. This is the theory of Egoism. The other teleological theory, called Utilitarianism, considers the good of the whole human race.” [162]

1. Egoism is a method of determining right from wrong on the basis of its effect in producing good
 - a. It does not necessitate that the good be connected to pleasure (Hedonism)
2. Psychological Hedonism

“Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as to determine what we shall do.” [Bentham, cited on p. 164]

- a. However, pain and pleasure are indefinable apart from absolutes

E. Utilitarianism

1. Chief proponent: Jeremy Bentham

“By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question. . . . I say of every action whatsoever; and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government.

By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community: if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual.”

It has been shown that the happiness of the individuals, of whom a community is composed, that is their pleasures and their security, is the end and the sole end which the legislator ought to have in view: the sole standard, in conformity to which each individual ought, as far as depends upon the legislator, to be *made* to fashion his behavior. But whether it be this or anything else that is to be *done*, there is nothing by which a man can ultimately be *made* to do it, but either pain or pleasure.” [Bentham, cited on pp. 167-68]

2. The utilitarianism slogan: “the greatest good of the greatest number”

- a. However, Is there any good reason to believe this to be true?
- b. Nazi Germany could have operated under this principle

3. Sedgwick’s socialism: pleasure should be equally distributed

However, “What evidence is there that the pleasures of all people never conflict in the long run?” [172]

4. A teleological system cannot discern the moral obligation of one act over another

F. Ateleological Ethics

1. Rejects “the ends justifies the means” philosophy
2. The moral worth of an action is found in the action itself

The view of the Stoics, the British Institutionalists, and Immanuel Kant. For the Stoics, morality must be something within the control of the individual, not circumstances (or results). This was especially true of Epictetus. For the modern British Institutionalists, the mind of man is innately endowed with immutable principles of morality. Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative also reflects an ateleological ethic.

G. Kant

“Kant was undoubtedly the most important figure in the history of ethics, of those who sought the test of morality not in the consequences but in the act itself.” [180]

1. Kant’s categorical imperative

“Act only on that maxim whereby though canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.” [I. Kant, cited on p. 181]

Another expression: “Act as you would want all other people to act towards all other people. Act according to the maxim that you would wish all other rational people to follow, as if it were a universal law.” [www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/class/300/categorical.htm]

- a. Kant upheld the concept of a universal moral law
- b. Kant attempted to prove suicide morally wrong
- c. Kant’s categorical imperative breaks down in practice

“The principle cannot justify a young man in deciding to become a stock broker or in choosing the legal profession for a career; for it is impossible that all people should be lawyers or stock brokers. . . . Likewise the maxim may in strict logic condemn the breaking of a promise, but it never shows what promises are to be made in the first place.” [185]

H. The Ethics of Revelation

1. Reward and punishment in Christianity

“It is obvious that Biblical theism appeals to self-interest. . . . In this sense Christianity is definitely egoistic. Not only will those who meet God’s requirements be rewarded with joys unspeakable, but also a conscious desire for those rewards is legitimate motivation.” [188]

- a. Not egoism in the commonly understood sense of selfishness

2. Biblical theism gives specific guidance in life's circumstances via propositional revelation
3. Contrary to Kant's autonomy of the will and failure to apprehend a true knowledge of God

Kant defines ethics by way of his categorical imperative. That imperative requires human autonomy. This rules out divine sanction. The definition of morality according to Kant differs from that of the Bible.

V. Chapter Five: Science

A. Science and Knowledge

1. The modern championing of science as a worldview

“T.H. Huxley asserted that the foundation of morality is to renounce lying and give up pretending to believe unintelligible propositions for which there is no evidence and which go beyond the possibilities of knowledge. In a similar vein W.K. Clifford said, ‘It is wrong always, everywhere, and for everyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.’” [198-99]

2. A.J. Carlson’s critique of religion

“The scientist tries to rid himself of all faiths and beliefs. He either knows or he does not know. If he knows, there is no room for faith or belief. If he does not know, he has no right to faith or belief.” [A.J. Carlson, cited on p. 200]

3. Albrecht Ritschl’s attempt to harmonize science and theology

4. Clark’s questions for the scientific empiricist

- a. What is “sufficient” evidence? How is it defined?
- b. What is evidence?
- c. What of the continuous flux of the scientific method?
- d. Is scientific method the only way to determine truth?
- e. Is evidence for God’s existence measured by way of scientific method?
- f. How is Carlson’s principle of knowledge proven scientifically?
- g. What is scientific method?

5. Science cannot arrive at absolute immutable truth

B. Facts, Laws, and Verification

1. What is a fact and what is a theory?

- a. Underlying need for the interpretation of perception
- b. Science is not a body of fixed truths

C. Formation of Concepts

1. Limitations of science

- a. Quotes by physicist P.W. Bridgman
- b. Summary by Clark

“Careful scientific procedure was originally invented for the purpose of overcoming the grossness of ordinary sensation. The unaided eye cannot make fine distinctions and therefore delicate instruments had to be invented in order accurately to measure, say, a length. A length was supposed to be some sort of real attribute of a physical thing. Now length turns out to be just the operations themselves. And how can the scientist observe and define the operations? Will he depend on his unaided eyes to describe the instruments and the procedure, or will he invent other more delicate instruments to measure the operations, ad infinitum? There seems to be in all this a thoroughgoing epistemological relativism that makes the obtaining of truth impossible; and if scientific procedure cannot obtain truth, it can offer no absolute arguments against theism nor can it say truthfully that ‘the scientific method is the sole gateway to the whole region of knowledge.’” [215-16]

D. Mechanical Model

The mechanical image of nature (atoms, etc.) move according to the laws of mechanics. There is, therefore, no God. This is a fallacy. The premises don’t necessitate the conclusion.

E. Physics, History, and Ethics

1. A theory of science must include its purpose
2. Presuppositions

F. Conclusion

No final appeal can be made to science as that which give infallible laws. Science deals in theories and theories change. Theories also are derived from methods and methods are in flux. Science is incapable of arriving at absolute truth.

VI. Chapter Six: Religion

A. Method

1. Brightman's scientific method applied to religion

“Edgar Sheffield Brightman (September 20, 1884 in Holbrook, Massachusetts – February 25, 1953 in Boston) was a philosopher and Christian theologian in the Methodist tradition, associated with Boston University and liberal theology, and promulgated the philosophy known as Boston personalism.” [Wikipedia]

a. Question: which scientific method?

b. How does one define experience?

“Our experience consists of our entire conscious life . . . All human knowledge begins, continues, and ends in experience.” [Brightman, cited on p. 235]

c. Experience vs. Reason

“Experience . . . consists of data given in sense, while reason consists of eternal principles not derived from these data. Four apples may be inferred from sense data, but the truth that two and two are four is an eternal, universal, and necessary truth.” [234]

2. The problem of empiricism

“The influence of Auguste Comte, William James, and their disciples, as they reacted against what seemed the mysterious legerdemain of Hegel's system, has made empiricism the predominant style in science, philosophy, and religion. There are styles in philosophy as there are in women's dress, and there may come a time when past styles will be resurrected. A student who has an historical sense and who knows to what extent social superstition presses on all of us should not consider too weighty any contention that apriorism is passe' and empiricism up to date. In fact a part of the reason for Brightman's insistence on empiricism is the resurgence of apriorism in the theology of Barth, Brunner, and like minded writers.” [235]

a. Apriorism = “knowledge rests upon principles that are self-evident to reason or are presupposed by experience in general” [Webster's Dictionary]

b. Kant

“That all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt. . . . But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience.” [Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, cited on p. 237]

“There are many flaws in Kant, but when he says that there are universal and necessary truths which transcend sense data, he is not guilty of the logical contradiction with which Brightman charges apriorism. Apriorism therefore remains as a possible theory.” [238]

There must exist a priori forms that are identical in all learning minds. Apart from this experience becomes so subjective as to devolve into solipsism (the theory that the self is all that can be known to exist).

B. Value

1. Brightman’s definition:

“Value means whatever is actually liked, prized, esteemed, desired, approved, or enjoyed by anyone at any time. . . . Good is synonymous with value.” [239]

This makes “values” subjective. One culture may value torture, another selfless living, still another war. There are no absolutes (truths with values).

a. Values vs. true values

Brightman attempts to soften the subjectivity of his values approach by distinguishing between values and true values. The latter are those values that have been verified as consistent and coherent with other values and the facts of experience.

(1) Is this satisfactory?

However, many values are inconsistent with each other as sets. For example, gambling and whiskey may be compatible, but gambling and parsimoniousness are not. Furthermore, the prime value of coherence in Brightman’s thinking is vague. In the end, he presumes that all people will be in agreement as to what is good or evil.

C. Is God Essential to Religion

1. The question can only be answered once the terms God and religion are defined

a. Attempts to define religion have been notoriously futile

(1) Religions have been contradictory with each other

(2) Belief in God, god, or gods is not common to all religion (Eg. Buddhism)

D. Can God be Known?

1. The immanence and transcendence of God

2. Brightman’s use of the phrase “totally other” to describe God

“For the Calvinist and the Catholic, God is not totally other: there is a resemblance. Calvin expounds the image of God in man and makes many references to the Scriptures.” [250]

3. The use of reason to ascertain God

“The Calvinists . . . more or less closely follow the Augustinian tradition that places much less faith in reason than Thomism does. . . . [T]he Protestant theologians . . . usually repudiate natural theology and assert that the traditional proofs of God’s existence are not logically or ‘mathematically’ demonstrative.”

a. What is “reason?”

There are two senses in which the word “reason” is employed. There is a general use of reason that accords with the laws of logic. This is acceptable. There is another subjective and abstract use of reason that is more closely allied with rationalism. This is unacceptable.

4. The logical priority of Scripture

“It is inherent in the very nature of the case that the best witness to God’s existence and revelation is God himself.” [258]

5. Empiricism

“If everything is to be demonstrated, the demonstration turns out to be either circular or an infinite regress. Both are unsatisfactory. Therefore, some things cannot be demonstrated. These are first principles which themselves are the basis of beginning of argument; and if they are the beginning, they cannot have been previously argued. To require a proof of a first principle is to misunderstand the whole procedure.” [259]

E. What is God?

1. Brightman’s contentions

a. Brightman calls God “The Source of all Values”

b. Brightman has no room for sinful persons in his concept of God

2. A personal God leads to coherence; an impersonal naturalism leads to chaos

3. Which God? A question not yet answered in the chapter

B. Good and Evil

1. Question of evil in the world leads some thinkers to deny the existence of God

“Brightman approaches the subject by distinguishing between intrinsic and instrumental goods. Optimism he then defines as the view that the world contains nothing but intrinsic goods and perfect instruments for their attainment, while pessimism holds that nothing exists but intrinsic evil and their corresponding perfect instruments.” [265]

- a. Brightman’s difficulty in deciding whether a value is intrinsic or instrumental

“The simplest form of good or value is always a desire striving for fulfillment.” [Brightman, cited on p. 265] However, Plato takes desire to be evil.

- b. Brightman: evil as a result of human freedom

2. A finite god?

- a. Brightman’s theism as a practical deism

C. Absolute Theism

1. Two positions: absolutism and finitism

- a. Absolutism

“[T]he will of God faces no conditions within the divine experience which that will did not create, or at least approve.” [267]

- b. Finitism

“[T]he will of God does face conditions within divine experience which that will neither created nor approves.”

(1) Argument for finitism

Finitists argue that God has at least one limitation: He cannot do the impossible. However, this argument fails to take into account the structure of reality versus the law of non-contradiction which is part of God’s nature.

2. Brightman sees the origin of theistic absolutism in Aristotle rather than in the Bible

- a. But see Isaiah 45:6-7

3. Evil as good and good as evil

“If an event, like an earthquake or habitual drunkenness, by every empirical standard judged to be evil, is in fact a good, then why may not terra firma and sobriety be considered real evils?” [271]

a. The challenge in judging good and evil on the basis of natural phenomenon

4. Calvin and predestination

D. A Finite God

1. Brightman sees a finite God as a reasonable hypothesis

2. Brightman's "finite good God"

3. Objections and conclusion

"A frequent, perhaps the most popular of all objections to absolutism, and one that Brightman repeatedly urges, is that absolutism fails to absolve God of responsibility for creating the evils in the world. The reply to this objection is found in Isaiah 45 and Romans 9 . . . But he cannot hide from himself that the same objection will be raised against his own view. . . . God knew, that is, Brightman's finite god knew that man would suffer from surd* evils, and yet he created him." 277] * surd evils = natural evils like earthquakes

"Now the difference between absolutism and finitism is this: in absolutism God created voluntarily and omnipotently and hence uses evils as instrumental goods; but in finitism god sees that the evils are unjustifiable and yet he creates other persons." [278]

VII. Chapter Seven: Epistemology

Epistemology which asks the basic question, "How do you know?" is foundational to all spheres of life. According to Clark, Will Durant did not think epistemology important, a view he traces in Durant's life to the influence of John Dewey.

A. Skepticism

1. Knowledge is impossible

2. Reasons for adopting skepticism

a. The mental exhaustion of epistemological paradoxes

(1) Example from Zeno the Eleatic according to Clark:

"If the tortoise is given a head start, Achilles cannot overtake him because every time Achilles arrives at the point where the tortoise was, the tortoise is no longer there--he has a fraction of a second to go on just a bit. And at every moment of the flight of an arrow its extremities are coincident with two points in space; but to be coincident with two points is to be at rest; therefore at every moment of the alleged flight, the arrow is at rest." Clark concludes, "The difficulties of solving these enigmas were so great that the last of the Pre-socratics gave up and accepted the conclusion that knowledge is impossible." [286]

b. Argument from false sensation

“Common opinion credits sensation with furnishing information about the world. But dreams and illusions, while they last, are as vivid and as real to us as are sensory images. If we pinch ourselves to make sure that we are awake, we are reminded that we might be dreaming that we are pinching ourselves. It is therefore impossible to tell when we are dreaming and when we are awake.” [286]

(1) Other sensory dilemmas: identical twins; mirages; etc.

It is said that dogs are color blind. How do we know that in fact the world has no color and what we see are hallucinations? Descartes postulates an omnipotent demon whose delight is to deceive us. He makes us think that $2+2=4$ when in fact it is 5. If this were true, knowledge would be impossible.

c. Views that border on relativism

(1) Protagoras

Protagoras gives the example of a cool breeze which feels good to a healthy man who is feeling warm, but is oppressive to a sick man with the chills. How the breeze feels, cold or warm, is relative to each one. For one it's the truth that it is warm, for the other, cold. Therefore each individual within a group may say that his/her own senses are true.

(2) David Hume

Man draws his proper nourishment from science, yet human understanding is so narrow that little hope can be held of learning real truth. Hume further makes a distinction between impressions that are vivid and ideas that are weak. “Hume does not exactly glory in his ignorance but rather attempts to make room for probability.” Ultimately, Hume must be seen as a skeptic. [289]

“I would venture to affirm, Hume writes, that a person is nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement. This bundle is never destroyed all at once during our lives; parts vanish and other parts appear; and in this sense the ‘same’ bundle continues its existence.” [290]

3. An answer to skepticism

a. Plato

William James thought there to be no answer to skepticism. Plato observed that the skepticism of Protagoras who held that man is the measure of all and that everyone is right in their thinking. But if everyone is right, then Plato was right in refuting skepticism.

b. Aristotle and his laws of logic

c. Augustine

“He once held . . . that one cannot certainly know anything, and that probability is sufficient for the activity of life. With his conversion to Christianity he came to hold that one cannot fail to know the truth. . . . In the first place, probability cannot be had unless one has truth first. The skeptics refer to propositions as false, doubtful, or probable; but these terms would have no meaning unless there is some truth.” [292-93]

If there is no truth there is no reason for action in life. Life is meaningless. The skeptics further have not paid attention to logic.

(1) Augustine’s “trustworthy intellectual intuitions”

Augustine argued for an intellectual intuition of his own existence. “He is always able to embarrass his skeptical opponent by asking him if he knows he exists. He must exist to doubt, even to doubt his own existence. There can be no doubt, no illusions, no skepticism, unless one exists.” [293]

B. Relativism

1. Evidenced by the pursuit of progress in history (“progressiveness”)
2. Evidenced in politics
3. Evidenced in religious theory
 - a. Barth and Brunner relate the truths of God to the mind of man in such a way as to leave man without the truth

(1) Brunner

(a) Brunner views faith as a personal relationship

He admits that sin has impacted the creation and sees theology affected by sin, but not logic and mathematics. However, truth is truth. The subject of truth is not affected by sin (theological truth or logic); it’s the individual thinker who is affected and brings error to truth.

(b) God and man meet resulting in truth

(c) A bifurcation of truth:

Brunner held to a view whereby the truth of faith could be distinguished from the truth of reason. He saw abstract, verbal, propositional truth serving as a pointer to personal truth, but the pointer itself may not be truth.

Brunner may not be guilty of theological relativism, but he is guilty of epistemology relativism.

C. Empiricism

1. Empiricism attempts to avoid skepticism

“From the time of Roger Bacon and William of Ockham the British thinkers have favored a reliance on sensation and hard facts. During the seventeenth century when the continent was influenced toward rationalism by Descartes and Spinoza, who aimed to deduce all knowledge by logic alone without appeal to experience, Thomas Hobbes, however much the English disliked his politics and ethics, stood squarely in the English tradition of experimental methods.” [302]

2. John Locke

“After Hobbes, an early forerunner of eighteenth century thought and the fountain head of most subsequent British philosophy, John Locke (1632-1704) formulated the principle of empiricism in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. He wrote, ‘Whence has [the mind] all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer in one word, from experience; in that all knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself.’” [302-03]

Locke further argued against the idea of innate ideas and spoke of the mind as a sheet of white paper.

3. Berkeley

The objects of human knowledge are either ideas imprinted on senses, or “perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind,” or “formed by help of memory and imagination.” [304] Berkeley rejected Locke’s abstract ideas and believed that a mind must exist to have impressions of thought. A mountain may be perceived, but it is perceived in the mind.

4. Issues

“If knowledge is a result of sensory experience, or even of internal experience . . . how could the ideas of space and time be obtained? Time has never been impressed on the senses so that we might have an image of it.” [306]

- a. The realm of logic and mathematics contain truths that cannot be derived from experience

“Does not the teacher show the pupil how two marbles and two marbles make four marbles? Roll them together into a corner and see that there are four marbles. Then after this is done . . . the child generalizes or abstracts from his experience that truth that two and two are four. However, this explanation of the learning process seems to be unsatisfactory. In the first

place, the child would have to recognize one marble before he could count two of them. Where did the concept of a unit come from? From the marble also? But would not the pupil have to have the concept of a unit before he recognized a marble as one? If he did not know one, he could not count one. He has to know the numbers in order to count. . . . He can count marbles only after he can count numbers. And since numbers are not marbles or anything else sensory, it follows that arithmetic is not abstracted from experience.” [306-07]

“Hume’s analysis of causality also points up essentially the same difficulty in empiricism. . . . Physics as well as mathematics requires necessary and universal judgements and these are impossible on an empirical basis. All images, sensations, or experiences are unique occurrences. . . . It is a mental event that occurs at just one moment in time. It never occurred before and it will never occur again. Hume wondered whether it could have an connection with a previous or a future event.” [307]

5. Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas

Each taught that knowledge begins with sensory experience. This empiricism may lead one to a knowledge of God.

a. Univocal, equivocal, and analogy

(1) Thomists propose an intermediate concept of “analogy” to bridge the gap between univocal and equivocal predications

(2) Issues

“If there were no likeness or similarity of any sort, there could be no analogy. . . . The Thomists admit the likeness or resemblance in analogy; they deny the univocal basis. They transfer analogy from the status of a literary embellishment or pedagogical aid to that of a serious epistemological method. But this removes every real distinction between analogy and equivocation.

It follows therefore that the Thomistic proofs of the existence of God are invalid on two counts. First there are the previous empirical difficulties with causality, abstraction, and logic; but now there is this second. Even if no other fallacy were to be found in the arguments, and if we should arrive validly at the conclusion, God exists, this existence at which we have arrived would not be God’s existence. Syllogisms and valid arguments require their terms to be used univocally. If this has been done, the ‘analogical’ and actual existence of God has not been obtained. All through the argument the term *exist* or *is* has been used in a human or temporal sense; and if the argument is valid, the term in the conclusion must also have the same temporal sense. But in this sense of the word exists, God does not exist. Once more, empiricism has failed.” [311-12]

D. Apriorism

Again, *apriorism* is the philosophical view that the mind has innate ideas and that it is possible to have knowledge independent of experience (a priori).

1. Immanuel Kant

For Kant, the mind uses innate categories to organize experiences. The result is knowledge. Knowledge results in judgement. A triangle, for example, cannot be true or false, but it can be judged or categorized as an isosceles triangle.

2. Emile Durkheim

E. A Theistic World

Knowledge requires an object, namely truth. Truth is eternal. Without a mind, truth could not exist. That truth is eternal, and that a mind is required for truth to exist, demands an eternal mind, namely the mind of the God of whom we know in the Bible.

F. Conclusion

By the law of non-contradiction, which is integral to any system of truth, we can ascertain that truth exists and that knowledge is possible. Christian theism is self-consistent and stands apart from other philosophical or epistemological views.

“Perhaps the Harvard Report is correct when it predicts that society will never again choose Christianity as its unifying principle. But there is no other type of philosophy that has a unifying principle to offer. And a continued repudiation of Christian principles promises a future which, even more than the present, will be characterized by social instability, wars and rumors of war, brutality, and despair.” [325]