

The problem of common ground in Christian apologetics: towards an integral approach

Joongjae Lee
21272786

Thesis submitted for the degree *Doctor Philosophiae* in
Philosophy at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West
University

Promoter: Prof R Coletto

May 2014

"Our Westminster apologetics has benefitted greatly from the philosophical insights that have come to us from our reformed community. As we look to the future, we should explore these relationships even more carefully in an attempt to make our apologetics even more solid and more effective in Christ. (...) We should seek to purify it of elements that do not properly fit in with its radical, transcendental orientation".

Robert Knudsen (2009:112)

Declaration of Authorship

I declare that this thesis, entitled: **The problem of common ground in Christian apologetics: towards an integral approach**, and the work presented in it, is my own and has been written by me – as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly while in candidature for a PhD degree at the North-West University.
2. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly acknowledged.
3. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.

Joong Jae Lee

April 2014

Acknowledgements

The writing of this thesis has been a significant academic challenge to me. Above all, I confess that this project would have never been completed without the help and guidance of my gracious God. He has also sent me the following precious people – without whose help, support, patience and guidance, this thesis would never have been finished.

My interest and journey in reformation philosophy started from a Christian world-view study group in South Korea during my college days. I am deeply indebted to the group members and to Prof. Kim Yushin.

In North-West University, I would like to express my thanks to Prof. J. J. (Ponti) Venter, who welcomed a thesis on this topic. I am indebted to Prof. M. F. Heyns, who guided and gave me insightful advice on the initial draft of the proposal of this thesis. I also wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Bennie van der Walt, who was willing to discuss the topic of my thesis, and gave me insightful advice on an alternative approach in apologetics.

Above all, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my mentor and promoter, Prof. Renato Coletto. From the moment we met on the Pochefstroom campus, he showed his willingness to support me in every aspect of this thesis. While writing at a distance, without his immediate responses, infinite encouragement with kind comments, patient corrections of my writing, and thoughtful consideration of my situation, this thesis would never have been completed. I sincerely express my deepest gratitude to him.

I also would like to extend my gratitude to the Hapdong Theological Seminary, Boondang Joongang Church in Korea for their financial support. I would like to give special thanks to my mother church, Bumchen Full Gospel Church, for their prayers and support, and to the Toronto Korean Philadelphia Church (where I am currently serving) for their consideration and support.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere love and thanks to my family. My three children, David, Rebecca, and Rachel, have always cheered me up with their presence; and my wife, Yoo, Seunghee, has sacrificed almost her entire life to date for the completion of this thesis.

Abstract

The key issue in recent debates of Christian apologetics is whether there is any common ground of data and criteria between believers and unbelievers. Two main schools are divided on this issue, namely: evidential and presuppositional apologetics. The evidential apologists claim that a common ground exists, and that objective proofs of theism are possible from this common ground. In contrast, the presuppositional apologists argue that there is no common ground; and they maintain that theoretical arguments (including apologetic ones) are unavoidably prejudiced by religious presuppositions.

In this study, both sides are claimed to have their own flaws. The former apologetics has the flaw that its epistemic foundation (i.e., “classical foundationalism”) is fatally defective; and it is criticised by the reformational philosophical tradition, as well as secular contemporary (postmodern) epistemology. In contrast, the latter apologetics has the flaw that when the existence of common ground is entirely denied, the problems of circular reasoning (hence, relativism) and total communication breakdown are unavoidable.

In order to clarify and deepen the issue, the tradition of reformational philosophy, which is represented by Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Van Til is first examined; and it is shown that all three scholars struggle with the tension between antithesis and common ground; and they attempt their own solution. Secondly, the contemporary anti-foundationalist epistemology is examined; and it is shown that the same tension exists between “radical” and “moderate” postmodern (anti-foundationalist) epistemologies; and their debate is on-going – without any satisfactory conclusion.

As a solution, it is suggested that the notion of common ground should be distinguished by the ontological and epistemological dimensions. From the epistemological standpoint, all knowledge is prejudiced; and no objective conclusion (on the issue of e.g., theism) can be arrived at by so-called “neutral” rational arguments. However, from the ontological standpoint, it is undeniable that all kinds of knowledge are made possible by certain universal (transcendental) conditions, which constitute the ontic common ground. In this distinction, the confusion is caused by the false assumption that the ontic common ground is meant to function as an epistemic neutral criterion.

In contrast, this study argues that the ontic common ground functions only as the condition for the possibility of legitimate knowledge (including apologetic arguments).

As a result, this study claims that traditional apologetics, based on objective theistic proofs should be abandoned, and that (radical) presuppositional apologetics needs to be modified. Therefore, as an alternative approach, a new “integral apologetics” is proposed – on the basis of Dooyeweerd’s modal theory of reality. This approach emphasizes the need to utilize different types of knowledge, which together could strengthen the apologetic persuasion towards Christian theism, and take into consideration of the whole context of apologetic dialogue.

Key words:

Apologetics, Common ground, Presuppositionalism, Evidentialism, Post- (late-) modernism, Foundationalism, Objectivism, Subjectivism, Reformational philosophy.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction (1)

- 1.1 Background (1)
- 1.2 Problem statement (3)
- 1.3 Leading theoretical arguments (3)
- 1.4 Further study questions and objectives (6)
- 1.5 Proposed contributions (7)
- 1.6 Method (8)

- 1.7 Outline of the chapters (8)
 - 1.7.1 Chapter One (Introduction) (8)
 - 1.7.2 Chapter Two (8)
 - 1.7.3 Chapter Three (9)
 - 1.7.4 Chapter Four (10)
 - 1.7.5 Chapter Five (12)
 - 1.7.6 Chapter Six (Conclusion) (13)

Chapter 2: Evidential apologetics and common ground (14)

- 2.1 Introduction (14)

- 2.2 Natural theology and the Scriptures (16)
 - 2.2.1 The significance of Romans 1 for natural theology (16)
 - 2.2.2 Ligonier authors on Romans 1:18ff (17)
 - 2.2.3 What kind of knowledge of God? (17)
 - 2.2.4 Calvin on Romans 1:18ff (19)
 - 2.2.5 Van Til on Romans 1:18ff (21)
 - 2.2.6 Unbelievers' knowledge of God in Romans 1: 18-31 acquired by special revelation (22)
 - 2.2.7 Intuitive knowledge of God (24)

- 2.3 Theistic proofs proposed by evidential apologetics (26)
 - 2.3.1 The paradigm cases of the theistic argument (26)
 - 2.3.2 The ontological argument (26)
 - 2.3.3 The cosmological argument (31)
 - 2.3.4 Arguments from design (36)

- 2.4 The evidence presented by empirical apologetics (39)
 - 2.4.1 Focusing on the historical data (39)
 - 2.4.2 The Resurrection event as objective evidence: Gary Habermas (40)
 - 2.4.3 Refutations by Richard Carrier (41)

2.5	Epistemological objections to evidential apologetics (44)
2.5.1	Brief orientation (45)
2.5.2	Dooyeweerd's analysis of the structure of theoretical thought (49)
2.5.3	Plantinga's critique of evidentialism (54)
2.5.4	Contemporary anti-foundationalist epistemology (55)
2.5.5	Philosophical hermeneutics (hermeneutic turn) (55)
2.6	Responses by the "second generation" of evidential apologists (58)
2.6.1	Criticizing anti-foundationalism (58)
2.6.2	Replies to Dooyeweerd's critique of theoretical thought (58)
2.6.3	Replies to Plantinga's proper basicity (60)
2.6.4	Replies to Perspectivism and Constructivism (62)
2.6.5	Replies to the "hermeneutic turn": language as a condition of knowledge (64)
2.7	Conclusion (66)
 Chapter 3: Presuppositional apologetics and common ground (67)	
3.1	Introduction (67)
3.2	Van Til's presuppositional apologetics in dialogue (68)
3.2.1	The two faces of Van Til's approach (68)
3.2.2	Van Til's "radical" presuppositional apologetics (69)
3.2.3	Traditionalist criticism: the problem of circularity and common ground (72)
3.3	Contributions by "inconsistent" presuppositional authors (74)
3.3.1	Gordon Clark and the problem of circularity (74)
3.3.2	Edward Carnell and the problem of circularity (77)
3.3.3	Van Til's "radical" approach: challenging inconsistent presuppositionalism (79)
3.4	Van Til's "moderate" version of presuppositional apologetics (81)
3.4.1	The problem with radical presuppositionalism (81)
3.4.2	Van Til's ambivalent view of antithesis and common ground (82)
3.4.3	Frame's analysis of Van Til's extreme antithesis formulation (84)
3.4.3	Frame's analysis of Van Til's normative formulation (86)
3.4.4	Frame's analysis of Van Til's situational, existential and practical formulations (87)
3.4.5	Evaluation of Van Til's moderate presuppositionalism (88)
3.5	The problem of common ground in Kuyperian circles (92)
3.5.1	The conflict between Kuyper (and Dooyeweerd) and Van Til on common ground (92)
3.5.2	Abraham Kuyper on antithesis (93)
3.5.3	Abraham Kuyper on common ground (95)
3.5.4	Van Til's criticism of Kuyper's conception of common ground (97)

- 3.5.5 Evaluation of Kuyper's conception of common ground (99)
- 3.5.6 Dooyeweerd on antithesis and on the common "state of affairs" (102)
- 3.5.7 Van Til's critique of Dooyeweerd's conception of the common state of affairs (110)
- 3.5.8 Evaluation of Dooyeweerd's conception of common ground (113)
- 3.5.9 The implications of the notion of common ground for apologetics (115)

3.6 Conclusion (117)

Chapter 4: Contemporary epistemology and common ground (119)

4.1 Introduction (119)

4.2 Kuhn's philosophy and the "neo-positivist" criticism (124)

- 4.2.1 Introduction to the debate (124)
- 4.2.2 Kuhn's theory of paradigm-shifts (125)
- 4.2.3 Neo-positivist criticism (127)
- 4.2.4 Kuhn's response to the charges of circularity and relativism (128)
- 4.2.5 Kuhn's response to the charge of "total" communication breakdown (130)
- 4.2.6 Kuhn's response to the irrationality charge (132)
- 4.2.7 The implications for apologetics (134)

4.3 Gadamer and Habermas: the limits and possibilities of hermeneutics ((135)

- 4.3.1 Introduction to the debate between Gadamer and Habermas (135)
- 4.3.2 Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Habermas' critique (136)
- 4.3.3 The depth-hermeneutics of psychoanalysis (138)
- 4.3.4 Habermas' universal pragmatics: "rational reconstruction of the rules of communicative competence" ((140)
- 4.3.5 Four validity claims as universal presuppositions of utterance (141)
- 4.3.6 Universal presuppositions of discursive communicative action (143)
- 4.3.7 Gadamer's response to Habermas' universal pragmatics (145)
- 4.3.8 A personal assessment of the dialogue/debate (146)
- 4.3.9 Clarifications and implications for apologetics (149)

4.4 Pancritical rationalism and Apel's philosophical foundations (151)

- 4.4.1 Introduction to the debate (151)
- 4.4.2 The fallibilist principle in critical rationalism (152)
- 4.4.3 Apel's "indubitable evidences" and "philosophical foundations" against Pancritical rationalism (154)
- 4.4.4 Apel's difference with the Popperians (156)
- 4.4.5 Transcendental foundations of philosophical argumentation (158)
- 4.4.6 Apel's critique of postmodernism (161)
- 4.4.7 Implications of Apel's epistemology for apologetics (162)

4.5 Conclusion (167)

Chapter 5: Integral apologetics as an alternative approach (169)

5.1 Introduction (169)

5.2 Dooyeweerd's philosophy: towards "integral apologetics" (171)

5.2.1 An overview of Dooyeweerd's philosophy (171)

5.2.2 Dooyeweerd's critical philosophy and critique of immanence-philosophy (173)

5.2.3 Ground-motives in apologetics (175)

5.2.4 Dooyeweerd's "positive philosophy": tuning subject and object (177)

5.2.5 Some consequences for epistemology and apologetics (180)

5.3 Integral apologetics: a few practical proposals (181)

5.3.1 Overview of the proposals (181)

5.3.2 Multiple irreducible types of knowledge (182)

5.3.3 Actual apologetic strategies utilizing multiple types of knowledge (185)

5.3.4 Audience-sensitive apologetics (187)

5.3.5 Effective delivery method in apologetic dialogue (189)

5.4 Conclusion (192)

Chapter 6: Conclusion (194)

Bibliography (200-214)

Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1 Background

In recent debates of Christian apologetics, a central question has been whether or not there are common criteria and data between Christians and non-Christians. In simple words, whether there is any common ground. Two main schools of thought are divided on this issue, namely: evidential¹ and presuppositional apologetics (Hanna, 1981:93).

Evidential apologists (see e.g. Sproul et al., 1984; Craig, 2000) posit that there exists common ground, such as universal principles and historical facts; and they argue that the existence of God can be objectively demonstrated on the basis of these principles and facts. Therefore, they claim that sound apologetic strategy should be pro-positive rather than merely “defensive”. Presuppositional apologists (e.g. Van Til, 1976; Frame, 1995), on the other hand, argue that due to the spiritual antithesis, there is no common ground between believers and unbelievers², and that apologetic arguments, as well as other rational arguments, are unavoidably prejudiced by our presuppositions – and thus no objective proof of Christian theism is tenable.

Therefore, they claim, the goal of apologetics should be mainly “defensive”; that is, it cannot give compelling evidence; but it can only “protect” those who have already accepted the Christian faith from the arguments proposed by unbelievers.³

The phrase “common ground” has been broadly employed in apologetic literature. It refers to

¹ In the context of our discussion, the term “evidential” has three distinctive meanings (which apply to cognates like “evidentialism” and “evidentialist” as well). The first meaning refers to a broad class of apologetic schools, including classical, evidential and cumulative apologetics, all of which are grounded in the belief that there is neutral ground to appeal to in the defense of the Christian faith. Secondly, in its narrower sense, the term denotes one particular apologetic strategy, which mainly appeals to the historical facts as objective evidence. Lastly, it denotes an epistemological theory claiming that it is irrational to believe any proposition without sufficient evidence. The term is used here in relation to the first meaning.

² The phrase refers to (and is a synonym of) Christians and non-Christians. The term “unbelievers”, as a consequence, does not refer only to atheists, but also to the members of non-Christian religious traditions, as both groups constitute, of course, the “target” of Christian apologetics.

³ This is only a simplified sketch: as a matter of fact, presuppositional apologetics does contain a phase of “attack”; because it intends to show that the presuppositions of the non-Christian are untenable, and that he often needs to “borrow the capital” from the Christian position itself (e.g. Van Til, 1980:9).

the fact that believers and unbelievers retain something in common even after the fall. However, it is not easy to define what this common ground exactly denotes. I believe that most controversial issues in apologetics are related to the ambiguity of this notion. Does it simply indicate one shared external world in a naïve and trivial sense? Or, does it imply the existence of neutral epistemological criteria or ontological data? Furthermore, can we know the latter in an objective way? In this study, I will endeavor to deal with these issues, though in a manner limited and relevant to apologetic problems. Provisionally, I will assume that 1) the notion of common ground indicates only certain ontological conditions for the possibility of any human activity including theoretical thought and argumentation; and that 2) they are common to all human beings as creatures. The issue whether (and to what extent) these conditions can be known in a fairly objective way may remain an issue.

While the evidentialist and presuppositionalist schools continue their debates, it is fairly well known that each side has its own weaknesses and problems. On the one hand, evidential apologetics faces serious challenges – both from other apologetic schools, and from contemporary philosophical epistemology. For instance, the school of “reformed epistemology” (e.g. Plantinga, 1983; Clark, 2000) demonstrates that the “classical foundationalism”, on which evidential apologetics is founded, is fatally defective (Plantinga, 1983:59-61; 2000:93-99).

This school claims that evidence as such is not necessary for belief in God to be rationally justified, since faith in God is one of the “properly basic beliefs”, which do not require any further evidence (just as the belief in the existence of “other minds” is rationally justified without further evidence). In other words, the necessity of evidence itself is denied for the defence of Christian theism.

In addition, contemporary philosophical epistemology, in general, strongly disagrees with the claim that objective proof is available. For example, in the area of the philosophy of science, Thomas Kuhn shows that even scientific theories are unavoidably shaped by the paradigm in which a researcher is embedded. In the area of philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer shows that prejudice is an ontological condition in the process of attaining knowledge. If these philosophical developments are applied to apologetic discourse, they naturally imply that no apologetic argument can be objective or could prove Christian theism in an objective way.

From this viewpoint, it is generally assumed that evidential apologetics cannot be a tenable apologetic approach in the contemporary situation.

However, whereas these challenges seem to favour presuppositional apologetics, in the sense that non-rational⁴ elements are inevitable in the process of attaining knowledge, the presuppositional model has been criticised by both other Christian apologetic schools and by contemporary philosophical epistemology. First of all, evidential apologists (e.g. Sproul et al., 1984; Craig, 2000; Groothuis, 2000; Smith, 2005) complain that if there is no recognition of common ground in theoretical debates, the problem of circular reasoning (hence relativism) is unavoidable. Furthermore, some presuppositional apologists themselves (cf. Frame, 1995) acknowledge that if the religious antithesis is considered absolute (to the extent of denying any common ground), it would be problematic to explain why and how substantial understanding and meaningful communication occur daily between believers and unbelievers. Furthermore, within contemporary philosophical schools as well, there are some voices (e.g. Kuhn, 1970; Apel, 1987; Habermas, 1969) who claim that the existence of certain common factors must be acknowledged – in order to avoid a relativistic view of reality – even if the so-called linguistic and hermeneutic turns are conceded.

1.2 Problem statement

On the basis of this contextualization, the following question needs to be explored: Does any common ground of ontic data and epistemic criteria between Christians and non-Christians exist; and if it does, what consequences does it (eventually) have for Christian apologetics?

1.3 Leading theoretical arguments

On the issue of “common ground” in apologetics, I shall take a moderate yet alternative position; that is, I shall acknowledge both the existence of pre-theoretical presuppositions (leading to diverging interpretations) and the existence of common ground. As Reformed scholars, such as Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, as well as Van Til suggest, I believe it is necessary to acknowledge that pre-theoretical presuppositions precede and affect every rational argument, including apologetic

⁴ In this thesis “non-rational” is used in a broad sense. It does not imply that whatever is indicated as “non-rational” has nothing whatsoever to do with rationality or logic. It rather indicates something that cannot be strictly qualified as rational or logical. For example, a belief has surely something to do with rationality, but it cannot be strictly qualified as rational or logical, because it is qualified in fiduciary or certitudinal terms. In this sense, “non-rational” is used as a synonym of “pre-rational”, “supra-rational”, “extra-rational” and other similar phrases.

ones. In spite of this, however, I shall still argue that a certain “common ground” is always available: even to rival commitment-groups.

Further, with regard to contemporary philosophical epistemology, I shall also argue that users of different paradigms or conceptual schemes already share a certain common ground, in spite of the fact that (partial) incommensurability is acknowledged.

I believe this view can be validated by the fact that substantial understanding and meaningful communication occurs between Christians and non-Christians, and between the users of differing conceptual schemes; and, above all, if no common ground is acknowledged, the adoption of a radical form of relativism is unavoidable.

However, in order to distinguish the acknowledgement of some common ground from a return to an outdated version of foundationalism I shall firstly propose that the two dimensions of common ground should be distinguished: ontological and epistemological. The ontological dimension of the common ground refers to the concrete reality in which we live. This includes both visible entities in the empirical world or invisible laws, such as the law of non-contradiction, the law of causality, etcetera.⁵ All humans, as created beings, share common creational structures and conditions (which universally constrict human knowing and functioning).⁶

While these ontological conditions are common to all, I shall argue that this should not be confused with the epistemological dimension of the common ground, referring to the cognitive and interpretive abilities of individuals and groups. In other words, the ontological commonalities cannot be automatically assumed to produce or to function as epistemologically neutral criteria and data, as the evidential apologists maintain.⁷ The latter claim that the ontological common ground (such as the law of non-contradiction, the law of causality or basic

⁵ In the postmodern context, whether universals exist is a debated issue. When I acknowledge the existence of ontological universals, my recognition is based on the (Christian) worldview-insight that there must be certain commonalities shared by all in this world. Whether they can be objectively known (or not) by us is still another issue.

⁶ For example, regardless of their differing presuppositions, all humans will immediately recognize that something is wrong when the question “what is one plus one?” is answered by “stone” or “sky”, rather than by “two”. This is one example showing that our cognitive faculty is universally constricted by a certain ontic structure (Cf. Sproul et al., 1984:52- 53).

⁷ In most evidentialist writings, arguments against contemporary post- or late-modern epistemology are often concluded with this same claim (cf. Sproul et al., 1984:66-90; Groothuis, 2000:161-186; Smith, 2005:157-170).

sense-perception) can constitute or generate a neutral epistemological ground, from which the theistic position can be objectively inferred (cf. Sproul et al., 1984:70-90).

However, we can easily notice that this claim becomes problematic, as soon as believers and unbelievers start drawing opposite conclusions from the same ontic state of affairs constituting the common ground. This tells us that the existence of ontological common ground does not automatically warrant an epistemologically neutral ground.

Consequently, I shall argue that evidential apologetics is not a fully viable approach, and that, as far as epistemology is concerned, no neutral ground should be taken for granted. However, I shall also claim that this does not imply that radical presuppositional apologetics (e.g. Van Til, 1976; Bahnsen, 2009)⁸ is an unproblematic position. In fact, contrary to radical presuppositionalism, the existence of ontological common ground should be conceded, in order to avoid a “total” breakdown of communication between Christians and non-Christians, and a merely relativistic view of reality.

At this point, given the fact that the major apologetic schools seem to be entangled in overwhelming difficulties, one could reach the conclusion that apologetics should be abandoned altogether. However, I shall rather investigate the possibility of an alternative apologetic strategy, an “integral” apologetic approach, in which insights from Dooyeweerd’s modal theory and multi-aspectual (or non-reductionist) ontology are utilized.

The latter theory argues about irreducible dimensions (i.e. aspects) of reality; and it acknowledges the possibility of different ways of knowing, related to different aspects. According to this approach, I shall argue, apologetics can be established on new philosophical foundations. As far as the practical strategies of apologetics are concerned, they need not be limited to analytical (theoretical) arguments, but can comprise several other dimensions, which were traditionally not fully recognized as having any epistemic value.

On the basis of Dooyeweerd’s reformational philosophy, I shall therefore propose a few practical strategies that take into account various non-analytical epistemic dimensions (or aspects) of life. These strategies address the whole person as the recipient of apologetics.

⁸ Presuppositional apologetics may be divided into two groups, according to their different interpretations of Van Til. Moderate presuppositionalists (e.g. John Frame) admit that there exist certain commonalities between believers and unbelievers. However, radical presuppositionalists (e.g. Greg Bahnsen) tend to deny any commonality, including the ontological ones.

1.4 Further study questions and objectives

The following sub-questions and sub-objectives will also be discussed. They should be regarded as sub-divisions of the statement of problem and of the leading theoretical arguments.

Sub-question 1: Do neutral criteria and data for apologetic arguments exist, as evidential apologists insist? In addition, is classical foundationalism, as an underlying epistemological assumption, a tenable position?

Sub-objective 1: It will be shown that various sources from philosophical epistemology argue that classical foundationalism is not a viable position, and that neutral criteria and data are not available. Dooyeweerd demonstrates that theoretical thought starts from religious ground-motives. The school of “Reformed epistemology” claims to have proved that classical foundationalism has collapsed. Recent philosophy of science demonstrates that neutral scientific knowledge is not possible. Furthermore, philosophical hermeneutics shows that rationality is always-already prejudiced.

Sub-question 2: Presuppositional apologetics argues that there is no common ground between believers and unbelievers. If it is true, how does substantial understanding occur between them; and how is relativism to be avoided?

Sub-objective 2: It will be demonstrated that an ontological common ground exists as creational structure pointing towards the possibility of mutual dialogue and understanding. The position defended here avoids the “anything goes” type of relativism.

Sub-question 3: In the epistemology of “radical” postmodern philosophy, it is claimed that all of our understanding is prejudiced (Gadamer); some scientific theories are incommensurable (Kuhn) and all knowledge is fallible (pan-critical rationalists). If their claims are true, how can rampant relativism and a total communication breakdown be avoided?

Sub-objective 3: It will be demonstrated that in spite of non-rational influences on our theorizing, there still remain common and shared data and criteria. These shared data and criteria point towards the existence of an ontological common ground.

Sub-question 4: Whereas the existence of an ontological common ground is acknowledged, if it does not automatically grant *epistemological* common ground and no compelling apologetic proof is possible, what new approach and new practical strategies should apologetics adopt?

Sub-objective 4: It will be suggested that an “integral” apologetic strategy can be a viable

alternative, since it approaches apologetics in a new way by taking into account various dimensions (or aspects) of life, which retain religious epistemic value, but have been largely ignored so far.

1.5 Proposed contributions

I would suggest that the contributions of this study are as follows:

Until now, comparative studies of several apologetic approaches have been rather limited in their scope and perspective; and some of them are rather confined within the borders of a modernist (humanist) perspective. Although there have been significant developments in contemporary philosophical epistemology (which considers the anti-foundationalist approach to be unavoidable), there has been no comprehensive apologetic study dealing with these changes and challenges. This study strives to respond to and evaluate some of these contemporary developments in epistemology, and to reflect on their implications for apologetics.

In this way, I shall attempt to contribute to and enrich our knowledge of apologetics and to prepare apologists (potentially all Christians) to defend the faith with a more clear and relevant voice in the contemporary situation.

Until now, the discussion of the apologetic method has been rather limited or incomplete, in that it has taken place mainly in relation to Christian theology or theological epistemology. This study aims to deepen and clarify the discussion by drawing from resources within contemporary philosophical epistemology and ontology.⁹

This study will identify problems in both postmodern epistemology and in Christian theology, thus preparing the way for an alternative apologetic method.

After the collapse of foundationalism and the rise of postmodern epistemology, it is sometimes claimed that apologetics is unnecessary and should be abandoned. However, in this study an “integral” approach will be proposed as an alternative, in order to sustain the scriptural command to defend “the hope which is in us” (1 Peter 3: 15).

In an effort to implement an integral approach, Dooyeweerd’s (1997) modal theory and his

⁹ This study utilizes resources from several theological disciplines, as well as from Christian ontology and epistemology. Without denying the possibility of a theological reflection on “nature”, the Christian-philosophical perspectives mentioned above are to be distinguished from “natural theology” – for the simple reason that they are not theological in nature.

epistemology will be examined – in order to see how a multi-aspectual ontology and epistemology could contribute to the development of a sound apologetic methodology.

1.6 Method

This research will be based on a comparative literature study and survey of apologetic texts from several Christian traditions, and on some recent philosophical works on epistemology. Since this study focuses on the epistemological assumptions behind different apologetic strategies, it will also employ a transcendental (or “metapologetic”) method to analyse, compare and criticize the underlying epistemological assumptions.

1.7 Outline of the chapters

1.7.1 Chapter One (Introduction)

In the Introduction, I describe the background of the current apologetic debate between evidential and presuppositional apologetics; and I seek to identify the key problem of their debate: their different understandings of common ground. In an attempt to resolve the conflict, I propose a series of leading theoretical arguments with regard to the notion of common ground. In addition, several study questions are formulated; and it is briefly outlined how each question could be answered. After that, I identify the possible contributions of this study; I explain the method employed to achieve the goal; and I briefly describe the contents of each chapter.

1.7.2 Chapter Two

In the second chapter, I introduce the approach and fundamental tenets of evidential apologetics and then criticize them. The fundamental assumption of this apologetic school is that since certain data and criteria are universally shared as common ground, objective proofs of theism can be demonstrated on the basis of that common ground. To support and defend this assumption, the evidentialists argue firstly that the Scriptures warrant the possibility of natural theology (hence, objective proof); secondly, actual objective proofs can be demonstrated; and thirdly (its opponent) presuppositional apologetics is not a tenable approach, because of its inherent problems of circular reasoning, communication breakdown and pernicious relativism.

Against these arguments, I firstly try to demonstrate that the Scriptural verses presented as evidence for the possibility of a natural theology are, in fact, open to different interpretations.

Secondly, I attempt to demonstrate that the actual proofs presented as objective arguments (such as the ontological, cosmological and design arguments) are not conclusive or compelling to all; but they are persuasive only to those who already accept their premises. Finally, in a more fundamental analysis, I attempt to demonstrate that the epistemic position undergirding evidential apologetics, i.e., foundationalism, is not a viable position. I argue my point by introducing Dooyeweerd's analysis of the structure of theoretical thought, Plantinga's criticism of foundationalism, and the anti-foundationalist epistemology of contemporary (postmodern) philosophy.

After discussing these refutations, I show that the ("second generation") evidentialists nonetheless try to maintain their position by pointing out that the anti-foundationalist epistemic position (which undergirds the presuppositional apologetic approach) implies an irresolvable problem. They claim that if no common ground is acknowledged, the presuppositional approach cannot avoid the charge of relativism and of a total communication breakdown between believers and unbelievers.

In addition, they claim that presuppositional apologetics is not compatible with our everyday experience that believers and unbelievers share common data and criteria; and they communicate with substantial understanding. Thus, I show that the debate between evidential and presuppositional apologists continues and converges into the issue of common ground.

1.7.3 Chapter Three

In the third chapter, I examine how the issue of the existence of common ground has been dealt with in the tradition of reformational philosophy, from which the doctrine of "radical" spiritual antithesis in theoretical (scientific) thought originates. Firstly, I examine Van Til's presuppositional apologetics and point out that the issue of common ground is, in fact, a serious problem, in which Van Til is at pains to reconcile this with his doctrine of radical antithesis. For the solution of this problem, I go back to Kuyper's original text, from which Van Til's presuppositionalism is derived; and I argue that the original tension between antithesis and common ground resides in Kuyper's own system of thought. In fact, Kuyper maintains, on the one hand, that there is "not a square inch" in the whole domain of our human existence (Kuyper, 1998:488) that is not affected by the antithesis concerning our interpretations or epistemological standpoints.

Yet, on the other hand, there are some areas of common ground that are not affected by the antithesis. For this ambivalent position, Van Til argues that Kuyper is not consistent with his own doctrine of radical antithesis; Van Til also claims that no common ground should be allowed. However, I show that Van Til's doctrine of radical antithesis cannot avoid facing absurd conclusions, e.g., that no communication is possible between believers and unbelievers. I also show that to avoid this problem Van Til too has to reluctantly concede the necessity of the existence of some common ground. By contrast, I show that Dooyeweerd consistently follows Kuyper's (ambivalent) position. On the one hand, he deepens Kuyper's antithesis and demonstrates in his transcendental critique that theoretical thought is not neutral, but structured to be affected by different religious ground motives.

Yet, on the other hand, he claims that there must be a certain common ground, like the created cosmic order. Because of this ambivalent position, Dooyeweerd is sometimes accused of trying to "have it both ways".

Following Kuyper and Dooyeweerd's line of thought, I propose that this problem could be resolved by distinguishing between the epistemological and ontological dimensions of common ground. While there is "not a square inch" of *epistemologically* neutral area between believers and unbelievers, I argue that there is an *ontic* common ground that universally constrains human cognitive activities. My contention is that even if ontic common ground is admitted, it does not automatically produce epistemic neutral criteria to bring about universal consensus on concrete issues (including apologetic ones). As a result, my argument is that in spite of the recognition of ontic common ground, an objective proof of the truth of theism is not available. Nevertheless such common ground functions as a boundary or guideline for a legitimate way of argumentation, thus allowing communication and mutual understanding.

1.7.4 Chapter Four

After our discussion on the issue of common ground in the circle of reformational philosophy, in the fourth chapter, I extend our discussion to the context of the contemporary (postmodern) epistemology, in order to deepen our understanding on the issue. In the postmodern epistemology, which is typically characterized as anti-foundationalist, I identify two conflicting trends: a "radical" and a "moderate" camp, which I claim to respectively represent the epistemic positions of the (radical) presuppositional and of the (second generation) evidential apologetic

schools.

From the radical camp of postmodern philosophy, which is typically represented by Derrida, Rorty, Foucault, and so forth, it is claimed that there are no common factors whatsoever between groups holding to different conceptual schemes, linguistic frameworks, paradigms and so forth; and that though this results in relativism, it is not to be seen as something negative.

By contrast, from the moderate camp (represented by Habermas, Apel and some of the “neo-positivists”), it is claimed that although non-rational factors in divergent commitment groups are incommensurable, there still are residual common factors between the different commitment groups.

To show the differences and conflicts between these two camps and their implications for the issue of common ground, I first examine the debate between Kuhn and some of his “neo-positivist” critics. Initially, I will focus on Kuhn’s understanding of revolutionary paradigmatic shifts. The neo-positivists argue that Kuhn’s incommensurability thesis denies any common factors whatsoever between rival paradigms, and that it results in a total communication breakdown between them. By contrast, Kuhn contends that his thesis should be understood in a moderate sense, in that he does not deny all common data, languages and common criteria between rival paradigms.

Rather, his claim is that regardless of the common factors, actual theory choice is eventually determined by subjective elements. In other words, he admits the common ground as ontic condition for the possibility of theory choice; but he denies that it functions as a neutral epistemic criterion for objective theory choice.

Secondly, I discuss the debate between Gadamer and Habermas on the scope of hermeneutics. While Gadamer claims that no form of knowledge can avoid being prejudiced, Habermas argues that the hermeneutic claim needs to be restricted; and he maintains that there must be certain universal factors or “meta-theories” underlying hermeneutic understanding. Otherwise, a systematically distorted communication could not be discerned.

In this debate, while I agree with Habermas’ claim about these universal factors, I contend that such factors do not function as epistemic criteria, on which an objective conclusion could be established.

Thirdly, I discuss the debate between the later Popperians (adopting pan-critical rationalism) and Apel. The pan-critical rationalists argue that all forms of knowledge are dubitable and

fallible; and they maintain that any search for a philosophical foundation leads to an unjustified “dogma”. By contrast, Apel holds that, although partly acknowledging fallibilism, certain “indubitable” paradigmatic data and philosophical foundations must be recognized, in order to save fallibilism from the problem of self-applicable contradiction. While I agree with Apel that fallibilism should be restricted, I contend that the indubitable data and philosophical foundations only function as condition for the possibility of legitimate arguments; and they cannot be epistemic criteria on the basis of which an objective conclusion could be established about specific issues in debate.

As a conclusion to this chapter, I hold that in contemporary epistemology, certain common factors still need to be recognized. This goes against the main thesis of radical presuppositionalism. Yet, since common factors do not necessarily function as epistemic criteria, the moderate school of postmodern epistemology cannot support the (second-generation) evidentialists in their thesis that objective theism can be conclusively demonstrated on the basis of common ground.

1.7.5 Chapter Five

In the fifth chapter, I acknowledge that the main contemporary schools of Christian apologetics are inclined to adopt (to different extents) as their philosophical basis, positions that derive from modern humanistic epistemology. To explore this situation, I utilize Dooyeweerd’s analysis of the ground motives operating in the Western thought-tradition. Dooyeweerd holds that modern secular philosophy is inevitably involved in the dialectic tension between “freedom” and “nature”; and I further claim that this results in the permanent dilemma or conflict (in contemporary epistemology) between subjectivism and objectivism.

Dooyeweerd suggests that this conflict can never be resolved from the immanence standpoint, which seeks the origin of theoretical thought within human thought itself. By contrast, it can only be resolved by seeking its origin in the transcendent Origin, who has created all things in His providence. From this transcendent standpoint, the dilemma between subjectivism and objectivism can be resolved by utilizing the connecting “bridge” of the modal laws. While this solution may be rejected by the immanence philosophy, I contend that at least it has the advantage of avoiding the permanent conflict in immanence philosophy between subjectivism and objectivism. Because this approach is based on a non-dualistic ground motive

and philosophy, I designate it with the adjective “integral”.

In the remaining part of chapter 5, I extend this integral approach by applying it to a few practical apologetic problems. I again refer to Dooyeweerd’s modal theory of reality, in order to suggest a few “practical” apologetic strategies. I hold that there must be different types of knowledge (which are derived from different aspects and are different in quality); and they can be altogether employed to strengthen apologetic persuasion. Whereas traditional apologetics monolithically emphasizes intellectual arguments (of the analytic aspect) as the sole apologetic tools, this new approach makes us see that different types of knowledge have unique epistemic values, and can be employed altogether towards the increase of persuasion of Christian theism.

This approach advocates taking into consideration the whole context of apologetic dialogue (including the unique needs of the interlocutors), rather than simply presenting abstract arguments. Above all, while this approach promotes the presentation of apologetic activities in an integral way, it acknowledges the limitations of our diverse apologetic efforts, including the theoretical ones, since no conclusive proofs of Christian theism are available.

Thus, it admits that the crucial purpose of apologetics (i.e. changing a person’s heart), is eventually possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit.

1.7.6 Chapter Six (Conclusion)

In the Conclusion, I summarize the discussion in each chapter, and recapitulate the possible contributions of this study.

Chapter 2:

Evidential apologetics and common ground

2.1 Introduction

Evidential apologetics may be divided into two types. One is called “classical” apologetics and the other “empirical” apologetics. Both approaches stand on the shared belief that there is a certain common ground, a common starting point from which the truth of Christian theism can be objectively proved. Classical apologetics claims that the common starting point should be rational principles; and empirical apologetics claims that it should be empirical (natural, historical) facts. The difference in their strategies is that the empirical apologists believe that since the “facts speak for themselves”, only one step of presenting (natural, historical) facts is enough to prove the truth of Christianity (Boa & Bowman, 2005:155); while the classical apologists suggest a two-step method.

Since facts are to be interpreted by the medium of a particular world-view, they claim that in the first step, a theistic worldview (theism) should be proven to be true; and then, in the second step, the empirical evidence should be presented, in order to prove that *Christian* theism is the only true one amongst the other theistic traditions.¹⁰

Table 1: Approaches in evidential apologetics

Classical apologetics	Empirical apologetics
Emphasis on rationality	Emphasis on empirical experience
2 steps demonstration	1 step demonstration

¹⁰ For example, C. S. Lewis says, “what we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience. It is, therefore, useless to appeal to experience before we have settled, as well as we can, the philosophical question” (Lewis, 1948, p. 11). By “settling the philosophical question”, he means that a correct worldview, whether theism or atheism, could only be adopted on the basis of a rational examination.

As evidential apologetics, in general, has been under severe attack – both from presuppositional apologetics and contemporary (anti-foundationalist) philosophical epistemology, it was once said that this approach looks as if it is almost dead (Wolterstorff, 1984:33). Nevertheless, during the latter part of the 20th century, this approach is said to have experienced a revival of sorts (Brent, 2008; Sudduth, 2009); and, in fact, the Evangelical Apologetic Society promotes this approach as the only one that allows the Christian community to cope with the contemporary challenges.

In his diagnosis, Kelly Clark¹¹ also says that “although classical natural theology has been almost universally rejected, it still survives in the apologetics of evangelical evidentialists”; and several authors support this view earnestly, thereby implying that this is “the only means of saving Christian belief from the abyss of irrationality” (Clark, 1990:46).

In this context, recent evidential apologists have reconstructed their system to cope with the latest challenges. As one of the efforts, R. C. Sproul, J. Gerstner, and A. Lindsley, who are called the “Ligonier apologists” – after their research centre’s name – jointly authored the book *Classical apologetics* (1984), in which the classical approach is presented in a systematic form and presuppositionalism is thoroughly criticized.

This book was evaluated by the well-known Van Tilian author, John Frame, as one of the most extensive and serious critiques of presuppositionalism. He says that it is “the most thorough research and the most accurate interpretation” of presuppositionalism (Frame, 1984:280).

In this chapter, I mainly follow the structure of this book, *Classical Apologetics*, in order to see whether the main tenets of evidential apologetics can be successfully defended, and to examine whether their criticism of presuppositionalism can be justified.

In the introduction to the book, the Ligonier authors assert that, in order to establish classical apologetics on a firm foundation in the midst of the contemporary “fideistic (anti-foundationalist) mooring”, three tasks need to be accomplished. Firstly, the Scriptures should be shown to support the possibility of natural theology; and that they, therefore, warrant the success of the theistic proofs. Secondly, the actual theistic arguments should be shown to be conclusively proven. Thirdly, the opposing presuppositional apologetics should be shown to stand on false assumptions; and its criticism of classical apologetics should be shown to fail. For these tasks,

¹¹ Kelly James Clark is a reformed epistemologist following Plantinga, not to be confused with Gordon Clark (presuppositional apologist discussed in Chapter 2), or with David Clark (classical apologist).

the book is divided into three sections; and each section deals with the corresponding task.

Following this sequence, I will firstly examine whether or not the Scriptures indeed support the possibility of a natural knowledge of God; and I will show that their interpretation of the concerned Scriptural texts is not conclusive. Rather, the latter open the possibility to be interpreted in different ways than do the evidential apologists. Secondly, I will analyse the paradigmatic theistic arguments that evidential apologists and philosophers of religion present and show that their arguments cannot be conclusively and objectively proven. Thirdly, I will examine their critiques of presuppositionalism; and I will demonstrate how they cannot but fail, by discussing the nature of theoretical thought in the assessment of Dooyeweerd, Plantinga and contemporary (secular) philosophical epistemology.

After this, I will discuss the second-generation evidential apologists' response to the criticism of the nature of theoretical thought (including theoretical proofs). I will show how this debate necessarily leads to the crucial question concerning the existence of (ontological and epistemological) common ground among interlocutors who hold to different belief systems. This is the central theme of this thesis.

2.2 Natural theology and the Scriptures

2.2.1 The significance of Romans 1 for natural theology

The possibility of natural theology is a problematic issue that has a long history; and it is still much debated (Brent, 2008; Sudduth, 2009). Among many issues, one of the key problems is how to interpret Romans 1, where the natural man's condition after the fall is revealed. In his discussion of presuppositionalism, Greg Bahnsen once said that "throughout the history of apologetics, we find that Romans 1 has been of guiding interest to biblically oriented apologists" (1995:1).

In this section, in order to see whether the Scriptural texts support the possibility of natural theology, Romans 1 (specifically, verses 18-23) will be examined and discussed. In this discussion, my focus will not lie in making an exhaustive exegesis, but in showing that no single interpretation can be conclusive. Whereas the authors of *Classical Apologetics* (1984) confidently assert that the verses confirm that the natural men can attain knowledge of God through inferential reasoning, I will attempt to show that the text is still open to different

interpretations.

2.2.2 Ligonier authors on Roman 1:18ff

The Ligonier authors (Sproul et al., 1984) interpret Romans 1:18-21 as stating that God has clearly disclosed Himself in His creation; and thus the general (natural) revelation is “plain” even to “the ungodly and wicked men”. As a result, the unbelievers have knowledge of the existence of God, as well as of His invisible qualities (“His eternal power and divine nature”). More specifically, they say, the fact that the unbelievers have knowledge of God is confirmed both by verse 18, which says that they “suppress the truth” that they already know, and by verse 20 which says that they “are without excuse” at the seat of judgment, since they “knew God” (v. 21).

With this interpretation, the Ligoniers assert that these verses are conclusive evidence for the possibility of the natural knowledge of God. They say that, “Here, the apostle asserts that the knowledge of God is not shrouded in obscurity, detectable only by an elite gnostic group, or by a skilled master of exoteric mysteries. That which can be known about God is ‘plain’” (Sproul et al., 1984:43). In addition, they say, “no-one will be able to approach the judgment seat of God justly pleading, ‘if only I had known [that] You existed, I would surely have served You’. That excuse is invalid. The problem is not a lack of evidence, nor a lack of knowledge, nor a lack of natural cognitive equipment – but their suppression of the plain knowledge of God (1984:46). Thus, they conclude that “if people do in fact have knowledge of God from nature, then a natural theology is possible” (1984:64).

Consequently, the authors assert that the task of Christian apologetics should be more affirmative than defensive, in the sense that apologists can rationally prove/demonstrate the existence of God to the unbelievers (1984:64).

2.2.3 What kind of knowledge of God?

In response, however, there have been several objections to the classical apologist’s interpretation. Firstly, some reformed scholars argue that there should be a distinction between what is revealed as an objective side, and the human mind’s subjective apprehension of such a revelation. While it is agreed that God reveals himself in his creation, the question is whether the

human mind can apprehend such a revelation correctly or not (Moo, 1991:122). Because of the effect of sin on the human mind (noetic effect of sin), many doubt that men can apprehend that revelation correctly. Calvin says in his commentary on Romans 1 that the manifestation of God is sufficiently clear, but it is “inadequate on account of our blindness” (Calvin, 1973:30).

Secondly, some scholars question whether the knowledge of God attained by natural men is “real” and “true” knowledge of the God of the Bible. For example, Herman Bavinck, after expending much effort in the exegesis on Roman 1, says that the unregenerate indeed have some sort of knowledge of God; but it is not the “real knowledge” of the God in the Bible (n.d.: passim).

Berkouwer also makes the same point, saying that: “Paul’s portrait of this knowing man [in Roman 1] is quite different. It does not reveal the clear colour of *true knowledge*” (1951:121). That is, the kind of knowledge natural men attain is only abstract and theoretical knowledge; but not the living knowledge of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Thirdly, other scholars argue that the Ligoniers’ interpretation conflicts with other texts in the Scriptures. On many occasions, the apostle Paul describes the pagans as not knowing God. For example,

1 Thess.4:5, “Not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God”;

2 Thess. 1:8, “Dealing out retribution to those who do not know God”;

Gal. 4:8, “However, at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods”;

1 Cor. 1:21, “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God”...

Since these passages clearly deny that the unbelievers have any real knowledge of God, it is argued that the passage in Romans 1 needs to be interpreted in harmony therewith.

As to these objections, however, the Ligonier authors respond that they can be refuted on many grounds. Firstly, as to the objection that it is not true and real knowledge, they reply that the Greek verb “to know” can be used in three distinctive ways indicating: a) cognitive knowledge (intellectual awareness); b) intimate knowledge (personal intimate relationships, e. g., “Adam knew his wife and she conceived”); and c) saving knowledge (which is a correlate of special revelation) (Sproul et al., 1984:49-50).

According to this distinction, they say that although it is admitted that unregenerate men do

not attain intimate and redemptive knowledge, they still can attain cognitive (theoretical) knowledge, just as Bavinck and Berkouwer have acknowledged. Therefore, the Ligonier authors claim that those conflicting Pauline passages can be harmonized by interpreting them in such a way that the “Gentiles do not know (the redemptive knowledge of) God” (1 Thess. 4:5); but they have the cognitive knowledge of God (Rom. 1:21).

On the basis of this interpretation, the authors conclude that the objections are caused by confusion between the distinctive usages of the term “to know”; and that as far as natural theology is concerned with a cognitive knowledge of God, the Scriptural texts indeed support the project of natural theology.

Secondly, regarding the noetic effects of sin, the Ligonier authors assert that since the faculty corrupted by sin is not the mind but the heart, even if the moral problem darkens thinking and distorts judgment, the intellectual mind still retains the ability to attain cognitive knowledge of God (1984:59). Thus, they say, “the problem is not the failure to honour what was unknown, but *a refusal to honour what was clearly known*” (1984:59).

With this refutation, the Ligoniers conclude that natural men have the ability to attain a cognitive knowledge of God, though not a saving and intimate one. Therefore, since the unbelievers have some knowledge of God, but suppress it, the apologetic focus should be on providing a conclusive proof of the existence of God, so that they may return to their original knowledge of God and admit it.

2.2.4 Calvin on Romans 1:18ff

For this debate between the reformed scholars and the classical apologists, it is important to consider Calvin’s exegesis of the text. In fact, both groups claim that Calvin’s exegesis supports their own interpretation.

In his commentary on Romans 1:20 (“For the invisible things of him are clearly seen since the creation of the world (...) that they may be without excuse”), Calvin first distinguishes the objective side of natural revelation from the subjective side of the human noetic faculty; and he says that the manifestation of God is sufficiently clear “as far as its own light is concerned” (objective side); but it is “inadequate on account of our blindness” (subjective side) (Calvin, 1973:30). However, as he goes on to comment on the phrase “being without excuse”, he qualifies the subjective side of our “blindness”: “we are not so blind that we can plead ignorance without

being convicted of perversity” (1973:31). In other words, here, Calvin opens the possibility that natural men retain a certain kind of knowledge of God to the extent that they cannot make excuses at the seat of judgment. At this point, however, as we have seen in other reformed scholars, he immediately qualifies the kind of knowledge that unbelievers have: “This knowledge of God, therefore, which avails only to prevent men from making excuses, differs greatly from the knowledge, which brings salvation” (1973:32).

Consequently, in this commentary, Calvin seems to agree with the reformed scholars’ interpretation. Nevertheless, it is also true from the viewpoint of the classical apologists that Calvin indeed opens the possibility that the natural men can have some cognitive knowledge of God.

Contrary to the commentary on Romans 1, however, in his writings in general, it is often noticed that Calvin strongly denies the possibility of attaining knowledge of God through natural revelation. He argues in his *Institutes* (1949) that the knowledge of God is not achieved by the fruitless and “frigid speculations of the philosophers and scholastic theologians” (Calvin, 1949:I.v.2). Similarly, he denies the validity of theistic proofs, arguing that “by that guidance of their reason they do not come to God, and do not even approach him; so that all their understanding is nothing else than mere vanity” (Calvin, 1973b; cf. John 1:5).

Again, he says that “it is undoubted that we, with our senses and powers of understanding, will never reach a true knowledge of God” (Calvin, 1949:I.v.12). Still, in another place, Calvin rhetorically says, “it is indeed true that the brightest manifestations of divine glory [in nature] find not one genuine spectator among a hundred” (1949:I.v. 8).

In summary, with regard to the natural knowledge of God, Calvin seems to support both sides. On the specific commentary on Romans 1, Calvin can be interpreted to leave room for the possibility of the cognitive knowledge of God, in spite of his depreciation of its value. However, in his general writings, Calvin strongly opposes the possibility of natural theology.

Recognizing the ambivalence in Calvin’s writings, in any way, the classical apologists insist that in spite of the negative comments on the project of natural theology, Calvin only depreciates the *value* of natural theology because it does not produce redemptive knowledge. However, they claim, it does not mean that he, in fact, denies the possibility of the cognitive knowledge of God *via* natural theology (Sproul et al., 1984:48).

2.2.5 Van Til on Romans 1:18ff

Before evaluating the Ligoniers' refutation, it would be helpful to see how Cornelius Van Til deals with this text, since his presuppositional apologetics strongly opposes the possibility of the natural knowledge of God.

Unfortunately, however, Van Til does not supply any extensive exegesis on Romans 1. As is known from his radical antithetical position, his general view is that the unbelievers cannot know any truth, whether it is of God, or of the world, due to the effects of sin. He says that "man is blind with respect to the truth wherever the truth appears" (Van Til, 1967:73); and he further argues:

"The unbeliever is the man with yellow glasses on his face. He sees himself and his world through these glasses. He cannot remove them. His interpretation of himself, and of every fact in the universe in relation to himself, is unavoidably a false interpretation" (Van Til, 1969:259).

Thus, Van Til believes that the unbelievers can have no true knowledge of God, unless they are regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit. However, in interpreting Romans 1, he expresses his difficulty; and he confesses that it is hard to harmonize this text with his radical antithetical view, since he understands that the text acknowledges natural men's knowledge of God. He says:

"The apostle Paul speaks of the natural man as actually possessing the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:19-21). The greatness of his sin lies precisely in the fact that 'when they knew God, they glorified him not as God'. *No man can escape knowing God*. It is indelibly involved in his awareness of anything whatsoever" (Van Til, 1967:109).

Here, Van Til seems to face a difficulty. On the one hand, he argues that unbelievers can know no truth whatsoever, but, on the other hand, he understands that the Scripture confirms that they have a natural knowledge of God. To resolve this discrepancy, in one place, Van Til explains that their knowledge is true only "in a restricted sense". He says that "there are two senses to the word 'knowledge' used in Scripture" (Van Til, 1967:45); and their knowledge is not "living, loving", or "true knowledge" of God (1967:45-46).

While this explanation reminds us of the "real" knowledge of Bavinck, and the "true" knowledge of Berkouwer, the problem is, as in the case of Bavinck and Berkouwer, that Van Til's understanding of Romans 1 does not preclude the classical apologist's undefeated claim for the cognitive knowledge of God.

As a result, if I summarize our discussion so far, it has been shown that both classical

apologists and reformed scholars agree that the text of Romans 1 does not indicate that natural men can have true, redemptive knowledge. However, even if the reformed scholars strongly oppose the possibility of natural theology, none of them has produced a conclusive refutation of the classical apologists' claim concerning the possibility of the cognitive knowledge of God.

It appears that one must accept the classical apologists' claim about the possibility of natural theology. However, at this point, my suggestion is that we need to turn back to the text and look into it more closely, in order to search for what the commentators have possibly missed.

Thus far, the commentators assume that the text says that unbelievers have some cognitive knowledge of God. This is based on three verses: 1) Unbelievers know the truth and suppress it (v.18), 2); natural revelation is plain and unbelievers are without any excuse (v.20); 3) they know God; but they do not glorify him with the honour due to Him (v.21). However, I find that each of these verses has a trouble spot in it. Firstly, regarding v. 18, even though unbelievers possess truth, the question is, how was the truth acquired?

Classical apologists take it for granted that the truth is achieved by inferential reasoning from nature. However, the text does not explicitly confirm the assumption; and there are other scholars who claim that the truth in the unbeliever's mind could be *intuitively* given from birth with the image of God. Secondly, regarding v. 21, some other scholars claim that the transition to the past tense of the verbs in v. 21-32 (i.e., the text does not say that they *know* God, but that they *knew* God) should be noticed and the description in the verses should not be understood as an *a priori* universal human condition, but as a past experience of the Gentile. Thirdly, regarding v. 20, even if it is true that unbelievers are without excuse, the question is: Does this necessarily mean that unbelievers obtain their knowledge by objective proof from nature (which would imply that (theoretical) knowledge is neutral)?

While they assume that our mind is not affected by sin, are not classical apologists ignoring the fact that theoretical reasoning is necessarily part of the faculties of the "heart"?

In the following subsections, I would like to explain the first two issues in more detail, while the last issue will be dealt with in a later section (2.6) in greater detail.

2.2.6 Unbelievers' knowledge of God in Romans 1:18-31 acquired by special revelation

Regarding v. 21, a question that we did not raise so far is that the verbs used in v. 21 and in following verses (vv. 22-31) are all in the past tense (aorist), which indicates that a certain

transition from the previous verses occurs. This could suggest that Paul is, here, describing the Gentile's past experience, rather than a human being's *a priori* universal condition in terms of the cognitive knowledge of God.

Coffey's (1970) article is devoted to arguing for this contention; and he says that when Paul changes to the past tense, starting from verse 21, it means that the middle section (1:21-31) is not describing the current situation of the people in the Hellenistic world – but a past experience of the Gentile ancestors. He says, “This could not have involved Paul's contemporaries, and so must have involved their ancestors. In v. 21, Paul is saying that *the Gentiles of old* knew God” (Coffey, 1970:677-678).

In order to justify his interpretation, he suggests that the passage of 1:18-31 needs to be seen in the broad context of 1:16-3:24. For our understanding, if the broad context may be briefly outlined, firstly, Paul states the thesis of the Epistle in 1:16-17, that is, “justification by faith”. Then, in order to show that the current world is in need of justification, Paul has to spend the middle section (1:18-3:20) in explaining that the whole world is in sin before God. Then, in the last section (3:21-24), he draws the conclusion: Justification is given by God as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ.

Here, the middle section (1:18-3:20), which is of our interest, is again divided into two subsections; in the first subsection (1:18-32), Paul explains that the *Gentiles* are in sin; while in the second subsection (2:1-3:20), he maintains that the *Jews* are also in sin. For the Jews, it is clear that they are in sin before God because, while knowing the laws of Moses, they constantly violated them. By contrast, in the case of the Gentiles, it is more complicated to prove their sinfulness *against God*. It is true that the Gentiles commit sins, but being Gentiles, they do not know the God against whom they are sinning. Therefore, the difficulty lies in proving that their sins are *against God*.

Thus, Coffey says, “in order to establish their real sinfulness against God, Paul postulates a time in the past when they *did* know God”, but worshipped other pagan gods (1970:676). Under this overarching context, verse 21 states, “For although they [the Gentiles of old] knew God, they neither glorified him as God, nor gave thanks to him”. So, it was then that they sinned against God. Afterwards, God abandoned them and the contemporary Gentiles commit sins of the worse kinds, as described in vv. 24-31.

With this interpretation, Coffey's point is that unbelievers could argue that they do not know

the God against whom they commit sins; and so they do not need justification; but the fact is that they have a primordial sin of “the Gentiles of old” against the God whom they knew, like the original sin of Adam (1970:681). As a result, the contemporary Gentiles too are in a state of sin against God; and they are in need of justification through faith in Christ Jesus.

Seen from this broad context, Coffey says, that what Paul means is that the knowledge of God is not that of the present Gentiles, but of the Gentiles of old; and thus the knowledge is not an *a priori* universal condition of being a human.

However, some might yet ask, even if it is admitted that verse 21 is a description of the situation of the Gentiles of old, if the Gentiles of old knew God, is it not possible that the present Gentiles would also be able to know God, because the Gentiles of past and present both have the same cognitive faculty? In reply to this question, Coffey explains that the knowledge of the Gentiles of old was given by special revelation, rather than inferential reasoning, just as Adam’s knowledge of God was given by special revelation, i.e. by God’s direct communication (presence) with him (Coffey, 1970:681).

Therefore, if the present Gentiles are said to have some knowledge of God, they must have acquired it by special revelation *via* the work of the Holy Spirit.

Regarding Coffey’s interpretation, the strength of his exegesis is that it is more faithful to the text, in the sense that it shows an effort to account for the transition of tenses, while the classical apologists neglect this fact: one that is crucial for the possibility of natural theology. Without explaining this fact, it sounds unjustified to draw a conclusion on an *a priori* human condition in terms of the cognitive knowledge of God from the *past* tense of the text. This weakness of their exegesis leaves their conclusion doubtful.

2.2.7 The intuitive knowledge of God

The preceding discussion on verse 21 has shown that the exegesis of classical apologists is incomplete; yet some would argue that there still remains an important factor in the text in favour of the classical apologist’s contention. That is, verse 18 says that the wicked people suppress the truth and hold it down. It implies that, in order to hold it down, they must already have it; and, therefore, Paul says in verse 20 that they are “without excuse” at the seat of judgment. These verses seem to indicate that the current Gentiles (natural men) have some knowledge of God.

For this interpretation, however, a question can still be raised, namely: *How* did the current

Gentiles acquire the knowledge of God? For the Ligoniers, along with the natural theology tradition (represented by Catholic Thomism and Old Princetonians, like Hodge and Warfield), the knowledge is obtained by inferential reasoning from the natural revelation. However, the fact is that there is no explicit support for this assumption in the text itself. Rather, there has been another view on the origin of the knowledge of God. This view originated from Calvin, who says that the knowledge of God in the unbelievers is an *instinctive* knowledge given at birth.

In his *Institutes*, Calvin says that “the human mind, by natural instinct itself, possesses some sense of deity” (1949:I. iii. 1, 3 - *sensus divinitatis or deitatis*), which is naturally engraved on the hearts of men (I. iv. 4) and becomes part of their very constitution (I. iii. 1). He says that this assumption is demonstrated by the fact that “man has [an] ineradicable propensity” to religious activity; and it is expressed in the universal phenomenon of religion, although the wicked pervert this into the worship of strange gods (Calvin, 1949:I. iii.1, 3).

This instinctive knowledge of God was later adopted by Alvin Plantinga in his famous article, *The reformed objection to natural theology* (1982). He develops this idea into a complete epistemological theory in his later work, *Warranted Christian belief* (2000). The gist of his thesis is that “the sense of divinity” is engraved in all human minds, so that every man is supposed to know God intuitively without further evidence. Just as “belief in other minds” is rationally justified without evidence, belief in God is a “properly basic” belief that is justified without any evidence.¹²

Between the two different interpretations, that is, “inferential reasoning” by the natural theological tradition and “intuitive knowledge” by the Calvin-Plantinga tradition, as far as I understand, the text itself does not explicitly indicate which of these is preferable. Rather, one’s prior systematic theological assumptions might well determine one’s interpretation. Whereas, the classical apologists emphasize the faculty of reason; and thus are more likely to interpret the knowledge of God as something acquired by inferential reasoning, the reformed thinkers are skeptical of the faculty of reason (due to their emphasis on the noetic effects of sin); and thus, they are more inclined to focus on the intuitive knowledge of God.

As a conclusion of this section, we have seen that unlike the Ligoniers’ bold promise, there are some difficulties in claiming that the biblical text conclusively confirms the possibility of natural theology. Rather, it has been shown that it is difficult to claim that any one interpretation is

¹² See section, 2.4.3, “Plantinga’s critique of evidentialism”.

completely squared with the whole text of Romans 1. For classical apologists, their weakness is that the transition of the tense of verse 21 is not adequately explained; and whether the knowledge of God is acquired intuitively or inferentially cannot be determined by the text.

In contrast, for Coffey's exegesis, even if it successfully explains the issue of the transition of tenses in verse 21 and following, it does not explain the knowledge of God of the contemporary Gentiles, indicated in verses 18 and 20. For the Calvin-Plantinga's view, it is more systematic than exegetical.

In this context, in the following section, I will examine whether the actual practice of inferential reasoning, in particular the theistic proofs, can demonstrate the existence of God conclusively, as the classical apologists wish to claim; so that we can decide whether natural theology is possible in practice.

2.3 Theistic proofs proposed by evidential apologetics

2.3.1 The paradigm cases of theistic argument

Theistic proofs have a long history and a variety of versions. Since space only allows us to deal with a limited number of cases, let us examine a few paradigm cases from the well-known: a) ontological; b) cosmological; and c) design (teleological) arguments.

The Ligonier apologists also present their own versions of the arguments. However, since their arguments are more aimed at the non-philosophically trained audience and Evangelical theologians, I will try to extend and relate their discussion to the original philosophical versions; and, by criticizing them, I will show indirectly that the Ligonier apologists' arguments cannot be conclusively proved.

2.3.2 The Ontological argument

The earliest Ontological argument was put forward by St. Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1033-1109) in the 11th century; and it was vigorously debated then and in the 13th. century. Later, its value was rediscovered; and it was discussed by Descartes in the 16th. century. Recently, interest in this argument has been revived by contemporary philosophers, such as Charles Hartshorne, Norman Malcolm and Alvin Plantinga (Plantinga, 1974a:109).

Among the various versions of the ontological argument proposed in history, since the

Ligonier authors advocated Anselm and Descartes' arguments as successful arguments that could survive all critiques, let us examine them.

Firstly, as I understand it, Anselm's ontological argument can be rendered as follows (cf. Plantinga, 1965:3-6). It starts with a definition of God as, "a Being than which nothing greater can be conceived"; and it then claims that, according to this definition, God must exist. Anselm asks us to consider a painting created by an artist. Before he creates the artwork, he has it in his imagination as a mental object; but when he creates it, the artwork becomes an extra-mental object with an existence of its own. If we compare the artwork in imagination and in reality, the latter is more perfect (greater) than the former, because the one in reality has one more property (i.e. existence) than the one in the imagination.

Consequently, if God is "a Being than which nothing greater can be conceived", He must have an existence. Therefore, God exists.

For this argument, a well-known objection to Anselm was raised by his contemporary Gaunilo (Gaunilo, 1965:6-13). He argued that one cannot prove the existence of an extra-mental object from a "mental object". If Anselm's proof is valid, then, he says, other unreal things that we can conceive in our minds must in the same way exist in reality. He exemplifies "a perfect island than which no more excellent island can be conceived". According to Anselm's own example, the perfect island, too, must exist – simply because an island that exists in reality is more perfect than the one in one's mind. However, Gaunilo asks: Is this conclusion not absurd? He says,

"But suppose that he went on to say, as if by a logical inference: 'You can no longer doubt that this island, which is more excellent than all lands that exist somewhere, since you have no doubt that it is in your mind'. (...) Either, I should believe that he was jesting; or I know not, which I ought to regard as [being] the greater fool" (Gaunilo, 1965:11).

In his reply to Gaunilo, however, Anselm does not directly answer whether or not the inference from mental objects to extra-mental objects is a legitimate move. He simply asserts that the case of the existence of God is unique and distinguished from that of other contingent beings, such as the island. He says that we know that He is a necessary being from our concept of God; and "His nonexistence is inconceivable" (Anselm, 1965:17). However, it is obvious to those who are not committed to theism, that Anselm's answer is not answering the question. He simply assumes

what needs to be demonstrated, namely that God only is a necessary Being.¹³ In the same vein, a contemporary atheist, Michael Martin, explains why Anselm's case cannot be applied to other cases. He says:

“The onus is then on the proponents of the ontological argument to show why the parody [perfect island] of the ontological argument should not be accepted; while the ontological argument [about God] should be” (Martin, 1990:84).

Consequently, Anselm's demonstration ends up by showing that his argument started from his subjective commitment to the definition of God, which is not logically proved. Therefore, non-theists will claim from their own commitment that they can maintain their own position without violating logical laws.

A similar situation can be noticed, if we turn to Descartes' version of the ontological argument. In his fifth *Meditation*, Descartes presents his argument for the existence of God. Whereas Anselm's ontological argument is derived from a definition of God, Descartes' argument is derived from his notion of an “innate idea”. For him, humans are born with some clear and distinctive ideas, such as those related to mathematics and geometry. They are not invented by humans; but they are imposed on us (Descartes, 1984, 2:46). He further claims that one of those innate ideas is the idea of God. However, unlike those mathematical ideas, or an idea of “a winged horse”, whose extra-mental existence is not guaranteed, he says, that the idea of God implies His necessary existence in reality. It is so, because God is “the supremely perfect Being”; and one of the elements of perfection is existence (1948, 2:46).¹⁴

¹³ In fact, this issue is later acknowledged to be a legitimate problem by Malcolm (1965); and he attempts to logically demonstrate that God is a necessary Being in his modal version of the ontological argument, which we will discuss in the latter part of this section.

¹⁴ Whether or not existence can be an element of perfection is a controversial issue. In his reply to Descartes' argument, his contemporary Gassendi complains that “that which does not exist has neither perfection nor imperfection, and that which exists has various perfections” (Gassendi, 1965:46). What this assertion implies is that existence should be more properly understood as a prerequisite for perfection than as an element of perfection in itself. That is, existence cannot be understood as one of the properties. Descartes does not directly respond to the critique; but he insists on his conviction. He says that the essence of a perfect Being contains existence; and if a perfect Being does not have existence, it would not be the most perfect being (Descartes, 1965:49). Later, Kant takes on this issue; and he argues that existence cannot be a predicate. Summing up Kant's argument, Plantinga says, “Kant's point is that one cannot define things into existence because existence is not a real property or predicate” (Plantinga, 1974a:115). This issue still remains a controversial problem. In order to examine a more detailed and

As one may expect, however, this argument draws a similar objection to that of Anselm, namely, whether one can infer an extra-mental object from a mental object. His contemporary, the priest, Johannes Caterus, responds that even if it is granted that the concept of God as a perfect Being necessarily implies His existence, it only proves that the *concept* of existence is inseparably linked to the *concept* of God. Thus, the composite concept of “existent perfect Being” is still confined to the mental (conceptual) realm. Consequently, Caterus goes on to say that “you cannot infer that the existence of God is anything actual, unless you suppose that the supreme Being actually exists (...) *from some other source*” (Descartes, 1984, 2:72).

To reinforce his claim, Caterus presents an illustration of the notion of “existing Lion” (Descartes, 1984:2:72). The notion is a composite of both the concepts of “existence” and “lion”. While the notion contains the idea of existence, he says, it does not mean that the notion of an “existing lion” causes a lion to exist in reality.

In response to this objection, however, in a similar way that Anselm replies, Descartes avoids directly answering the objection; but he points out the difference between the clear and distinct idea of finite beings and that of an infinite and perfect Being. Whereas the former idea contains “possible” (or dependent) existence, the idea of God uniquely contains “necessary” (independent) existence (Descartes, 1984:83).

To this response too, however, critics object by asking why the idea of God only should be privileged; and they argue that it is still possible that someone has a clear and distinct idea of the “*necessarily* existing lion” in parallel to the “*necessarily* existing God”. If Descartes’ reasoning is valid, they say, the lion too should exist in reality.

To refute this objection, Descartes argues that the idea of the necessarily existing lion is obscure, and “not transparently clear to us”; while that of God is clear and distinct (1984:84). However, once again, critics may further ask: What is the criterion on which to establish the clarity and distinctiveness of ideas. Nolan says,

“Why should Descartes be allowed to legislate the scope of our clear and distinct perceptions? Perhaps we can clearly and distinctly perceive something that he could not” (Nolan, 2011).

extensive discussion on the issue of existence as predicate, see A. Plantinga (1967:29-38; and 1966:537-546).

In other words, it appears that the discussion ends up with revealing that Descartes' argument also starts from his subjective conviction that the idea of God is solely a clear and distinct idea. Therefore, his argument is not objective and conclusive to all people.

The critiques to the ontological argument have converged into the question of whether or not it can be proved that God is the only necessary being. As interest in the ontological argument has recently been revived, contemporary proponents of the argument, recognizing this problem, try to prove that God is the only necessarily existing Being. Among many, N. Malcolm (1965) argues for God's necessary existence.

If I schematize his argument for our understanding, it would be as follows:

- 1) If God does not exist, He cannot begin to exist (come into being). If He does exist, He would be a limited Being, (since he becomes a Being with a beginning).
- 2) Therefore, if God does not exist, his existence is logically impossible.
- 3) If He exists, He must exist necessarily (without a beginning or an end).
- 4) Thus, God's existence is either impossible or necessary.
- 5) The concept of God is neither self-contradictory, nor logically absurd.
- 6) Therefore, God's existence is not impossible, but necessary.

There is no doubt that this argument is "valid", since the conclusion logically follows from the premises. But in order to be a "sound" argument, its premises must all be true. Here, non-theists claim that the point of premise 5) is still controversial; while Malcolm takes it for granted that the notion of God is not self-contradictory, and that there is no need to prove it (Malcolm, 1965:157).

In their criticism, non-theists sometimes argue that the concept of God is in fact self-contradictory or logically absurd. Among many, Martin (1990) argues that the attributes of God, such as omniscience, omnipotence and moral perfection are incoherent. He says that the attribute of omniscience, for example, is self-contradictory, because if God is all-knowing, He should be able to have every experiential type of knowledge such as, for example, "how to do gymnastic exercises on the parallel bars" (Martin, 1990:288). But God is, by definition, a disembodied Being; therefore, He cannot have any knowledge earned by experience. Further, he argues that if He is morally perfect, He cannot experience lust and envy; and thus, he does not have knowledge of lust and envy. Therefore, he cannot be omniscient (Martin, 1990:288). Martin believes that these examples at least show that God's attributes are incoherent (Martin, 1990:288). As a result,

he claims that Malcolm's arguments should be used rather to prove the impossibility of the existence of God (Martin, 1990:86).

Against Martin's criticism, Christian theists have obvious objections. Above all, it is so obvious for Christian believers that God is able to have an experiential type of knowledge, since God was incarnated in a human body and suffered and felt the same way as we humans do. Thus, for the Christian, the concept of God is obviously not self-contradictory. However, to show this, again, the historical fact of the incarnation should be proven; and this requires another enormous amount of arguments and debate; and it would eventually require religious commitment.¹⁵ The point is that even if contemporary theists (e.g. Malcolm) attempt to prove the necessary existence of God in a purely logical way, without doubting the question; in the end, it can be demonstrated that they cannot avoid involving their subjective commitment.

In summary, through our examination of the ontological argument from its classical to some of its contemporary versions, we have seen that the ontological argument, which is generally thought to be a purely logical argument, is eventually involved with subjective commitment, and cannot be objectively proven.

2.3.3 The Cosmological Argument

The cosmological argument is an attempt to prove the existence of a necessary being, i.e. God, from the fact that there are contingent beings in the world. Among many different versions of the argument,¹⁶ if we focus on a cosmological argument from contingency,¹⁷ which is simpler and

¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see section 2.4.

¹⁶ Craig (1980: 282-283) distinguishes three types of cosmological argument in terms of "the role of the infinite regress" in the argument. The first type maintains that an infinite "temporal" regress is impossible; and there must be a temporal beginning of the world, which is, in turn, caused by a self-existent being. This argument is known as Kalam's cosmological argument. A second type deals with the abstract notion of contingency in a deductive way. It maintains that a contingent being has its cause and the cause cannot regress infinitely. There must be a stopping point, which has been called "a prime mover" or "a first cause" or "an absolutely necessary being". This argument is advocated by Aquinas; and it is parallel to his first three ways. The last type has no reference to the issue of the infinite regress. It is grounded on the principle of sufficient reasons (or causation); and it maintains that everything contingent has its cause. Since the universe is a contingent being, it must have its cause too, and the cause must not be a contingent one (otherwise, we would be trapped in the problem of the infinite regress). Therefore, there must be a self-existent (necessary) being. The present formulation that we discuss is one of the third type versions and emphasizes the issue of "the principle of sufficient reason".

¹⁷ The authors of *Classical Apologetics* propose and defend their version of the cosmological argument in

more fundamental than other types (Mackie, 1982: 82), it can be sketched out as follows.

1. Every contingent being must have a cause (sufficient reason, explanation) for existence.
2. The cause for existence must be something other than itself.
3. The cause for existence must be either be other contingent beings or a non-contingent (i.e. necessary) being.
4. Contingent beings alone cannot provide an adequate causal explanation for the existence of a contingent being
5. Therefore, a non-contingent (necessary) being must be included for the explanation of the existence of a contingent being.
6. Therefore, a necessary being, God, exists (cf. Reichenbach, 2010; Craig, 2010; Martin, 1990: 119).

Since the conclusion logically follows from its premises, the argument is valid. Again, however, in order to be a sound and convincing argument, all the premises must be true and persuasive to all. Firstly, if we examine Premise 2, it is logically true, because in order to cause itself, a cause should already exist before its existence, which is impossible. Premise 3 is also true by virtue of the principle of excluded middle; there is no middle way or third way to explain the existence of a contingent being. In addition, the conclusions 5 and 6 validly follow from their respective premises. What is usually controversial is the main point of premises 1 and 4. Their underlying problematic issue is the application of the principle of sufficient reason. That is, everything that exists must have sufficient reason (or cause) that explains why it is so and not otherwise. Here, the problem is, whereas it seems most natural to theists that everything that exists has its cause (or explanation), some non-theists deny the universal application of the principle. Non-theists usually agree that particular contingent beings in the world must have their cause for existence; but they dispute that the world as a whole must have a cause for existence.

For example, Bertrand Russell, one of the great critics of religious belief, denies in his

which they consider four possible causes for the existence of contingent beings. That is: 1) illusion; 2) self-creation; 3) self-existence; 4) creation by something that is self-existent (1985:109-122). These four possible causes are dealt with in our formulation (except for the first case, which I wouldn't consider as a plausible case). However, contrary to their conclusion, it will be shown that the version they adopt is vulnerable, since they omit to mention one important objection, which I will consider below.

discussion with Father Copleston that the world as a whole needs a cause. Following Hume, he maintains that whereas the concept of cause is derived from our observation of particular objects in the world, the world itself cannot be experienced and observed by us. Therefore, he says, the application of the principle of causation (sufficient reason) should be limited to the events happening in the world; and it cannot be extended to the world as a whole.

Replying to Father Copleston's question on the cause of the whole world, he simply says that the world "is just there; and that's all" (Russell, 1964:175).

In response, however, theists would naturally assert that Russell's response is nonsensical and would claim that the principle of sufficient reason has an *a priori* metaphysical ground; and thus it should be universally applicable. For instance, in his *Metaphysics*, Richard Taylor (1963:85-87) illustrates the universality of the principle. He says, when you walk in a forest, if you find a strange translucent ball, you cannot avoid thinking that there is a reason why it exists there. It cannot pop into existence without cause; or it cannot simply exist there forever. Further, in our imagination, we can make it grow as big as the size of a balloon. Then, it still has a reason why it exists there. Still more, we can imagine that the ball can grow as big as the size of the universe. Then, it is most natural that it must still have a reason why it exists. Therefore, Taylor claims that this shows that the principle is not limited to the case of the objects in the world; but it can be applied to the case of the whole world as well.

In this way, he claims that it should be admitted that the principle has an *a priori* metaphysical status; otherwise, the world would remain unintelligible.

In the same vein, Koons (1997) claims against Hume and Russell that we don't need to observe every possible contingent being to conclude that it has a cause;¹⁸ and unless there is a clear evidence that there is no cause for the world itself, we have to believe that the world itself is contingent; and that it has a cause, just as all other contingent beings in the world have a cause (1997:202). Further, he says that if the universality of the principle is doubted, we cannot avoid falling prey to utter skepticism; while the remarkable discoveries of science confirm that the principle is universally applicable (Koons, 1997:198-199).

However, non-theists may still claim that it is suspicious that the principle of sufficient reason

¹⁸ For example, he says that it is clearly absurd to claim that "to know that a rubber ball dropped on a Tuesday in Waggener Hall by a redheaded tuba player would fall to the ground", we must have observed a large sample of such balls dropped at the same location (Koons, 1997:202).

has a metaphysical status. Mackie (1982) says that the principle has no *a priori* ground; but it is simply a methodological tool to interpret the events in the world. We give an epistemic justification to the principle *a posteriori* from our experience – in so far as it successfully explains the events in the world so far. Thus, there is no *a priori* guarantee that it will explain every event happening in the future. Moreover, he says that when we extrapolate a principle derived from how the world works, and apply it to the world as a whole, we push it beyond its limits (Mackie, 1982:85).

In response, again, theists would want to appeal to our intuition that the principle is self-evident; and they would claim that non-theists just insist forcibly without any evidence. According to Plantinga, however, if a proposition is self-evident, it must have two features. Firstly, one must know its truth immediately, that is, non-inferentially. Secondly, with a self-evident proposition one feels “a strong inclination to accept it, because it has a luminous obviousness which compels assent” (Plantinga, 1983:74).

As we have seen in the case of Russell and Mackie, however, even though they surely understand what the principle means, they neither know its truth immediately; nor do they feel compelled to assent to the principle. In their case, then, the principle could hardly be said to be self-evident to them.

As a result, it seems that a simple stand-off situation has been reached on the status of the universal applicability of the principle of sufficient reason.

At this moment, while putting this undetermined issue aside, let us suppose that the principle is conceded to have an *a priori* metaphysical status, and to be universally applicable. Non-theists would still question, then, why should the case of God be an exception to the principle? That is, why are we not allowed to ask what the cause of God is; and why should we stop at the point that “He simply is self-existent”, whereas it is illegitimate to stop applying the same principle to the case of the world as a whole, and to merely conclude that “it just exists”? Richard Dawkins, the well-known contemporary atheist and defender of evolution, bluntly says,

“To explain the origin of the DNA/protein machine by invoking a supernatural Designer is to explain precisely nothing; for it leaves unexplained the origin of the Designer. You have to say something like ‘God was always there,’ and if you allow yourself that kind of lazy way out, you might as well just say ‘DNA was always there,’ or ‘Life was always there,’ and be done with it” (Dawkins, 1986:141).

In other words, in Dawkins's view, one cannot blame non-theists for not explaining the origin of DNA, since theists can't explain the origin of God, either.

For this problem, after looking into the debate, Clark, a member of the Reformed Epistemology group, comments (1989:64; 1990:23-25) that after all, the pivotal point of the cosmological argument lies in the question of "the stopping-off point" in applying the principle of sufficient reason. Theists would surely think that there is no problem with stopping with the case of God, whereas non-theists believe it is legitimate to stop at the case of the whole world. Clark comments that the problem is that there is no rationally compelling way to adjudicate this disagreement; and it is not due to the lack of rational arguments, but because non-rational commitments are unavoidably involved in the discussion.

Further, Clark provides an analogy. In the political sphere, we often watch the debate between a Marxist and a Capitalist over the one true economic theory reach a quick stand-off situation. It is because their arguments are entailed in their differing prior commitments to deeper fundamental issues, such as "the nature of man, the nature of the historical process, man's natural right to property, and so forth" (Clark, 1989:67). Likewise, Clark (1990:24) says that the issue of "the stopping-off point" in the cosmological argument will not be resolved by rational argument alone, since "where one thinks one ought to stop, then, this depends on what one already believes".

Against this comment, of course, some theists would go on to argue that Clark was not rigorous enough to seek rational solutions; and if he examined them thoroughly enough, there would be a way of resolving the issue rationally (Craig, 2000:285-290). Likewise, others claim that the conflict is caused because the fact is not considered that God is, by definition, a necessary and self-existent Being; and therefore stopping at the case of God has a justified reason – unlike that of the world itself (Sproul et al., 1984:102).

However, as we have seen earlier, this claim would eventually lead to the re-opening of the question in the ontological argument by asking what guarantees that God is the *only* necessary, self-existent Being. As matter of fact, Kant already recognized the connection and claimed that the cosmological argument is eventually dependent upon the legitimacy of the ontological argument; and he said that "the so-called cosmological proof really owes any cogency, which it may have, to the ontological proof from mere concepts". He concluded that since the ontological argument is defective, the cosmological argument is defective, too (Kant, 1998:606).

In summing up, what we have seen so far on the cosmological argument is that, firstly, the metaphysical *a priori* status of the principle of sufficient reason is in dispute; and, secondly, even if its universal applicability is conceded, the problem of “the stopping-off point” is still controversial; and this cannot be resolved by any rational argument. As a result, a conclusive argument cannot be demonstrated in the case of the cosmological argument, either.

2.3.4 Arguments from design

The argument from design identifies certain features in the world as designed or ordered; and it infers therefrom that their best explanation is related to the existence of an Intelligent Designer (or Orderer) behind them. This argument has a strong intuitive appeal to our ordinary way of thinking,¹⁹ as we often experience harmony, beauty and purpose in the natural world around us. Furthermore, they may not be explained away as random or unplanned accidents. This argument also has a long history and various versions. Here, I will deal with one of the classical versions, first introduced in Aquinas’s Fifth Way²⁰, and then, discussed by Hume and William Parley (1743-1805).

In his *Summa theologiae* (article 3, Question 2), Aquinas put forward his design argument, as one of his Five Ways; and this was again expressed in a more colloquial way by Hume’s interlocutor, Cleanthes, in Hume’s *Dialogues*. Cleanthes says:

“Look around the world: contemplate the whole and every part of it: you will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions to a degree beyond what human senses and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy, which ravishes into admiration all men who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance; of human designs, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since, therefore, the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author of Nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man, though possessed of much larger faculties,

¹⁹ Though Kant is ultimately critical of the design argument, he still commends this argument, as it “always deserves to be mentioned with respect. It is the oldest, the clearest, and the most accordant with the common reason of mankind” (Kant, 1965:623).

²⁰ The most famous classical design argument is probably William Parley’s watchmaker analogy. But since his argument appeared after Hume’s criticism of Aquinas’ fifth way, I will first discuss Aquinas’ fifth way reformulated by Hume. After that, I will briefly deal with Parley’s version.

proportioned to the grandeur of the work, which he has executed. By this argument, *a posteriori*, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity, and his similarity to human mind and intelligence” (Hume, 1947:143).

The structure of this argument is rather straightforward:

- 1) The material world (universe) is closely analogous to the most intricate artefacts produced by human beings;
- 2) According to the rule of analogy, “like effects have like causes”. If effects resemble, then, the causes resemble, too;
- 3) Since the effects (i.e., the world and human artefacts) resemble, their cause must resemble;
- 4) Since the cause of human artefacts is [the] human intelligent mind, the cause of the world must be similar to and greater than the human intelligent mind, in proportion to the grandeur of the world.

On this seemingly appealing argument, however, Hume placed his criticism (Hume, 1947:165). Since this argument is based on the principle of analogy, the strength of the argument depends upon the degree of similarity between the items in comparison. But he alerts us to note the fact that there is an important dissimilarity between [the] machines (human artefacts) and the world; whereas we have a good deal of experience of human artefacts (e.g., watches), and we know human designs are in it; [but] no-one has ever experienced other worlds and observed them to be created and designed. Therefore, he says that the principle of analogy cannot be applied with the same certainty to the case of a universe-designer. Rather, our inference of the existence of a universe-designer is simply based on our “educated guesses” from the experience of things in this world. In fact, supposing that someone did not have [any] experience with watches at all, then, he would not be led by reason to postulate a watchmaker, since he simply does not know what the watch is. Likewise, if one has never experienced other universes, he would not postulate a universe-designer by reason.

In other words, only those who already presuppose the existence of a Designer would affirm the existence of a Designer. Therefore, it is said that the argument from Design circumvents the question from the beginning. That is, the main premise that the world *appears designed* already assumes the conclusion that there is a Designer. Thus, atheist Mackie complains that “an argument *from* design would be trivial, since to speak of design is already assuming a Designer”. He suggests that instead of the argument *from* design, the argument should be called the

argument *to*, or *for*, design (Mackie, 1982:133).

In the same line of thought, since Hume was not committed to the existence of a divine Designer, he chooses to give a naturalistic account of the design in the world. He argues that given an infinite amount of time and finite possible sets of configuration of the world, if matters in the universe acquire motion and remain active for eternity, the matters would continuously and repeatedly form and break up certain configurations of the world. In this process, it is possible that by chance they would eventually settle for the configuration that our world currently has (Hume, 1947:184-185).

For this naturalistic account, of course, there was a strong resistance among advocates of the design argument. In his book, *Natural theology, or evidences of the existence and attributes of the deity collected from the appearances of nature* (1802), William Parley, who is best-known for his watchmaker analogy, opposed Hume's naturalistic account. With impressive examples from the biological world, such as the intricate structure of the eye, he contended that these designs cannot be explained by cosmic accident or random chance, but can be explained only by assuming an almighty divine Designer.

Though Parley's design argument was naturally appealing to the theists, his argument was severely weakened by the emergence of Darwin's theory of evolution. According to this theory, given over millions of years, the complicated biotic organisms could have gradually evolved from simple organisms *via* the process of natural selection. Further, he says that, in nature, we notice not only harmony and purpose, but also purposelessness, disharmony and cruelty, which could not be explained by a beneficent and perfect divine Designer. Darwin contends that those factors can be best explained by the principle of "the survival of the fittest". Ever since then the evolutionary theory has gained increasing popularity, even if the theory is not a proven fact, the design movement is regarded by some as a rather weak and sectarian movement.

Coming to the contemporary world, the dispute between the supporters of the design argument and evolutionists centres on three issues. The supporters of the design argument argue that, firstly, evolutionism hardly explains how the biotic structure of living organisms started, while it explains how more complicated organisms could possibly have evolved from a simple organism. Secondly, while micro-evolution (in which evolution occurs within a species only) is generally acknowledged, macro-evolution (occurring *across a species*) is not probable, because each species is irreducibly structured. Thirdly, the universe appears to be "fine-tuned" for life. If one

smallest part of the setting were slightly different from what they are, life would not be able to survive.

What makes the fine tuning possible is not random chance, but a divine intelligent Designer. For these contentions, in essence, the evolutionists' objection is that though it is admitted that the chance of the starting structure, macro-evolution and fine-tuning is extremely slight, the possibility is not blocked by logical impossibility. Therefore, there is still chance. What is more, if this chance is compared to the possibility of the existence of a divine Being, they claim that evolutionism still looks like a better hypothesis. In other words, a similar standoff situation occurs, as in the other arguments examined above. The decision between them is still dependent upon one's prior commitment.

As a result, this analysis also shows that both approval of the argument from design – and disapproval – are, at bottom, a function of one's prior commitment (belief). Therefore, the argument from design cannot constitute conclusive evidence for the existence of God.

2.4 The evidence presented by the empirical apologetics

2.4.1 Focusing on historical data

So far, we have examined the logical arguments presented by classical apologetics. Now, let us move to the empirical (historical) type of evidence presented by the empirical apologetics; and let us see if this can constitute any objective evidence in favour of Christian theism.

Empirical apologists claim that Christian theism is supported by factual evidence; and it is objectively verifiable by all those who examine it. The scope of evidence for empirical apologetics is rather broad. According to Bernard Ramm, it can be divided into three categories: material facts (historical events, documents, archeological artefacts, etc.), supernatural facts (miraculous events), and experiential facts (individual and social phenomena) (Ramm, 1953:16-32). Among these facts, since the Resurrection Event is the most extensively examined and emphasized, let us examine the case presented especially by a contemporary empirical apologist, Gary Habermas, who is best-known for his defence of the resurrection event; and let us see if his defence can be objectively conclusive to all people.

2.4.2 The Resurrection Event as objective evidence: Gary Habermas

Habermas introduces his approach as a strategy focusing on “minimal facts”. In historiography, he acknowledges that subjective elements (personal preferences, prejudices, and world-views) cannot be completely removed. However, he claims that if the historical principle is carefully applied, objective “minimal facts” can be sorted out (Habermas, 2000:94-95).

As a criterion for discerning objective minimal historical facts, he suggests that such facts must be “well-evidenced, usually for multiple reasons”, and “generally admitted by critical scholars who research this particular area” (2000:100). According to these criteria, he claims that Jesus’ resurrection, as presented in the Scriptures, is an objective minimal fact. To demonstrate this, he firstly claims that most critical scholars agree that the Scriptures are as trustworthy as a historical document as are other ancient documents; and he outlines the historical event of Jesus’ death and resurrection as confirmed by both Christian and critical scholars.

Firstly, he says that there is excellent evidence that Jesus actually died on the cross because the rigours of crucifixion and the crucial medical factors prove this fact (cf. Habermas, 2000:107). Secondly, regarding the post-mortem appearance of Jesus, he says that it is generally confirmed that when Paul wrote the most discussed text of 1Cor. 15:3-8 (which records that Jesus appeared to Peter, all twelve apostles, more than five hundred of his followers at once, and then to James and all the apostles), he copied the original form of a primitive creedal testimony, which is an “exceptionally early” record and a “trustworthy source” (Habermas, 2000:109).

This means that the early church community accepted and confessed Jesus’ post-mortem appearance from the beginning, as a historical fact. This creedal testimony was checked by Paul and confirmed again by the other apostles in Jerusalem, when Paul visited them. Moreover, the fact that this same account is written in every Gospel and in the book of Acts reinforces the historicity of the event.

Another pointer that strengthens the case of the post-mortem appearance of Jesus is, according to Habermas, the fact that the tomb was empty. This fact was indirectly proved by the reaction of the Jewish leaders, who were enemies of Jesus, and attempted to hide the fact from the public. Habermas says, “One well-known principle of historical research generally recognizes what one’s enemies admit. The fact that the Jewish leadership could not even eliminate this physical component of the early proclamation is [in] itself an indictment” (2000:110).

According to Habermas, an additional indicator is the fact that the witnesses, who had been in

disappointment and despair, were transformed to the point of being willing to die for their belief. There is no other way to explain this phenomenon except that they saw Jesus come back to life after His death. Another important pointer to Jesus' post-mortem appearance is, Habermas says, the fact that the central component of the Christian belief in the early church was to confess Jesus' resurrection, as Paul states that there is no Christian faith apart from the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:14,17).

After discussing the evidence from the Scriptural accounts and church traditions, Habermas turns to point out the fact that the community of critics who had researched Jesus' resurrection event also acknowledged the historicity of Jesus' post-mortem appearance. Instead of denying its historicity, they made efforts to provide an alternative explanation for it – without any supernatural intervention (resorting to possibilities, such as swoon, hallucination, stolen body, spiritual resurrection). Yet, it has been conclusively shown that each alternative theory suffers from many rebuttals; and, in fact, their supporters refute one another's theories.

For example, David Strauss denied the swoon theory of Friedrich Schleiermacher; and Theodor Keim, in turn, disproved Strauss's hallucination theory, while critical studies on the New Testament demolished the legend theory (Habermas, 2000:113).

On the basis of this evidence, Habermas contends that since the resurrection event meets the criteria of sufficient evidence and admittance by critical scholars, it should be categorized as a minimal objective historical fact.

For this evidential argument for the Resurrection event, however, there have been many refuting arguments. In essence, the most controversial problem is its characteristic of probability. Since Habermas' argument is presented – not as absolute necessity – but as the best, or the most probable explanation of the assembled facts, it still leaves room for other possible explanations of the event.

2.4.3 Refutations by Richard Carrier

An atheist historian, Richard Carrier, analyses the historical data on the Resurrection event, and brings forth some definite reasons why he cannot accept the possibility of a physical resurrection (Carrier, 2006). He says, firstly, that this is a historically very poorly attested event, when compared with other major historical events. He says that all historical records of the resurrection event come from the sacred writings, which are entirely pro-Christian; and there

appeared no extra-biblical account until the mid-2nd century. This indicates, he claims, that the resurrection story could hardly be regarded as an objectively established historical fact. In comparison, for example, the historical fact that Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 B.C. was written not only by himself and his enemies, including Cicero, but also by almost every historian of the period. Furthermore, it is supported by physical evidence, such as a number of inscriptions and coins.

In addition, Carrier urges us to consider the social setting, which is almost entirely different from ours. It was the age of fables and wonder. Magic, miracles and ghosts were everywhere, and no scientific tool and technology existed to verify the truth of the story. In other words, just as the fables and wonders of that age are hardly evidenced or believed today, it is difficult to prove the story of Jesus' resurrection (Carrier, 2006).

Secondly, and more specifically, he wants to discuss and examine the records in the Bible stating that the event was eye-witnessed by many people who were later willing to die for their belief in the physical resurrection. He claims that even if he might acknowledge the appearance of Jesus, no Bible verse confirms that his appearance was in the form of physical body. It could rather be a vision or a spiritual appearance. In fact, it is recorded in Matthew 28:17 that after they saw Jesus, some still doubted. In other words, His appearance was not so convincing to some people, after all. In addition, when the Apostle Paul saw Jesus in heaven at Damascus, it was clearly during a vision; and it happened after Jesus' ascension to heaven.

Further, Carrier says, the first martyrdom story recorded in the New Testament was the stoning of Stephen. He was not an eye-witness; but he converted later by hearsay. When he died, it was not because of his belief in the physical resurrection, but because he was charged by the Jews of proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. When he saw Jesus, it is written that it was also in a vision, not in an actual physical appearance. A second martyrdom recorded in the New Testament concerns the Apostle James; but no reason was recorded for his execution. Other than these stories, Carrier says that, "as far as we can tell, no-one knew what the fate was of any of the original eye-witnesses" (Carrier, 2006). Even though some martyrdom stories were recorded many generations later, most of them were written in legend-form, or in unofficially recognized documents. In addition, Carrier claims that the first written Gospel book, Mark, originally ended at 16:8 – with the description of the empty tomb – and the prediction by a certain man that Jesus would be seen in Galilee. It is agreed by all biblical scholars that the rest of the chapter, which

contains the resurrection account, was added a century later.

Carrier explains that the reason for this was that, in order to gain power over increasingly competing segments of the Church, some leaders needed to reinforce the physical resurrection account.

In summary, on the basis of these arguments, Carrier contends, from his perspective, that “it means that the resurrection story, as told in the Gospels, of a Jesus risen in the flesh, does not represent what the original disciples believed, but was fabricated generations later. So, even if some of the first disciples did die for their beliefs, they did not die for the specific belief that Jesus was physically resurrected from the grave” (Carrier, 2006).

Of course, my point does not deceive by showing the truth, as recorded in an atheistic account of the resurrection event. Rather, regardless of which side may be true, my point is to show that a completely opposite conclusion can be drawn from the same historical data and evidence; while both sides claim that their argument is “well-attested” and “recognized by critical scholars”.

In this context, is there a neutral criterion to discern the correct account for the given data? According to Clark, this situation can be compared to the process of scientific theory formulation, in which one hypothesis is preferred to the others. He emphasizes the influence of the criterion of “initial plausibility” (likelihood) (Clark, 1989:78). For example, in the 19th and the early 20th century, physicists were puzzled by certain phenomena, such as the behaviour of gases, the so-called black-body phenomena, Miliken’s oil-drop experiments, marks on cloud chambers and so forth. To explain these phenomena, Clark says, the atomic theory was eventually confirmed against the other competing hypotheses, such as the phlogiston and caloric theories, since the atomic theory has more explanatory power.

In this process though, it is little known, that the “Tiny Elf theory” was one of the proposed hypotheses and had equal explanatory power for the given data. But, it was rejected simply because it was not likely. That is, it lacks any initial plausibility (since it is not likely that elves exist). In other words, when two hypotheses have equal capacity in every aspect, one of the key criteria in adopting a theory is its initial plausibility (which corresponds to one’s prior belief, which is not necessarily scientific in nature).

The link with the resurrection event is that one of the key reasons why the hypothesis of the physical resurrection is not persuasive to some is that it is simply not plausible to them from the

very beginning. Then, what causes one to believe that the event is likely or unlikely to happen? Is there any rational, objective means to determine its plausibility? Clark simply says that the decision results from one's prior and fundamental commitment (1989:79).

In other words, while Habermas asserts that our prejudices can be offset by careful application of sound historical principles (2000:95), the result shows that his evidential approach cannot avoid being prejudiced by his fundamental commitment to theism; while Carrier's account is rooted in his commitment to atheism. For the same reason, a presuppositionalist, John Frame, comments that even for Habermas, the Scriptural world-view must already be assumed and "historical evidences would not be able to accomplish their purpose without the presupposition of a biblical world-view" (Frame, 2000:133).

In conclusion, unlike Habermas' bold promise that his evidential argument would prove the objectivity of Christian evidence (hence, Christian theism), his arguments cannot be taken as conclusive evidence, either.

2.5 Epistemological objections to evidential apologetics

2.5.1 Brief orientation

So far, I have tried to show, by discussing paradigm cases, that contrary to the claims of the evidential apologists, firstly, the Scriptures do not conclusively guarantee the possibility of natural theology. Secondly, the actual theistic proofs – through rational arguments and inferential reasoning from the historical facts – cannot conclusively demonstrate the truth of Christian theism.

However, since our examination was done only by example cases; and we cannot examine every case in the world, evidential apologists would still argue that there is a possibility that by a more rigorous examination of the Scriptures and evidence, someday, one might demonstrate an objective conclusion for theism. Against this possibility, in this section, I will attempt to demonstrate that the very nature of theoretical thought itself requires non-rational presuppositions; and completely objective evidence is not possible in nature.

For this purpose, firstly, I will introduce Dooyeweerd's critique of theoretical thought; and I will show that it is the nature of theorising (including theoretical proof) that requires supra-rational religious roots. Every proof cannot avoid being religiously prejudiced. Secondly, I will

also introduce Plantinga's "Reformed epistemology". It will show that epistemic evidentialism (more broadly, foundationalism), on which evidential apologetics is based, is not a tenable epistemic position. Whereas foundationalism (hence, evidential apologetics) claims that a belief cannot be justified without evidence, Plantinga claims that certain beliefs can be justified as "properly basic" – even without evidence. His Reformed epistemology not only confirms that natural theology is not possible, but also abolishes the project of natural theology itself as *unnecessary*, no matter whether it is successful or not.

Thirdly, I will introduce an anti-foundationalist trend in contemporary philosophical epistemology and briefly discuss some outstanding themes in contemporary (postmodern) epistemology, such as Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, Wittgenstein's theory of language games, and the critical rationalism of the later Popperians. It is admitted that these themes in contemporary philosophy are not epistemological theory *per se*. But they certainly have anti-foundationalist consequences in terms of their epistemological standpoint.²¹ Thus, they will show that evidential apologetics, which is founded on foundationalism, cannot stand. Nevertheless, the chapter will be concluded by the replies of several evidential apologists to these anti-foundationalist trends.

2.5.2 Dooyeweerd's analysis of the structure of theoretical thought

In the prolegomena to his *New critique*, Dooyeweerd demonstrates (against the belief in the autonomy of reason) that theoretical thought itself is rooted in religious²² presuppositions, position or commitment. In order to show this, he implements a transcendental critique of theoretical thought – by examining three transcendental problems.²³

The first transcendental problem is: "*What do we abstract in the antithetic attitude of theoretical thought from the structures of empirical reality, as these structures are given in naïve*

²¹ Especially, Westphal's article, *Hermeneutics as epistemology* (1999) is devoted to interpreting philosophical hermeneutics as epistemological theory (cf. Westphal, 1999:415-450).

²² By the term "religious", Dooyeweerd does not refer only to the beliefs and practices of the classical religions, but our innate impulse towards the absolute origin, which requires self-surrender and is supra- or non-rational in character (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:57).

²³ In the "Prolegomena", his critique of theoretical thought is implemented in two distinctive ways, *transcendent* and *transcendental*. In the first (transcendent) way, he argues "from above" (1997, 1:34), that is, directly from his Christian presuppositions. However, in order not to be accused of dogmatism, he devises his second (transcendental) way, which I explain in the following section.

experience? And how is the abstraction possible?” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:41). Dooyeweerd characterizes the theoretical attitude of thought as “abstractive or analytical” in contrast to the pre-theoretical attitude of naive experience.

In terms of our naïve experience, says Dooyeweerd, reality is constituted by a number of modal aspects; and these aspects are experienced in their coherence with each other, and with ourselves. By contrast, in our theoretical thought, each aspect is separated and abstracted from the coherence of modalities. In this process, the antithetic (Gegenstand) relation is produced between “the logical, i.e. the analytical function of our real act of thought” and “the non-logical aspects of our temporal experience” (1997, 1:39).

It should be noticed that this antithetical relation is not between the subject (self, thinking I) and the object (thing in its unity), but is “only regarding the logical aspect of our act of thought as opposite to the non-logical aspects of reality” (Dooyeweerd, 1948:31). Unfortunately, in secular philosophy, this Gegenstand relation has been incorrectly identified with the relation between the subject (the self) and the object (the thing in its unity), thereby creating several epistemological problems (Dooyeweerd, 1948:31).

For example, Dooyeweerd argues that, in his transcendental critique, Kant committed this fallacy and identified the “transcendental logical cogito” (logical aspect) with the self that directs the cogito. As a result, the logical aspect of the act of thought is mistakenly assumed to be the one that performs the theoretical thought. Consequently, the true character of theoretical thought and its true starting point have remained hidden, and the autonomy of theoretical reason has been accepted as a truism (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:52-55).

However, after disclosing the true poles of the antithetic relation in theoretical thought (that is, the logical and non-logical aspects), Dooyeweerd continues. The second transcendental problem arises in the process of synthesizing the two poles of this antithetic relation. He asks: “*From what standpoint can we reunite synthetically the logical and the non-logical aspects of experience, which were set apart in opposition to each other in the theoretical antithesis?*” (1997, 1:45). It is noted in the first place that the synthesis-process should be started from a certain vantage point, from which one can have a total view of reality, which must transcend each of the aspects. Thus, in order to synthesize two aspects, the synthesizing factor must be outside the two poles. Dooyeweerd says, it is evident that “the true starting-point of theoretical synthesis, however it may be chosen, is in no case to be found in any one of the two terms of the antithetic relation”

(Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:45).

With this analysis, Dooyeweerd again reveals the problem of the traditional theory of knowledge. He claims that in the traditional theory of knowledge, one of these non-logical aspects of our experience has been mistakenly taken as a synthesizing starting point; and this aspect has been absolutized. In this case, the whole reality is interpreted in the light of the one absolutized aspect; and this eventually results in the so-called “isms” in philosophy (e.g. materialism, logicism, historicism) (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:46).

To avoid this problem, Dooyeweerd goes on to say that to achieve “a totality view of reality”, the Archimedean point should be chosen in the thinking self (ego), which is operative in all acts of theoretical thought, as a deeper “concentration point” transcending all modalities. He says, “I have an actual function in all the modal aspects. The I remains the central point of reference; and [it remains] the deeper unity above all the modal diversity of the different aspects of my temporal existence” (1997, 1:5).

This conclusion leads us to think that, in order to find the true starting-point of theoretical thought, a deeper knowledge is required of who the self (as concentration point) is – and what is involved in the self in the process of synthesis. This question entails the third transcendental problem that Dooyeweerd formulates as: “*How is this critical self-reflection, this concentric direction of theoretical thought to the I-ness, possible; and what is its true character?*” (1997, 1:52).

In the first place, the problem is that knowledge of the self cannot be attained by theoretical thought, as we have seen that theoretical thought can function only within the diversity of modal aspects; and the self as such, transcends all aspects and cannot be a Gegenstand of theoretical thought. Each theoretical science can examine the self (human being) from a particular perspective, and provide an aspectual knowledge of it; but the self is more than the sum of its aspects. Because of this limit, Dooyeweerd claims that self-knowledge can only be understood in the light of its true or pretended origin. That is, self-knowledge is dependent upon its knowledge of God.²⁴ However, the knowledge of God is again not the same as the theological knowledge of God, because theology is only theoretical knowledge of God, whose Gegenstand is the faith aspect. Rather, the knowledge of God that affects the self-knowledge should be understood as

²⁴ “All self-knowledge is dependent on the knowledge of God. In the same way the apostate selfhood only arrives at self-knowledge through its idols” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 2:323).

“supra-theoretical”, religious knowledge that engenders complete *self-surrender* (1997, 1:55ff).

Therefore, the self is to be understood, according to which god (the true God or apostate gods) to whom it surrenders. And since this self-knowledge penetrates every theoretical thought in the process of synthesizing the logical and non-logical aspects, it gives the direction of theoretical thought, which is religious in nature.

In the final stage of his transcendental critique, Dooyeweerd explains what constitutes the starting point of the theoretical direction. Although the direction is of a religious nature, and is rooted in self-knowledge, it is not determined by any subjectivistic individual choice, but by a communal (supra-individual) basic (ground) motive. In fact, the self’s understanding of its religious origin is cultivated only in community. Dooyeweerd says, “True self-knowledge discovers the ex-sistent character of the selfhood – also in the fact that the ego is centrally bound with other egos in a religious community” (1997, 1:60).

According to Dooyeweerd, two basic religious motives have appeared in the history of the human race. The first ground motive is “the motive of *Creation, the fall, and redemption in Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit*”; and the second is the spirit of apostasy from the true God. The latter motive leads the human heart in the apostate direction, and is thus the source of all absolutizations of creation and creaturely aspects. Due to its idolatrous character, the apostate ground motive has revealed several variations in Western history such as: 1) The Greek motive of matter and form; 2) the Scholastic motive of nature and grace, which is a synthesis of the Greek and the Christian motives; 3) the Humanistic motive of nature and freedom (1997, 1:61-66).

In summary, what is relevant to our concern here is that by way of his transcendental critique of the structure of theoretical thought, Dooyeweerd has shown that theoretical thought is not autonomous; but it is guided and controlled by supra-rational, religious ground motives. This conclusion implies, as a practical consequence, he says, that “it would be pure illusion if one should imagine he could convince his opponents in a purely theoretical way that a standpoint is in itself true or false. For in that question there lie the thinker’s religious convictions, which as such, are not capable of theoretical discussion” (Dooyeweerd, 1948:viii). If this conclusion is applied to our apologetic discussion, it implies that the neutral proofs and objective evidences proposed by evidential apologetics are structurally not possible.

2.5.3 Plantinga's critique of evidentialism

Plantinga accepts Kuyper's doctrine of antithesis²⁵ and is negative from the beginning on the possibility of natural theology.²⁶ However, his criticism of evidential apologetics is derived from different ground than Dooyeweerd's. In his view, at the bottom of the evidential apologist's appeal to rational proof lies an uncritical assumption on "epistemic evidentialism"; that is, in order for a belief to be intellectually acceptable, sufficient evidence must be presented. Plantinga questions this very assumption and argues that (Christian) theistic belief is "intellectually acceptable" and "perfectly rational", even if there is no sufficient evidence for it. This thesis has been consistently developed into his magnum opus, *Warranted Christian belief*, published in 2000.²⁷

In this section, by examining Plantinga's works, it will be shown that he not only denies the possibility of natural theology, but also abolishes the necessity of natural theology as a requirement for intellectual acceptability, so that classical foundationalism no longer appears to be a tenable epistemic position.

In his early book, *God and other minds* (1967), Plantinga sought to provide a compelling argument for theism, because at this stage he uncritically assumed that the rationality of belief in theism may be demonstrated by providing evidence (cf. Plantinga, 2000:70). However, after he came to the conclusion that none of the theistic arguments have been successful and conclusive, he realized that there might be a possibility that theistic belief could be rational – "even if none of the theistic arguments work, and even if there is no non-circular evidence for it" (1985:55-56).

²⁵ Plantinga endorses Kuyper's doctrine of the religious antithesis between the Christian and the non-Christian motifs, with the qualification that Kuyper himself put, that is, he acknowledges that unbelievers can also find truths in certain areas (Plantinga, 1998:346).

²⁶ In his various writings, he clearly says that theoretical (rational) argument cannot prove the truth of theism. In his book, *Warranted Christian belief* (2000), for example, he says, "I don't propose to offer such an argument [for the truth of Christianity]. That is because I don't know of an argument for Christian belief that seems very likely to convince one, who does not already accept its conclusion" (2000:200).

²⁷ In the preface to the book, he states that there have been two kinds of objections to Christian theistic belief since the 18th century Enlightenment: the *de facto* objection and the *de jure* objection. The former questions the *truth* of Christianity, whereas the latter criticizes the rationality of Christian belief (viii-ix). He states that his project in the book is only committed to defend against the latter, *de jure* objection and shows that Christian belief is "perfectly rational" and "intellectually acceptable" without evidence (2000:3). However, as for the *de facto* objections, he denies that philosophical (rational) discussion can solve the problems. In this sense, Plantinga agrees with Dooyeweerd's claim concerning the religious root of theoretical thought (cf. Plantinga, 1998:346).

Already in the final section of *God and other minds*, he observes that there are in fact beliefs that are perfectly rational, even if there is no evidence for them. Among others is the belief in the existence of “other minds” (1967:271).

On this basis, in the following years, Plantinga critically examined the assumptions of evidentialist epistemology and provided his new theory of the rationality of theistic belief in his well-known article: *Is it rational to believe in God?* (1974). In this text, and in subsequent articles,²⁸ he introduces the notion that belief in God can be “properly basic” – even without any supporting evidence.

To briefly summarize Plantinga’s theory from his writings, he claims that epistemic evidentialism is part of a large epistemological tradition called “Classical Foundationalism” and the latter’s “noetic structure” is constituted by two categories of beliefs: basic and non-basic beliefs. On the one hand, a basic belief is a belief that one holds immediately and not inferentially from other beliefs, like the proposition, $2+1=3$. A basic belief functions as a foundation for non-basic beliefs. On the other hand, a non-basic belief is a belief that one holds inferentially from other *basic* beliefs.

Given this noetic structure, the crucial issue is: What constitutes the criterion for the *proper* basicity to accept a particular basic belief as rational? Plantinga explains that the three criteria that have been employed in the classical foundationalism are: a) Being “self-evident”; b) being “evident to the senses”; and c) being “incorrigible” (1983:55-59). If a proposition meets any of these conditions, a foundationalist regards a belief in it as properly basic, and considers it to be rational. On the basis of this noetic structure, the foundationalist argues that since belief in God does not meet any of the criteria, the belief is not properly basic. Therefore, if it does not provide evidence, it is not intellectually acceptable, that is, it is not rational.

Instead of capitulating to this charge, however, Plantinga criticized the very assumptions of classical foundationalism itself. First of all, he claimed that an obvious defect of that system is that if the criteria for proper basicity are fully observed, many obviously justified beliefs should be excluded from the list of rational beliefs. We should exclude, for example, the belief that “there are enduring physical objects, or that there are persons distinct from myself, or that

²⁸ This article was later developed into a longer paper, “Reason and belief in God” in the book, *Faith and rationality* published in 1983, which became a landmark book not only for Christian apologetics, but also for the philosophy of religion in general.

the world has existed for more than five minutes”, or that “I had lunch this noon” (Plantinga, 1983:59-60). These propositions are neither “self-evident, nor evident to the senses, nor incorrigible”. Neither are they supported inferentially by any other basic beliefs. However, it is perfectly rational to believe in them – even without any supporting evidence.

For this obvious discrepancy with our common sense, Plantinga asserts along with Reidian philosophy that if any philosophical principle conflicts with our commonsensical beliefs, then, that principle, and not our ordinary beliefs, should be rejected (Plantinga, 1983:59).

Secondly, Plantinga takes a close look at the thesis of classical foundationalism itself, that is, “a proposition is properly basic for me only if the proposition is self-evident, or incorrigible, or evident to the senses for me”. And he questions whether this thesis itself is a properly basic belief (1983:60). Plantinga shows that it is neither self-evident, incorrigible, nor evident to the senses, respectively, because one could reject it on understanding it (as Plantinga did), one could be mistaken about the truth of classical foundationalism; and it is obviously not a report of one’s immediate experience (1983: 55-62).

Therefore, Plantinga claimed that according to its own thesis, it turns out that the belief in classical foundationalism itself is not a properly basic belief; and thus he concludes:

“It is evident (...) that classical foundationalism is bankrupt, and insofar as the evidentialist objection is rooted in classical foundationalism, it is poorly rooted indeed” (1983:62).

However, in spite of this conclusion, Plantinga does not intend to reject the foundationalist noetic structure itself. Rather, his real contention is that the structure should be more inclusive than that of classical foundationalism, so that some obviously justified beliefs can be accepted, such as, e.g., the perceptual belief that the sky is blue, the memory belief that I had a sandwich for breakfast, the belief in the truth of elementary logic, and the belief in the existence of other minds. In addition to these beliefs, and even more crucial, is Plantinga’s claim that the belief in God can be one of these properly basic beliefs (1983:59). That is, belief in God is rational without any evidential support.

However, against this more inclusive model, some critics complain that if the criterion for the noetic structure becomes wider; and belief in God can be properly basic and rational, then, why cannot just *any* belief be properly basic (i.e., rational without evidential support), such as believing in “unicorns”, in “voodoo”, in “astrology” or believing that “the Great Pumpkin returns

every Halloween”? (Plantinga, 1983:74).

That is, if the latter beliefs are to be distinguished from Plantinga’s properly basic beliefs, there should be a new criterion to distinguish between “properly” basic and “arbitrarily” basic beliefs.

In his later career, Plantinga’s research focused on this project to develop a generalized theory for the criterion of proper basicity.²⁹ In order to accomplish this, he first examined what makes a particular belief epistemically “healthy or ill-healthy”, and what makes a belief not merely a “true belief” but also “knowledge”.³⁰ Among the three most commonly employed criteria for knowledge, i.e., justification, rationality, and warrant (2000:x-xi), Plantinga concludes that warrant is the most plausible candidate to make a belief attain the status of “knowledge”³¹; and then he further argues that the condition for a “warranted” belief is that it is produced by an epistemic faculty that functions properly.³² He says in *Warranted Christian belief*,

“More fully, a belief has warrant just if it is produced by cognitive processes or faculties that are functioning properly, in an environment that is propitious for that exercise of cognitive powers, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at the production of true belief (Plantinga, 2000:xi).

After this formulation, he proposes that a theistic belief of the A/C model (A standing for

²⁹ His research results in a trilogy. In his first two books, *Warrant: the current debate* and *Warrant and proper function*, both published in 1993, he surveys theories of epistemology, and proposes a theory of warrant; and in his third book, *Warranted Christian belief* (2000), he defends the reasonableness of Christian belief in terms of his theory of warrant.

³⁰ For this distinction, see the next footnote.

³¹ In his previous book, *Warrant: The current debate* (1993), Plantinga argues that justification, coherence, rationality and reliable faculties do not guarantee a particular belief to be knowledge. In chapters 3 and 4 (67-134) of *Warranted Christian belief*, Plantinga retraces this problem; and he argues that justification and rationality are not adequate categories; and, in chapter 6 (167-198), he proposes a theory of warrant as the most adequate theory of knowledge. For what he means by “warrant”, Plantinga exemplifies a case in terms of comparison between “true belief” and “knowledge”. An ardent fan for her favorite baseball team believes that her team will win a champion in the next season, even though the team finished last and dealt away their best pitcher in the previous season. In spite of this improbable belief, let’s suppose that by good luck, the team actually wins the champion. In this case, although the belief turns out to be true, that is, a true belief, the belief was not knowledge. Plantinga says, “To count as knowledge, a belief, obviously enough, must have more going for it than mere truth. That extra something is what I call ‘warrant’” (2000:xi).

³² In *Warrant and proper function* (1993), Plantinga argues that “proper function” constitutes warrant and this argument is elaborated in chapter 5 (135-166) of *Warranted Christian belief* (2000).

Aquinas and C for Calvin) is a warranted belief, because the belief is produced through a cognitive process or faculty that functions properly.

To prove this, he explains what process or faculty is involved in the belief in God.³³ Plantinga asserts that God installed a sense of divinity (*sensus divinitatis*) in every human mind as a cognitive faculty, which malfunctions because of the fall into sin. However, the work of the Holy Spirit restores this faculty and triggers it to function properly. This internal work of the Holy Spirit makes people recognize God's divine nature in the natural world; and it convinces them of the existence of God. Plantinga says that the process is like that of memory-belief, in that when a certain stimulus is given, a memory recurs to the mind (2000:175).

On this point, it should be noted that the belief is not inferred but *occasioned*, that is, it is not a result of natural theology.

However, the natural question that can be raised is, if the sense of divinity is a universally installed faculty of all human beings, why do so many people miss this knowledge of God? To this question, Plantinga responds that it is because this *sensus divinitatis* no longer functions properly in their minds as a result of sin. Thus, he says "it is really the *unbelievers* who display epistemic malfunction" (2000:184). Accordingly, he says, the belief in God is produced by a cognitive faculty, which was installed by God and restored to function properly by the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the belief in God is a warranted belief, since it is produced by a properly functioning epistemic faculty.

However, the weakness with Plantinga's warrant of Christian belief is that the warrant is effective only in the case that the existence of God has been already been proved to be true. If God does not exist, (that is, to the atheist) his hypothetical noetic structure (e.g., the work of the Holy Spirit) would be regarded as mere imagination. Therefore, the *de facto* question of the truth of Christianity is crucial for his theory of warrant. However, to the frustration of evidential apologists, Plantinga repeatedly asserts that the truth cannot be proved by rational argument: "The only way I can see to argue that Christian belief has *these* virtues is to argue that Christian belief is, indeed, *true*. [However], I don't propose to offer such an argument. That is because I don't know of an argument for Christian belief that seems very likely to convince one who does not already accept its conclusion" (2000:200-201).³⁴

³³ In chapters 6-10 of *Warranted Christian belief*, he elaborates on this model.

³⁴ Of course, many critics object that Plantinga's epistemology is blatantly fideistic and his description is a

In recapitulation, Plantinga, while rejecting the possibility of natural theology from the beginning, has shown firstly that classical foundationalism (hence, epistemic evidentialism) is a self-defeating and not a cogent position. Secondly, that belief in God is rational without supporting evidence. Therefore, the implication for evidential apologetics is that its underlying epistemic assumptions (i.e., classical foundationalism) are bankrupt, and its efforts to provide inferential evidence by natural theology are unnecessary.

2.5.4 Contemporary anti-foundationalist epistemology

I have so far presented epistemological theories in support of anti-foundationalism by Christian philosophers. However, it is well known that this anti-foundationalist trend is also prevalent in contemporary (postmodern) philosophical epistemology.

On the one hand, what Christian and secular philosophical anti-foundationalists have in common is the claim that theoretical (i.e. scientific) thought is not autonomous but open-ended towards non-rational presuppositions inherited from a tradition, paradigm, history, ground motive and so forth. On the other hand, their difference may lie in the level of presuppositions that they are prepared to discuss. Christian anti-foundationalists like Dooyeweerd and Plantinga openly present their position in relation to (i.e. as shaped by) their view of an ultimate reality, such as the existence of God. By contrast, the discussions of secular epistemologists usually focus on relatively shallow levels of presuppositions (such as convictions related to a particular research area, or derived from a world picture or world-view).³⁵

religious confession rather than a philosophical argument. For this expected charge, Plantinga keeps mentioning a condition for his Reformed epistemology. That is, his account of the cognitive process would be true, only if Christianity is *de facto* true and if God exists (2000:189-190). He says, “if I am right in these claims, there aren’t any viable *de jure* criticisms that are compatible with the truth of Christian belief; that is, there aren’t any viable *de jure* objections independent of *de facto* objections” (xii). Again, then, as to the question of whether the *de facto* claim concerning the truth of Christianity can be demonstrated, he is negative. He says at the end of his book *Warranted Christian belief*, “but is it [Christian belief] true? This is a really important question. And here we pass beyond the competency of philosophy, whose main competence, in this area, is to clear away certain objections, impedances, and obstacles to Christian belief” (499).

³⁵ In his Ph.D. thesis, Coletto distinguishes the levels of presuppositions for a heuristic purpose in a sequential order, from deeper (pre-scientific) to superficial (shallow, scientific) levels. Starting from the “deeper” (pre-scientific) levels, he distinguishes, religious ground motives – world-views - world pictures - convictions concerning the particular field of research. Concerning the scientific levels, he distinguishes philosophical/metaphysical presuppositions - axioms - theorems. Each prior level functions as a

While the trends of contemporary anti-foundationalist (secular) epistemology are diverse, they have all arisen from a common opposition to the “Enlightenment project”. Thus, what unifies the different trends contributing to contemporary humanist philosophical epistemology is such ideas as that the world and its inherent order are not objectively real, but are constructed by the human mind. As a consequence, truth is not objectively given; but it is constituted by subjective presuppositions that one brings to it; while language does not represent the real world; but it is a human social convention.

In terms of epistemological position, the main consequence of this world-view is a paradigm shift towards anti-foundationalism; that is, there is no objective foundation (truth and reality) to which our knowledge can correspond; and there are no neutral criteria for rationality.

Among many strands that contribute to this movement, in the next section, I will select one paradigmatic example, that is, the movement of “philosophical hermeneutics” initiated by Heidegger and led to maturation by Gadamer.³⁶ My purpose here is to introduce another aspect of anti-foundationalist epistemology before displaying the responses of the “second-generation” evidential apologists³⁷ to postmodern thought.

2.5.5 Philosophical hermeneutics (hermeneutic turn)

“Philosophical” hermeneutics is not limited to the interpretation of texts; but it regards all cognitive activities as interpretation; and it emphasizes the situational embeddedness of our cognitive activities, so that no one can transcend this embeddedness and claim pure reason or

foundation for the next one; but there occur multiple interactions and influences between the different levels (Coletto, 2007:18-19).

³⁶ I choose this philosophy not because I think it is particularly representative of postmodern thought, but because the same issue concerning pre-theoretical presuppositions and common ground are debated between this philosophy and its opponents. In this section, I intend to briefly introduce the debate between postmodern anti-foundationalist thought and evidentialists’ opposition. This brief discussion will usher us into the detailed discussion in Chapter 4, where I deal with contemporary philosophical epistemology and evidential apologetics. The hermeneutic school does not explicitly present itself as an epistemological movement, but it has definite implications in favour of an anti-foundationalist epistemology (Westphal, 1999:415-417). It, therefore, represents a “challenge” to evidential apologetics.

³⁷ By “second-generation” evidential apologists, I mean the “Biola school” or Evangelical evidentialists. The term “Biola school” is an heuristically coined term to denote the faculties of Biola University, but it is not limited to that group. It includes a common set of reactions to postmodern thought in the Evangelical Philosophical Society in general.

absolute knowledge (Westphal, 1999:415-417).

This new recognition originates from Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger claims that every cognitive act presupposes a prior understanding of the subject matter, which he describes as "fore-having," "fore-sight", and "fore-conception"³⁸. And it is this that constitutes the hermeneutic circle. However, what distinguishes his pre-understanding from the Kantian categories is that pre-understanding is not constituted by fixed categories in our mind, but given by a human situation, which cannot be comprehended (in the sense of controlled) by theoretical thought (Heidegger, 1963:191-192). He tries to demonstrate this situation in his claim that every assertion (i.e. act of knowing) is "derivative" (1963:195).

He explains that an assertion (or knowledge) is derivative, in the sense that it is derived from its prior "practice" and "moods". That is, prior to any assertion, there is a mode of interpretation by practice and moods; and they are the conditions for the possibility of assertion or knowledge. This statement is explained in his famous illustration of a hammer and the two concepts of "ready-to-hand" (Zuhandenheit) and "present-at-hand" (Vorhandenheit).

When one uses a hammer in one's natural experience, one sees it as ready-to-hand; and one uses it as a tool. In this action, Heidegger says, one has already implicitly carried out an interpretation of it as a tool without using any word. By contrast, when one makes an assertion that "this is a hammer", one sees it as present-at-hand; and it becomes an objective material for one's abstraction. In other words, prior to one's assertion or knowledge, a "practice" as implicit interpretation is present. Heidegger says that "in concerned circumspection there are no such assertions as 'at first' (...). Interpretation is carried out primordially – not in a theoretical statement, but in an action of circumspective concern – laying aside the unsuitable tool or examining it, 'without wasting words'" (Heidegger, 1963:200).

Further, Heidegger explains that our "state of mind" or "attunement", which is expressed empirically in moods, is another prior condition of cognition. Even if they are unnoticed or left unattended, moods are always already there and influence our cognition by directing it. Thus, the world is disclosed to us as far as our moods guide us. The moods are "prior to all cognition and volition and beyond their range of disclosure" (1963:175); and they "make it possible first of all

³⁸ In his book, *Truth and method*, Heidegger says, "interpretation is never a presuppositionless grasping of something previously given (...). Any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted" (Heidegger, 191-192).

to direct oneself towards something” (1963:178). That is, moods are another constitutive presupposition in any cognitive activity.

In summary, for Heidegger, our knowing which is expressed by assertion is founded (presupposed) on practice and coloured by moods as conditions for its own possibility. Moreover, Heidegger asserts that it is not possible to strip away moods and practices, so as to arrive at pure reason and at the thing in itself. He says, “When we master a mood, we do so by way of a counter-mood; we are never free of moods” (1963:175). The significance of this discovery is that Heidegger breaks away from modern Cartesian epistemology, and discloses pre-theoretical presuppositions as necessary conditions for the possibility of our cognitive activity.

For Gadamer, the departure point of his hermeneutics is Heidegger’s account of the hermeneutic circle and the fore-structure of understanding. Whereas Heidegger regards practices and moods as pre-conditions for assertion and knowing, Gadamer sees the prejudice (*Vor-urteil*) as the ineluctable presupposition of judgment.³⁹ As the source of our prejudice, he contends that one must recognize one’s embeddedness in and indebtedness to tradition, and that our understanding is not possible without it. Also, he contends, in a similar vein to Heidegger’s pre-theoretical pre-understanding, that tradition is not something we can criticize through pure reason, from outside it. Rather, we are given over to our belonging to history. He says, “tradition has a justification that lies beyond rational grounding; and [this] in large measure determines our institutions and attitudes” (Gadamer, 1994:281).

In summary, the significance of the hermeneutic turn for epistemology lies in the discovery of the ontological condition of our activity of knowing. Human knowledge is ontologically conditioned by our prior prejudices, and our situations; and the autonomy of human reason, which was the ideal of the Enlightenment, can no longer be sustained. Thus, the search for foundations through pure reason is shown to be an ontologically impossible project. Thus, the consequence for apologetics is that since our knowing is already prejudiced, no neutral evidence and proof for theism can be elaborated.

³⁹ He says, “in fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word [pre-judgments], constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience (...). They are simply conditions whereby we experience something” (Gadamer, 1976:9).

2.6 Responses by the “second-generation” evidential apologists

2.6.1 Criticizing anti-foundationalism

In spite of the overwhelming trend of anti-foundationalist epistemology in the context of (reformed) Christianity and contemporary philosophical epistemology, the “second-generation” evidential (classical and empirical) apologists nevertheless maintain their thesis concerning the possibility of neutral criteria and objective truth. The difference of their claim from those of their predecessors lies in the fact that they maintain their position in spite of the challenges of anti-foundationalist epistemology. As a consequence, they are usually more inclined to recognise the role of the subject in epistemology, by adopting very mild forms of perspectivism, constructivism and so forth.

In this section, therefore, I will examine the ground of their critical reactions to anti-foundationalist epistemology. In doing so, I will limit my examination to explain their claims; and I will leave more extensive discussions and critiques to the next chapters. In essence, their criticism is that anti-foundationalism has a substantial defect, since it entails the problem of circular reasoning; and it ends up with pernicious relativism, which is well-known for the problem of self-referential incoherence. Moreover, they claim that we intuitively know that there is a substantial common ground in reality; and it is this that makes our communication possible without any serious breakdowns.

With this overview, we will see how they criticize both Christian and secular philosophical anti-foundationalism, which I introduced in the previous sections.

2.6.2 Replies to Dooyeweerd’s critique of theoretical thought⁴⁰

Against Dooyeweerd’s *New Critique* and his analysis of theoretical thought, there have been critiques from various sources; and some of them are related to the problem of circular reasoning (or self-applicability) and communication breakdown. De Vos (1952) argues that if every theoretical thought is prejudiced by a religious ground motive, Dooyeweerd’s own analysis of

⁴⁰ The replies at this subsection are not directly from the evidentialists. Instead, I employ Conradie’s and de Vos’ critiques of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy to represent the evidentialists’ position. The first reason is that the evidentialists did not have serious interaction with Dooyeweerd’s philosophy; and, secondly, their epistemological position is very close to the positions of Conradie and De Vos, against anti-foundationalist epistemology.

theoretical thought must be self-applicably prejudiced. Moreover, philosophical communication is blocked “not accidentally, but fundamentally and in principle”. As a consequence, “the followers of this philosophy cannot expect that others should grasp, and least of all accept, their philosophy”, because all philosophical arguments are biased with non-rational ground-motives; and their disagreements cannot be resolved by neutral rational argument (de Vos, 1952:141).

Another critic, Conradie, says that according to Dooyeweerd’s philosophy, it is impossible to criticize a philosophy from the viewpoint of another philosophy, because there is no neutral criterion to adjudicate between them (Conradie, 1960:62). So she asks whether it doesn’t deny what is in fact happening in the history of philosophy. The whole history of philosophy shows that meaningful communication and debate between differing philosophies have been taking place. She says that this can only be understood by the fact that there is “a rubric of common ground between [the] different communities and philosophical groups” behind any non-rational, religious ground-motives (1960:62).

For this communication breakdown and self-applicable problem, however, Conradie points out that Dooyeweerd himself was already well aware of them and gave his response in his *New critique* (1997). After discussing the third transcendental problem, Dooyeweerd asks himself if what he has done up to this (third) stage is a “stringent” “proof” and if the latter then “supposes this very autonomy of theoretical thought, the impossibility of which our criticism tried to demonstrate” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:56). That is, he asks himself if his discovered structure of theoretical thought is a prejudiced subjective discovery or a universally valid proof. Then, Dooyeweerd answers, according to Conradie’s understanding, that his discovery should be understood as a universally valid proof, which is not affected by religious ground motives; and the structure of thought he discovered is objective and sufficiently immune from religious influences.⁴¹

Yet, Conradie insists that Dooyeweerd’s thesis is not consistent; and she says that “the real question is how the claim of the critique to be a proof can be reconciled with his own critical demand that all thought must necessarily proceed from a religious presupposition” (1960:134).

In her opinion, the problem of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy is, firstly, if religious commitment is

⁴¹ For more discussion on this interpretation, see the section 3.4.6 in chapter 3. I show that Conradie’s understanding is partial, it does not do full justice to Dooyeweerd’s text and does not properly represent Dooyeweerd’s contention.

universally applicable without exception, it makes Dooyeweerd's own philosophy a prejudiced one; and [it then] causes communication breakdowns between philosophers. Secondly, and conversely, if Dooyeweerd insists that his newly discovered structure of theoretical thought is neutral and immune from religious ground-motives, his philosophy loses its consistency. Therefore, Conradie concludes that Dooyeweerd's approach is untenable. She says:

“The critique fails, not because as a proof it accepts the doctrine of the autonomy of reason, but because it is both a *circulus vitiosus* and a *petitio principii*. If the critiques have failed, it means, firstly, that Dooyeweerd has failed to prove his claim that the critique is the final theoretical foundation of philosophy (...). It means, secondly, that Dooyeweerd has failed to find a point of contact between philosophies proceeding from radically different points of departure” (Conradie, 1960:152).

After this critique, Conradie claims that the failure of Dooyeweerd's philosophy confirms her basic assumptions. That is, to propose a sound philosophy, the philosopher should assume the existence of an objective epistemic foundation.

This criticism is obviously resonant with and supports the evidentialist's claim for the existence of neutral criteria and an epistemic foundation, from which a conclusive proof can be inferred.

2.6.3 Replies to Plantinga's proper basicity

After Plantinga's *Warranted Christian belief* (2000), various criticisms have appeared to date. According to Baker, those critiques fall into seven main categories (Baker, 2005:79). Among them, what is relevant to our current discussion may be such issues as: 1) Challenges to the proper basicity of Christian belief in God; 2) the objection that Plantinga's theory does not go far enough to prove the truth of Christianity; and 3) the problem of religious pluralism. At bottom, I believe that these critiques converge into one common claim, that is, the existence of neutral criteria or the evidence (common ground). Let us examine each criticism in the following paragraphs.

The first type of criticism challenges the proper basicity of Christian belief in God. Even though Plantinga assimilates the paradigm beliefs (such as perception-belief, memory-belief and belief in other minds) to the belief in God, Grigg contends that there are critical dis-analogies between them (Grigg, 1990:390). Firstly, while the paradigm beliefs are a universal phenomenon

to humans, the belief in God is applicable only to some people. Secondly, while the paradigm beliefs can usually be tested against empirical evidence, the belief in God cannot be verified. (Let's take for example the memory belief that you had a banana for breakfast. For this belief, one can verify the empirical evidence that there is a banana peel in the trash bin). Because of this dis-analogy, he claims that in order for belief in God to be a universal belief and to achieve the status of proper basicity, a certain type of empirical evidence is still required (Grigg, 1990:390).

The second type of criticism goes back to Plantinga's distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* objections. Plantinga asserts that the *de jure* defence (that Christian belief is rational and intellectually acceptable) is dependent on the *de facto* defence (that it is true); but the *de facto* defence cannot be achieved *via* philosophical discussion (Plantinga, 2000:499).

For this conditional warrant thesis, many evidential critics feel frustrated and ask whether Plantinga's project does anything meaningful for defending Christian belief against objections. Thus, they claim that the *de facto* question should be pursued all the way until its truth is proved. Swinburne summarizes this type of attitude as follows: "There is, however, a monumental issue which Plantinga does not discuss, and which a lot of people will consider needs discussing. This is whether Christian beliefs do have warrant (in Plantinga's sense). He has shown that they do, *if they are true*; so we might hope for a discussion on whether they are true" (Swinburne, 2001:211).

This type of criticism implies, however, the assumption that the Christian belief can be objectively proven if it is investigated further, and more thoroughly. In turn, this again implies the autonomy of theoretical thought, the impossibility of which was shown in Dooyeweerd analysis of theoretical thought.

The third type of criticism shows a more fundamental reason why the critics try to stick to the existence of objective evidence. They contend that if Plantinga's warrant theory is accepted, its consequence is to open the door for religious plurality. According to Plantinga, a belief could be basic and warranted without evidence, but he did not mean that any arbitrary belief can be a basic belief without evidence. The belief should be demonstrated to be produced through properly functioning cognitive faculties aiming at truth. So, he showed that belief in God is produced through the proper cognitive process. At this point, however, it is argued, the problem is that the properly functioning cognitive faculty that he contrives is not something universally

acceptable or empirically verifiable. That is, the existence of the sense of divinity, the work of the Holy Spirit and the epistemic effects of sin are not things that can be accepted by those who do not accept the A/C (Aquinas and Calvin) model of belief in God. Rather, the faculties he devises are more like something of his religious confession. Accordingly, critics say, if Christian belief is to be warranted, the harmful consequence is that people from other religions would also claim that their beliefs are warranted, because they believe that theirs are produced by properly functioning cognitive faculties. For this situation, however, there is no neutral criterion to falsify their claims. Thus, Paul Helm says that Plantinga's argument "leaves his defence of the rationality of Christian theism – not so much open to refutation [but] – as to imitation" (Helm, 2001:1112).

Daniel Hill also claims that in order to avoid religious pluralism, the traditional criterion should be recovered. He writes, "in disposing of the traditional model of giving arguments or evidence for all one's religious beliefs, Plantinga may have disposed also of an inter-subjectively agreed standard, which allows us to debate, argue, and evangelize. In creating an impregnable fortress for the rationality of Christianity, Plantinga may have done the same favour for the other theistic religions too" (Hill, 2001:49).

Peter Forrest asserts in a more simple manner that Plantinga's warrant theory rather fortifies the truth of evidentialism: "For we might be pluralists, not in principle, but because it so happens that some other religious or some non-religious ideology can make as good a case of being knowledge-if-true as Christianity. In that situation, I fail to see why we should remain Christians, unless we can give some religiously neutral grounds for why Christianity is superior to other religions – which, I hold, we can" (Forrest, 2002:111).

In summary, what these critiques have in common is that Plantinga's warrant theory opens the door for pluralism; and to avoid this, neutral criteria and objective evidence are still required.

2.6.4 Replies to perspectivism and constructivism

Philosophical hermeneutics has shown that embeddedness in a tradition and prejudice (presuppositions) is an ineluctable ontic condition for cognitive activities. As a matter of fact, a similar view on our situatedness and limitedness has been developed in the thought of other postmodern thinkers, such as Foucault, Derrida and Rorty, to mention only a few (Westphal, 2005:151). In terms of epistemological theory, this family resemblance group may be described

as perspectivist or constructivist, in the sense that humans do not have “an absolute, all-encompassing point of view; but see whatever [they] see from a particular standpoint” (Westphal, 2005:151). Reality is then constructed through the medium of our consciousness and language.

Against this view, a second-generation evidentialist, Groothuis, claims that even if moderate perspectivism is allowed, it does not mean that there is no residual objective reality at the bottom. He says:

“To some degree, we all have differing perspectives (which can be biased, prejudiced, ignorant, arrogant, uninformed, and so on); but our perspectives only affect our sense of what is true; they do not determine truth. A perspective may be partially true, largely true, or mostly false; but its worth is to be gauged by its truth value. A perspective is not, in itself, truth; it is a perspective *on* or *about* something else – something outside itself. A perspective *refers* to reality, either successfully (by being true) or unsuccessfully (by being false). Perspectivism reduces to a kind of collective autism” (Groothuis, 2000:108).

Another Biola school contemporary evidentialist, Scott Smith, acknowledges moderate perspectivism. However, he claims that we can still know objective truth: “I think we can, and often do, know an objective reality, as it really is. We can know truth, and we can even know what truth is, i.e., a correspondence with reality” (Smith, 2005:173).

To prove their claims, instead of providing theoretical arguments, the second-generation evidentialists typically rely on displaying a self-evident (though trivial, in some cases) state of affairs based on a series of instances that we may experience in everyday life.

For example, Smith complains that even though humans do not have an omniscient viewpoint, we simply know many objective truths, such as murder is wrong; torturing babies is wrong; $2+2=4$; and more (Smith, 2005:178). Groothuis asserts in a similar way that the statement “the world is spherical”, is objectively true, irrespective of the fact that many different perspectives may exist on it; and that the majority of ancient people believed that the earth is flat. Their perspectives and beliefs cannot change the objective external fact that the earth is spherical (2000:169).

The Ligonier authors also express a similar view. They claim that in spite of differing religious ground motives, some assumptions are undeniably common to all. Among many, they claim, some laws of formal thought, such as the law of non-contradiction, and the law of causality, are

“universal and objective”; and our basic sense perception is common to all, regardless of perspectives (Sproul et al., 1984:80). For instance, they say, when believers and unbelievers see a flower and know that it is a daffodil, what they see is the same to all, though its meaning is different; that is, for one it is a product of cosmic chance, while for the other it is created for the glory of God (1984:70). Or more graphically, they illustrate that when we approach an intersection in a car, and see a truck speeding towards the intersection, no matter what perspective or theory of truth we have, we commonly believe the truth of our perception and judiciously apply our brakes (1984:80).

What they try to point out with these examples is that though there might be various perspectives and theories about truth, there is a common, universal and objective reality that makes possible those variant perspectives.

What is more, they claim that when the common reality is denied by perspectivism and constructivism, the unavoidable consequence is relativism, and relativism is an epistemic position that is self-referentially incoherent. For instance, Groothuis asks us to consider the truth claim of this statement made by constructivists.

“All ‘truth’ is a social construction of language and nothing more. It cannot orient us to any objective reality outside a system of discourse” (Groothuis, 2000:106).

And he asks, if the constructivists claim that this statement is true and it applies to all cases, then, this statement itself cannot be exempt from its scope. That is, the truth of the statement applies self-referentially to the statement itself; and it reduces its truth to (e.g.) a social construction without any universal and objective validity. This is a logically unavoidable truth. In addition, Groothuis asserts that “this criticism has been voiced many times against many thinkers, but it remains irrefutable” – even to most postmodern thinkers (2000:106).

2.6.5 Replies to the “hermeneutic turn: language as a condition of knowledge

Another unifying motive that “almost all postmodern thinkers (...) agree on” is our embeddedness in language (Vanhoozer, 2005:77).⁴² They claim that since no-one can get out of a linguistic framework, and language is an arbitrary social construction, no-one has the privilege of

⁴² Vanhoozer classifies the postmodern thinkers as nihilists (e.g. Derrida), pragmatists (Rorty), hermeneutists (Gadamer, Ricoeur), and non-foundationalists (Wittgenstein, MacIntyre).

direct access to reality, as it is. Since no-one transcends language, it is argued, no objective reality and truth can be accessible.

Against this claim, evidentialists argue that even if we have different languages and different descriptions, there is still one same reality that makes possible the very different descriptions of it. For example, Groothuis asks us to consider an international scientific conference. The experts from different countries, even if they discuss in different languages and need interpreters, still understand each other; and they know that they describe the same realities. All this “would seem impossible given the postmodernist contention that language cannot penetrate to reality, and that it walls us off from others who use different languages, since languages are socially construed in varying contexts” (Groothuis, 2000:95-96).

Another example that testifies to the penetrability of reality by language is, Groothuis says, the success of missionary activities. Missionaries have reached various peoples from greatly diverse cultures and languages, but they have successfully had the same message understood by the aboriginal peoples. It is because they share the same reality; and language can contact the same reality (2000:96-97).

Smith also tries to show, by analyzing the process of thought, that language can get access to reality as it is. In our thought, he says, we think with concepts in certain cases. When we see an apple, for example, we match our concept of apple with the properties belonging to the actual apple that we see; and we recognize the object as an apple, if the object is correspondent to our concept. In this process, whereas the concept of apple is constructed by our mind, the properties of an actual apple that match our concept are not under our control; and they cannot be modified by our concept. In the process, what makes the matching possible is, he claims, that our concepts have natural affinity with properties in the object (reality).

In other words, our concepts are not arbitrarily constructed; but they reflect the properties given in the object in reality. Therefore, our concepts, which are represented by our words (or language in general), have open access to reality as it is (Smith, 2005:180-86).

In summary, the evidentialists’ claim is that even if it is true that we have different perspectives because of our embeddedness in specific situations, and we see through the necessary medium of language frameworks, knowledge is possible because of the common shared reality behind languages, perspectives or paradigms. Therefore, the radical anti-foundationalist epistemology has a crucial defect in it.

2.7 Conclusion

In summary of this chapter, we have so far examined the evidential apologist's claims concerning the possibility of neutral criteria and objective evidence. Firstly, we examined the paradigmatic Scriptural texts for the possibility of natural theology, and found that they do not give conclusive confirmation. Secondly, we examined the actual theistic proofs and historical facts to see whether they can constitute objective and neutral evidence; and we found that they cannot make conclusive evidence. Thirdly, we examined the underlying epistemological assumptions of the evidential apologetics; and this showed that foundationalism (hence, evidentialist apologetics) is not a tenable position. This has been shown by examining the structure of theoretical thought (Dooyeweerd), the noetic structure of foundationalism (Plantinga), and the claims of the contemporary anti-foundationalist epistemology.

After this long discussion, it might be concluded that evidential apologetics is not a tenable apologetic approach. However, we have also seen that notwithstanding the overwhelming critiques, the "second-generation" evidential apologists still hold that they have legitimate reasons to maintain their claims on the existence of neutral criteria and objective evidence. They show that both Christian and secular anti-foundationalist approaches have their own weaknesses.

Firstly, Dooyeweerd's analysis of theoretical thought is challenged by the problem of self-applicability (circular reasoning) and communication breakdown. Secondly, Plantinga's warrant theory allegedly opens the door to religious pluralism (relativism) and; thirdly, contemporary secular epistemology denies that there is any common shared reality behind all the different perspectives and the different languages.

After all, the claims of evidential apologetics centre around one conviction: There is some common reality (or neutral criteria and evidence), regardless of religious ground-motives, religious pluralism and diverse perspectives. In other words, the evidentialists' claims can converge into the one epistemic issue of the existence of "common ground". The issues discussed in this chapter boil down to and converge into this fundamental theme.

As a matter of fact, this issue has been vigorously discussed between evidential and presuppositional apologists, and also between postmodern thinkers and their opponents. I will examine the discussion between evidential and presuppositional apologists in the next chapter, and the discussion between postmodern thinkers and their opponents in Chapter Four.

Chapter 3:

Presuppositional apologetics and common ground

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the problems and limits of evidential apologetics were discussed; and the problem of common ground was identified as a central issue. The evidential apologists refuted several critiques from Christian and non-Christian circles, and insisted on the existence of common ground (neutral criteria and evidence) because that criticism has its own problems of self-applicability (circular reasoning), religious relativism and the denial of common ground.

In this chapter, the issue of common ground will be further discussed in the debate between the evidential apologetics and, as its counterpart, the school of presuppositional apologetics, of which Van Til's approach is the most representative, as well as the most radical. The basic thrust of Van Til's presuppositionalism is that, due to an absolute spiritual antithesis, there is no neutral criterion or objective evidence functioning as common ground for both believers and unbelievers; and thus no objective proof is available.

With regard to this position, the evidentialists would lay the same charge of circular reasoning, as they did with Dooyeweerd, Plantinga and anti-foundationalist epistemology.

However, what makes the issue more complicated in the present discussion is the fact that those scholars in the reformed "antithesis" tradition (such as Kuyper, and Dooyeweerd, as well as Van Til) do posit the existence of common ground together with radical antithesis. To complicate the matters further, Van Til's view is often inconsistent and is in conflict with those of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd.

In the following discussion, our main question is whether and how the notion of common ground (as defined by Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Van Til) is compatible with their claims concerning the radical antithesis. Further, what is the difference between their positions and that of the traditional apologetics, if all of them acknowledge the existence of common ground? That is to ask: Does the common ground function as a "neutral" ground, on which objective theism can be established, as evidential apologists wish to claim? And if not, what role does it play?

With these questions in mind, in the first section (3.2), an overview of Van Til's

presuppositional apologetics will be introduced and critical evaluations from various sources will be presented. In the following section (3.3), as a response to these critical evaluations, the position of two so-called “inconsistent” presuppositional apologists (Gordon Clark and Edward Carnell) will be analysed. Van Til’s criticism of them will be presented as well, to highlight his consistent or “radical” antithetical position. In the third section (3.4), Van Til’s “moderate” view on antithesis and common ground (conflicting to some extent with his original “radical” position) will be introduced and examined as well.

In fact, after exploring the radical position, in which no common ground is allowed, John Frame, a well-known Van Tilian author, analyses Van Til’s writings and shows that Van Til too acknowledges the necessity of common ground in several instances, and argues that this moderate view of antithesis and common ground reflects Van Til’s true position more closely.

In the fourth section (3.4), in order to compare and evaluate Van Til’s ambivalent position on the common ground, Kuyper’s and Dooyeweerd’s views will be examined as well. It will be shown that both Kuyper and Dooyeweerd acknowledge the necessity of common ground – in spite of their radical antithesis claim, in order to explain our common experience of genuine and meaningful communication between differing faith communities.

However, in his criticism, Van Til often returns to his radical position, with the result that he is affected by the communication breakdown problem. I will therefore suggest that, to avoid this (and other similar) problems, the existence of common ground (as an “ontic” condition) should be acknowledged. In the final section, I will discuss whether the existence of common ground makes conclusive theistic arguments possible, as the evidential apologists would like to claim.

As a conclusion, I will argue that although the common ground can function as a criterion against meaningless or irrational arguments, it cannot function as an epistemically neutral criterion; and it cannot therefore lead to an objective and conclusive argument in favour of the Christian position.

3.2 Van Til’s presuppositional apologetics in dialogue

3.2.1 The two faces of Van Til’s approach

Contrary to what is generally assumed, Van Til’s presuppositional apologetics has two conflicting faces on the issue of antithesis and common ground. In his “typically known” position, Van Til advocates an “absolute” antithesis with no common ground allowed. This

radical position is often regarded as impossible by evidential critics, while Van Tilian scholars claim that the criticism is misplaced by a superficial reading of Van Til's writings. They claim that Van Til, in fact, acknowledges the necessity of common ground between believers and unbelievers in many places in his writings (Bahnsen, 1996:41-48; Frame, 1995a:81-102; Pratt, 1999; Anderson, 2004).

In the following section, our discussion will be based on Van Til's typical or "radical" presuppositionalism; and in the next sections, his "moderate" view of antithesis will be introduced and evaluated.

3.2.2 Van Til's "radical" presuppositional apologetics

When compared with the long history of traditional (evidential) apologetics,⁴³ Van Til's presuppositional apologetics has been more recently developed; and it is presented as an alternative. Therefore, in order to understand his presuppositional approach, his criticism of traditional apologetics is in order.

Van Til refers to traditional apologetics usually as the apologetic approach adopted by Aquinas (classical apologetics) and Butler (empirical apologetics). As for classical apologetics, Aquinas, employing Aristotle's philosophy, develops the "five ways" of theistic argument in his *Summa theologiae* – and his arguments were later developed into the cosmological, moral and design arguments. In his arguments, Aquinas' fundamental assumption is that natural reason is relatively autonomous and able to know the truth: without the aid of any special revelation. Thus, reason by itself can prove the existence of God, and the truth of Christian theism in an objective way.

Concerning this classical approach, Van Til's judgment is that it causes a "moral" problem, since it comes close to idolatry – by assuming that reason has autonomy and sovereignty over the area of theoretical thought. It makes reason an autonomous law-giver and a final reference point. Therefore, God is robbed of His sovereignty in that area. Moreover, God's existence is placed at the mercy of human reasoning. Against this assumption, Van Til claims that God is the sovereign authority over every area of life including reason(ing). Reason must be subservient to God's

⁴³ Van Til usually employs the term "traditional" apologetics instead of "evidential" apologetics (see Table 1 in Chapter 2). In this chapter, I will use "evidential" and "traditional" apologetics interchangeably. The terms "traditionalist" and "traditionalism" are used in the same sense, and do not imply any negative connotations.

authority; and it must start with presupposing God's revelation. Because of this initial and fundamentally false assumption of Aquinas, Van Til judges that his arguments are entirely flawed.

“And it is this uncritical assumption that vitiates the entire argument for the existence of God that he offers, and in fact vitiates this approach to every other problem in philosophy and in theology” (Van Til, 1969:173).

Further, in his criticism of Roman Scholasticism in general, Van Til emphasizes that because of the effects of sin on the intellect (the noetic effects of sin), the natural man's reason does not function properly; and he cannot know any truth until his eyes are opened by the work of the Holy Spirit. He says, “on account of the fact of sin, man is blind with respect to the truth wherever the truth appears” (Van Til, 1967:73). He likens the unbeliever to a person with jaundiced eyes; and “that it is impossible to convince any non-Christian of the truth of the Christian position, as long as he reasons on non-Christian assumptions. Everything looks yellow to jaundiced eyes” (Van Til, 1972:95).

Because of this “noetic” effect of sin, Van Til is known to deny common ground and any point of contact with unbelievers.

With regard to Butler's empirical apologetics, Van Til takes issue with the ideas of “brute facts” and “probability”. In Van Til's vocabulary, a “brute fact” means an “un-interpreted fact” or “uncreated, ultimate matter” (Frame, 1995b:273). While empirical apologetics appeals to neutral and un-interpreted facts, Van Til argues that every fact is *pre*-interpreted by God, since all facts are given meaning by God. Therefore, to understand anything truly, God's interpretation of it should be presupposed.

With regard to Butler's analogical argument, Van Til argues that as analogical reasoning derives unknown possibilities from known facts, it will always end up in mere probability, as Hume shows in his trenchant critique of empiricism. Butler is well aware of this problem but, instead of depreciating the value of probability, he advocates it as “the very guide to life” (Butler, 1898:84). After all, he argues, in our practical life most of our decisions are made on the basis of probability rather than theoretical certainty. Therefore, he says that apologetic evidence can be satisfactorily presented on the criterion of probability. The probable character of apologetic evidence, however, is sharply criticized by Van Til.

“It is an insult to the living God to say that his revelation of Himself so lacks in clarity that man, himself through and through revelation of God, does justice by it when he says that God *probably* exists” (Van Til, 1967:197).

By contrast, Van Til claims that “theistic proof” must be “absolutely certain” (Van Til, 1967:103) and his “reasoning by presupposition” (or transcendental argument) provides an “absolutely certain” proof. He says, “If the theistic proof is constructed, as it ought to be constructed, it is objectively valid, whatever the attitude of those to whom it comes may be” (Van Til, 1955:256).⁴⁴

On the basis of these arguments, and in order to avoid the problems of the traditional apologetics, Van Til proposes that Christian apologetics must start with presupposing the truth of Christianity, instead of starting with neutral reason or brute facts. For him, the true basis of Christian apologetics is composed of two basic ideas.

According to Lewis, the first idea established by Van Til has to do with the epistemological question to know “how we know truth” (Lewis, 1990:130). Since God is the Creator of everything, says Van Til (1967:164), only He knows the true meaning of everything in its ultimate relation; and He has revealed that meaning in Scripture. Therefore, in order to know and interpret anything truly, Van Til asserts that the Scriptural account must be presupposed as the first principle of knowledge.

This presupposition further implies that there is no authority independent of Scripture; and there is no neutral area apart from God’s interpretation.

The second idea follows from the first one; and it has to do with the metaphysical question of “what we know as real” (Van Til, 196:50; Lewis, 1990:131). For Van Til, the ultimate reality is not nature, or its hidden rational principles, such as the law of causality or the law of non-contradiction, but it is the “self-contained” God, who sustains nature, as well as rational principles. Thus, the rational principles do not operate independently of God, nor have they the

⁴⁴ With regard to this statement, Van Til seems to contradict his own presuppositionalism, according to which every argument is prejudiced by one’s religious presuppositions; and there is no “objective” or “absolutely certain” proof. However, when he claims that his proof is absolutely certain and objective, he assumes that what is revealed in the Bible *is* objectively true and absolutely certain and although only Christians know it, while the unbelievers are blind and deny its truth. However, of course, from the unbeliever’s point of view, the proof is only subjective and relatively certain to those who accept Christian revelation. I will explain this situation further in section 3.3.3.

authority to determine whether God exists or not. Rather, they belong to God and depend upon His existence. If God does not sustain them, the principles would become unreliable – at the very next moment. Van Til explains, “if the word ‘cause’ is to mean anything to anyone, (...) there must be an absolutely unified experience in relation to Whom, as a final reference point, we may relate our predication of the cause and effect concepts” (Van Til, 1971:50).

Since unbelievers do not accept the two propositions introduced above as their starting point for reasoning, Van Til asserts that they “do not know any truth”; and there is no common ground between believers and unbelievers. He says that: “There is no single territory or dimension in which believers and non-believers have all things wholly in common. As noted above, even the description of facts in the lowest dimension presupposes a system of metaphysics and epistemology. So there can be no neutral territory of co-operation” (Van Til, 1972:85).

With this conclusion, Van Til proposes that instead of yielding to the demand for neutral reasoning and compromising God’s sovereignty, one must start by presupposing the existence of God and the truth of His revelation, if one is to be a consistent reformed apologist.

3.2.3 Traditionalist criticism: the problem of circularity and common ground

With regard to Van Til’s “radical” presuppositionalism described above, the obvious problem from the traditionalist’s (i.e. the evidentialist’s) perspective is circular reasoning and the issue of common ground. Firstly, regarding the issue of circularity, in a syllogism, if one assumes in a premise the very conclusion he intends to prove, the reasoning becomes circular and the fallacy of *petitio principii*, i.e. begging the question, is committed. In Van Til’s presuppositionalism, it is argued, it is obvious that this fallacy is committed and his reasoning becomes circular: to prove the existence of God, one must presuppose the existence of God.

To solve this problem, it is argued that the proper reasoning process must be linear. A common starting point must exist; and from there our reasoning inferentially arrives at a certain conclusion, which is not presupposed in the premise. As an illustration, the traditionalists further claim that a linear type of argument is adopted in Van Til’s own account for the legitimacy of presuppositionalism. They say that in his effort to prove that all reasoning is circular, Van Til has argued in a linear way.

“If Van Til can prove that circular reasoning is necessary (...), he has proven circular reasoning by non-circular reasoning. That is, he is assuming that there is such a thing as reasoning, that is, drawing conclusions on the basis of data. (...) So, the proof of

circular reasoning would be its necessity for linear reasoning. (...) In order to justify abnormal, antirational, irrational patterns of thought (circles), he has to accept normal, traditional patterns of thought” (Sproul et al., 1984:324).

Secondly, with regard to the problem of common ground, critics argue that, regardless of our different religious commitments, there must be an unavoidable common ground between believers and unbelievers, which is “non-negotiable” and “virtually universal” (Sproul, & others, 1984:71). Among many examples, the Ligonier apologists mention three elements constituting common ground between believers and unbelievers. They are: 1) The law of non-contradiction; 2) the law of causality; 3) “the basic reliability of sense perception” (hence, basic sense data) (1984:70-90).

Regarding the law of non-contradiction, the Ligonier apologists claim that no statement can avoid presupposing the law of non-contradiction as its transcendental condition. Even when a presuppositionalist states that “the existence of God should be prior to the law”, this statement itself already presupposes the law of non-contradiction, as its necessary condition to be a meaningful statement. Moreover, they say, the validity of this law is not limited to the act of thinking; but it is assumed in our everyday experience too. For example, “when we approach an intersection in our car and see a truck speeding toward the intersection, we judiciously apply our brakes”, no matter whether we are a theist or a non-theist (Sproul et al., 1984:80).

It is because we assume that “there cannot be a truck coming – and not a truck coming – at the same time, and in the same relationship” (1984:80). Here, the law of non-contradiction is already operating, irrespective of our awareness, to make us survive in everyday life. In other words, both in theoretical thought and in everyday experience, believers and unbelievers have the law of non-contradiction in common as a transcendental condition.

With regard to the law of causality, they say, this is simply an extension of the law of non-contradiction. It is a formal principle, which is analytically true. One might question and doubt that a particular cause has a particular effect. But in every case, in a formal sense, we cannot deny that certain events and effects *do* have a cause. According to the Ligonier authors, this is a “universal presupposition necessary for life and for the ordering of knowledge” (Sproul et al., 1984:83). This principle is operating as common ground for both believers and unbelievers.

With regard to “the basic reliability of sense perception”, the traditionalists acknowledge that Hume proved that no universal truth can be derived from our empirical experience, but what they

claim to be still common is a qualified rudimentary perception that is required to make our everyday life possible. They say that in the above illustration, no-one, believer or unbeliever, fails to apply the brakes to avoid an accident, unless one's visual organs are defective, or one is hallucinated. In other words, what we see in our basic perception is the same to all men, regardless of our different viewpoints. In this sense, the traditionalists say that the basic sense data of perception are "neither arbitrary nor subjectivistic", but common to all (Sproul et al., 1984:89).

On this basis, they claim that these instances of common ground can simply refute Van Til's contention that there is "not a square inch" of common ground between believers and unbelievers. Moreover, starting from this common ground, they argue that theism can be objectively proved. They say that "through the exercise of this common logic and reason, we come to realize the existence of the God, who validates the logical process by which we have arrived at the knowledge of Himself. So, we begin with logic because we *must*; and in the end, we come to the God who proves that we *may*" (1984:220).

Before discussing Van Til's response to the above criticism of the traditional apologists, in the next section, let us briefly discuss the contributions of some other presuppositional authors. Some apologists are categorized as presuppositionalist, even though they are not directly influenced by or close followers of Van Til. Two of them are Gordon Clark and Edward Carnell. Such a discussion should assist in clarifying Van Til's position by contrast.

3.3 Contributions by "inconsistent" presuppositional authors

3.3.1 Gordon Clark and the problem of circularity

Gordon Clark (1902-1985) is an original thinker and a proponent of presuppositional apologetics, even though Van Til considers him an "inconsistent" presuppositionalist. Clark examines all systems of thought in the history of philosophy; and he concludes that no one system has proven any conclusive truth, because each system starts from a presupposition (a first principle), which is not rationally demonstrated. He says:

"If everything is to be demonstrated, the demonstration turns out to be either circular or an infinite regress. Both are unsatisfactory. Therefore, something cannot be demonstrated. These are the first principles, which themselves are the basis or

beginning of argument; and if they are the beginning, they [could] not have been previously argued” (Clark, 1952:259).

Clark further explains that from this first principle, a system of thought (a world-view) may be deduced by following syllogistic logic. Just as in geometry, an axiom is granted as true without proof; and subsequent theories would then follow from it.

Just as the first principle is the starting point in other systems of thought, says Clark, in Christian apologetics, the existence of God and the truth of His revelation are assumed to be true as a starting point; and only from there can the apologetic argument arrive at the truth of Christianity. “Instead of beginning with [the] facts, and later discovering God, unless a thinker begins with God, he can never end with God or get the facts” (Clark, 1946:38).

Concerning this claim, critics would argue that this method of reasoning naturally calls for the charge of circular reasoning. However, Clark replies that every system is equally guilty of this charge. He says, “The non-Christian arguments regularly assume the point in dispute before they start. The questions are so framed, [so] as to exclude the Christian answer from the beginning” (Clark, 1961:27).

Up to this point, Clark appears to be faithfully following a presuppositional approach. However, Clark creates some problems for the presuppositionalist. In fact, he argues that the result of this reasoning cannot escape skepticism, since any system of thought can claim to have the same right, in terms of its first principle; and consequently, one would conclude that there is no way to prove that Christianity is the only truth.

To avoid this problem, Clark takes a step further toward the traditionalist side, and asserts that there must be a test or criterion to evaluate between the different systems of thought or their first principles. This is the test of consistency. “Still it remains true that no demonstration of God is possible; our belief is a voluntary choice; but if one must choose without any strict proof nonetheless, it is possible to have sane reasons of some sort to justify the choice. Ultimately, these reasons are reduced to the principle of consistency” (Clark, 1946:48).

At the bottom of Clark’s claim for consistency as a criterion for truth, there is his conviction that the logical laws, especially the law of non-contradiction, constitute a universal common ground; and they make it possible to choose consistency as the test for truth. Clark says that the law of non-contradiction is “the most certain of all principles” (Nash, 1968:126), and that both the believer’s and the unbeliever’s minds are so structured that they may reject any system that is

inconsistent or implies contradictions.

At this point, however, Clark makes a statement which is problematic to Van Tilian “consistent” (i.e. radical) presuppositionalists. He claims that the Scripture also needs to pass the test of logical laws to be regarded as a true system. In fact, he says that, in order to be meaningful statements, the precondition even for Scriptural statements is respecting the law of non-contradiction. For example, when the Bible says that “David was a king of Israel”, it must be excluded that “he was a president of Babylon”, or that “Abraham Lincoln was a president of Israel”.

In other words, the statement presupposes the law of non-contradiction, so that it does not mean something and the contrary thereof at the same time, and in the same respect (Lewis, 1990:110). He goes as far as to paraphrase the opening verse of the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Logic, and the Logic was with God and the Logic was God” (Clark, 1980:2).

About this contention, an immediate critique would be that Clark is exalting Aristotelian logic above the Biblical revelation. In response to this criticism, however, Clark replies that he does not mean to argue that God is subordinate to the logical laws. He says, “the law of contradiction is not to be taken as an axiom prior to or independent of God. The law of logic is God thinking”. That is, logic is the way God expresses His thoughts (Clark, 1980:3).

As one could expect, Clark’s position is criticized by both verificationists and presuppositionalists. Gordon Lewis, who follows Carnell’s “verificational approach”, argues that even if consistency or its underlying law of non-contradiction is conceded to be a universal test for truth, the sole test would not make us find one true system. It is because there could be more than one consistent system of thought. Therefore, to choose one truth-system among many consistent ones, he claims, their relevance to the empirical evidence should be another test (Lewis, 1990:119-122).

But Clark’s own philosophy rejects empirical tests, because each world-view (system of thought) has a different interpretation of the empirical facts. Further, Lewis argues that it is impossible to examine all possible systems of thought in history and in the world – in order to see which one is more relevant to the empirical facts; and this is the very weakness of empiricism. In other words, according to Lewis, Clark’s “inconsistent” presuppositionalism cannot prove that Christian theism is the only true system.

In addition, the presuppositionalist, Greg Bahnsen, points out that the problem of Clark’s

system of thought is that he obviously considers logic as an external test for revelation. This is quite obvious in his declaration that theology should not violate the norms of logic (Bahnsen, 2008:179); and any statement that does not match the law of non-contradiction “could not constitute a revelation” (Bahnsen, 2008:179). This, in fact, demonstrates that he elevates logic above God (and His revelation), even if he rejects the allegation.

Nonetheless, even if it is conceded that he does not subordinate God to logic, when he identifies logic with God and binds God to logic, he puts logic on the same level as God. It implies that logic is an ultimate substance co-existing with God, and that it limits God’s sovereignty. Furthermore, when Clark claims that “logic is God thinking”, the question is, asks Bahnsen: How does Clark know the fact, unless he is on the same level as God? If the Scripture does not assert it, then, the idea comes from his personal assumptions, from a commitment to rationalism (Bahnsen, 2008:179).

In other words, he places his rationalist commitments above God’s revelation. Along with this criticism, Bahnsen concludes that (from a Van Tilian point of view) Clark is, in fact, an “inconsistent” presuppositionalist.

3.3.2 Edward Carnell and the problem of circularity

Edward J. Carnell (1919-1967) was once a student of Van Til’s; and he embraced presuppositionalism. Later, after his studies at Boston and Harvard Universities, he is said to have compromised his presuppositionalism in a similar way to Clark (Frame, 1995b:285-291).

In his *Introduction to Christian apologetics* (1948), Carnell often makes statements that confirm his presuppositionalism. He says for example: “I have no interest in proving the existence of God (...) His existence is the *sine qua non* for all demonstration” (Carnell, 1948:159). “When one begins his philosophy apart from the assumption of the existence of a rational God one has thrown himself into a sea of objectively unrelated facts” (Carnell, 1948:123). And “the logical starting point is (...) water for Thales; for Anaximander it was air, for Plato it was the Good; and for the Christian it is the Trinity” (Carnell, 1948:124).

These expressions are in line with Van Til’s presuppositionalism. However, he adds that this starting point should neither be considered an “axiom”, as in Gordon Clark, nor an “unquestionable presupposition” as in Van Til, but a *hypothesis* that needs to be verified and confirmed.

Carnell believes that the problem of circular reasoning is unavoidable when “axioms” or “unquestionable presuppositions” are created by Clark and Van Til. In line with Carnell’s position, his student Gordon Lewis asks the following question: If presuppositionalism is to be maintained, how could one reply to the question: “Why should we follow the Bible in its entirety and the Bible alone? Why not accept other allegedly sacred writings? (...)”

To be responsible before the Bible, the unbeliever must have enough judgment to know why he should determine his lifestyle by Scripture rather than [by] the Koran or the Book of Mormon” (Lewis, 1990:204).

In order to resolve this problem of circularity, Carnell claims that the truth of Christianity needs to be tested and verified, just as a scientific hypothesis needs to be verified, in order to become a confirmed theory. However, Carnell says that the criterion of sheer logical consistency, as claimed by Clark, is insufficient as a test for truth, because even if a system of thought is perfectly consistent, it can still fail to fit the empirical experience. Therefore, he proposes as a criterion of truth “systematic consistency”, which includes both “logical non-contradiction” and “empirical adequacy”. His position can be illustrated by his most-often quoted statement.

“Bring on your revelations! Let them make peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of history; and they will [then] deserve a rational man’s assent” (Carnell, 1948:178).

In evaluation, it is obvious, according to Bahnsen, that Carnell compromises presuppositionalism and puts reason (hence, the human self) and empirical facts prior to his biblical presuppositions. Firstly, his assumption of the autonomy of reason is displayed in his endorsement of Warfield’s dictum that “a right faith is always a reasonable faith”. Carnell himself states that “a normal person does not submit his life to an authority until, guided by reason, he is fully assured in his mind that the authority in question is trustworthy” (Carnell, 1948:73).

In other words, in his apologetic, Carnell prioritizes reason over God’s revelation (Bahnsen, 2008:205-206).

Secondly, Bahnsen argues, that to propose his test of empirical adequacy Carnell must assume that facts are brute (that is, un-interpreted) and our knowledge can be verified by brute facts. However, for a consistent (radical) presuppositionalist, says Bahnsen, every fact of the universe and history is *pre*-interpreted by the sovereign Creator, and in order to understand it correctly, the

biblical revelation should be presupposed (Bahnsen, 2008:227).

In addition, Bahnsen argues that if empirical adequacy is the test, the standard of truth becomes probability, as is shown in Butler's case. Historical fact does not give us theoretical certainty and necessity; but it gives us only a greater probability at best. In fact, Carnell also acknowledges this point and says that "Christianity is founded on historical facts which, by their very nature, cannot be demonstrated with geometric certainty" (Carnell, 1948:113). Yet, he further claims, in Butler's fashion, that it is satisfactory that apologetic arguments should be assessed with the standard of probability. "If the scientist cannot rise above rational probability in his empirical investigations, why should the Christian claim more?" (Carnell, 1948:114).

According to Bahnsen, however, this weakness can only be overcome by presupposing God's interpretation revealed in the Scriptures, as being absolutely certain.

In summary, Clark and Carnell attempt to solve the problem of circular reasoning by proposing the test of logical consistency and empirical adequacy. However, from a Van Tilian point-of-view, logical consistency cannot work as a test to identify the one true system of thought, because more than one system can be consistent. And the test of empirical adequacy only proves probability. Above all, Clark and Carnell assume that the logical laws and empirical facts can be neutral criteria, rather than being prejudiced by our presuppositions. These are some of the reasons why they are regarded as "inconsistent" presuppositionalists.

3.3.3 Van Til's "radical" approach: challenging inconsistent presuppositionalism

In contrast to inconsistent presuppositionalism, Van Til insists that reformed apologetics must consistently apply the Christian presuppositions in every area of thought – without allowing any neutral standard. For him, reasoning is not neutral; but it must start by presupposing God. The facts of history and of experience are not brute (un-interpreted) facts, but are *pre*-interpreted by God.

Van Til is well aware that his method is regarded by some as "the clearest evidence of authoritarianism" (Van Til, 1967:100) afflicted by the fallacy of circular reasoning. However, instead of withdrawing from his position, Van Til responds that unbelievers themselves cannot avoid starting from their own presuppositions. Rather, "*every* method, the supposedly neutral one no less than any other, presupposes either the truth or the falsity of Christian theism". He goes on to say:

“To admit one’s own presuppositions and to point out the presuppositions of others is therefore to maintain that all reasoning is, in the nature of the case, *circular reasoning*. The starting point, the method and the conclusion are always involved with one another” (Van Til, 1967:101).

Therefore, according to Van Til, Roman Catholic or Arminian apologists (as well as inconsistent presuppositionalists) tone down their Christian position and introduce the neutrality of reason and brute facts to gain the unbeliever’s agreement. However, they do not enter into neutral ground, but they are embedded in the unbeliever’s biased position and acknowledge “the essential correctness of a non-Christian and non-theistic conception of reality” (Van Til, 1967:101). This betrays Christian truth and gives God’s sovereignty over to human autonomy. To prevent this mistake, Van Til claims that presuppositionalism must be consistently maintained in every area and every moment of the process of apologetic argumentation.

One aspect of his consistent application of Christian presuppositions is well reflected in his definition of the “objectively valid” truth (Van Til, 1967:104). Van Til anticipates the objection that, according to consistent presuppositionalism, there is no objectively valid truth on which both believers and unbelievers can agree. Against this critique, Van Til introduces an unusual notion of “objectivity”. He says that, in fact, there is “objectively valid” truth. However, it does not lie in the agreement between believers and unbelievers. Rather, the objective truth is what is revealed in the Scriptures. Whatever the Bible says is true is *objective* truth, whether unbelievers agree with the scriptures or not.

In reply, however, critics would argue that it is in fact *subjective* truth shared only between believers. To this objection, Van Til replies that, according to the Christian position, the problem lies on the unbeliever’s side. According to the Scriptures (Romans 1:19-20), unbelievers are blind to the truth, or they suppress it because of their sinful nature. Therefore, what is true and objective is what is revealed in the Bible. This is the Christian position that presuppositionalists have to maintain. If they seek the non-Christian’s agreement to find objective truth, they are giving up their presuppositions, and they set a higher criterion above the biblical revelation. According to Van Til, “there is confusion between what is objectively valid and what is subjectively acceptable to the natural man” (Van Til, 1967:104). He says, “it is precisely the Reformed faith which, among other things, teaches the total depravity of the natural man, which is most loathsome to that natural man. But this does not prove that the Reformed faith is not

true” (Van Til, 1967:104).

While this claim must sound like a most authoritarian and dogmatic statement to the unbeliever, Van Til maintains that this is consistent with reformed presuppositionalism. He often reinforces this point by using an illustration of the relationship between a patient and his doctor (Van Til, 1967:94,104). When a patient suffers from a paranoid delusion, and a doctor knows what true reality is, the doctor never fears that his view of reality is in disagreement with that of the patient. The doctor never enters into his (patient’s) deluded reality to be on common ground. Likewise, Van Til claims that Roman Catholic and Arminian apologists (as well as inconsistent presuppositionalists) are like unwise doctors taking the unbeliever’s (patient’s) position as common ground.

By contrast, the reformed (presuppositional) apologists are the prudent doctor who tells the truth that the revelation in the Scriptures is objective truth, however loathsome it may sound to the unbeliever.

For a brief evaluation, however, even if this position maintains presuppositionalism in a consistent way and shows the good intention to lift up God’s sovereignty in the area of theoretical thought, it is obvious that it causes the problems of circular reasoning and communication breakdown.

3.4 Van Til’s “moderate” version of presuppositional apologetics

3.4.1 The problem with radical presuppositionalism

As a consequence of the absolute antithesis claim, many would argue that the problem of circularity becomes burdensome and the possibility of a dialogue with the unbeliever becomes problematic. There seems no way to communicate and persuade unbelievers in apologetic discussions. However, this seems to contradict our common experience, as genuine communication and substantial understanding do take place between believers and unbelievers. Furthermore, many or most scientific truths are discovered by unbelievers, in spite of Van Til’s claim that they are blind to the truth and cannot interpret reality correctly.

With regard to these problems, as a matter of fact, there is another side of Van Til’s system of thought in which he admits the existence of some common ground (and contradicts his previously elaborated radical position). In this section, we will examine whether the “moderate”

version of his doctrine of antithesis and common ground can be harmonized with his radical position, and whether it can solve the problem of circular reasoning without weakening his antithesis motif excessively.

3.4.2 Van Til's ambivalent view of antithesis and common ground

In synthesis, I believe that Van Til's thought is more complicated than that which may be deduced from his doctrine of "absolute" antithesis. In the system of Van Til's thought, two incompatible elements exist in tension. Theologically speaking, it is the tension between the themes of antithesis and "common grace". They are in tension at least in the sense that one limits the other. In terms of their antithetic relationship, on the one hand, it is true that Van Til's presuppositionalism emphasizes the idea of absolute antithesis between believers and unbelievers. When he relies on this motif, he claims that "unbelievers are blind" and "unable to know any truth". This side of his thought has naturally led many to affirm that Van Til's presuppositionalism is simply impossible or ends up in absurdity.

In fact, this motif obviously contradicts our common experience, in which scientific truths and valuable insights for life are available to or even discovered by unbelievers.

However, on the other hand, to understand Van Til's system of thought as a whole, it should be considered that the motif of "common grace" constitutes an essential element of his system of thought. The doctrine of common grace teaches that God restrains the effects of sin and that unbelievers can know certain truths and do some good in spite of the effects of sin. In fact, Van Til often lays claims that seem to contradict his extreme antithetical position. He states, for example, that "we are well aware of the fact that non-Christians have a great deal of knowledge about this world, which is true as far as it goes. That is, there is a sense in which we can and must allow for the value of knowledge of non-Christians" (Van Til, 1974:26).

In another place, in response to the allegation that he would deny the unbeliever's ability to know any truth, he says emphatically that "we mean nothing so absurd as that". Rather, he says that since the unbeliever cannot always consistently maintain his own presuppositions, there are cases where s/he can accept or borrow Christian truths (Van Til, 1974:103). In yet another place, he mentions that "[the unbelievers] 'knew' the truth intellectually – as fully as did the children of God" (Van Til, 1967:46).

These statements apparently contradict the extreme antithetical motif, in which he denies any

common ground with the unbeliever. Faced with this inconsistency, Van Til admits the problem and concedes that this fact “has always been a difficult point” for him; and he says that “we cannot give any wholly satisfactory answer to the situation [of the unbeliever's knowledge], as it actually obtains” (Van Til, 1974:27). And he continues:

“The actual situation is, therefore, always a mixture of truth with error. Being ‘without God in the world’ the natural man yet knows God, and in spite of himself, to some extent recognizes God” (Van Til, 1974:27).

Unlike his typical claims supporting the absolute version of antithesis, these statements show his ambivalent attitude toward the issue of the unbeliever’s knowledge. In fact, Van Til tries to alleviate the tension and takes pains to find a way to reconcile the two motifs of antithesis and common grace by using various concepts, illustrations and images throughout his writings.

Judging from this side of Van Til’s writings, it seems that the critic’s understanding of Van Til’s presuppositionalism is oversimplified; or at least it does not represent Van Til’s thought in its entirety. In this situation, John Frame’s analysis and evaluation of Van Til’s thought on this specific issue helps us to have a more balanced assessment of Van Til’s apologetics. After collecting and analysing scattered statements in Van Til’s writings, Frame places into five different categories Van Til’s formulations of the relationship between antithesis and common ground.

He concludes that Van Til’s system of thought should be understood as holding to both antithesis and common ground at the same time (though in an inconsistent or sometimes confusing manner). Therefore, Frame argues that the critics’ one-sided appraisal of Van Til’s doctrine of antithesis is misplaced – due to their superficial reading and consequential misunderstanding (Frame, 1995b:210).

In the following sections, I will introduce Frame’s analysis of Van Til’s thought on antithesis and common grace (hence, common ground), accompanied by my own evaluation; and then I will discuss Frame’s criticism of Van Til’s inconsistencies. In addition to our endeavour to identify Van Til’s true position, our final purpose is to see whether his common ground, if any, can function as a neutral (epistemic) foundation on which an objective proof can be established, as traditionalists would like to claim.

3.4.3 Frame's analysis of Van Til's extreme antithetical formulation

First of all, Frame finds that Van Til does not give a systematic account of the relationship between antithesis and common grace. Rather, Van Til tends to give various accounts to suit the occasion. He is acutely aware of the dialectical tension between antithesis and common grace; and, says Frame, his extemporary descriptions make his accounts “not altogether consistent with one another; and some of them can be rejected on other grounds” (Frame, 1995a:86). Aware of this situation, Frame still claims that Van Til's scattered writings on antithesis and common grace can be categorized into five distinctive formulations.

Even in the first “extreme antithesis” formulation, which is the most well-known, it should be noticed that Van Til makes a distinction between “metaphysical” and “ethical-epistemological” (i.e. interpretive) “situations”. He grants the existence of absolute antithesis only in the ethical-epistemological sense, while the metaphysical situation remains the same for both the believer and the unbeliever.

Although Van Til does not define them specifically, by “metaphysical” situation he roughly means an “ontological” situation (Frame, 1995b:52), related to our given (created) world and natural faculties, such as reason and senses. By “ethical-epistemological” situation, he means the situation of our interpretation governed by religious presuppositions. These situations are sometimes expressed in his distinction between “form and content” or “mind (intellect) and heart”.

When Van Til is typically quoted as saying that the unbelievers “do not know truth at all”, as “they are blind” and “with jaundiced eyes” (Van Til, 1972:94-95), he is referring only to the ethical (interpretive) situation governed by religious presuppositions. Thus, he is, in fact, saying that while the unbeliever's interpretation is always false, his metaphysical (formal) knowledge remains immune from the effects of sin. For instance, in response to Ridderbos' question of whether the non-Christian can contribute to the progress of science, Van Til says,

“In reply it may be said that only if sin and salvation be thought of along metaphysical rather than along ethical lines, is it [then] possible that such questions can arise. [However, since] sin is seen to be ethical alienation only, and salvation as ethical restoration only, then the question of weighing and measuring or that of logical reasoning is of course equal on both sides. All men, whatever their ethical relation to God, can equally use the natural gifts of God. How could men abuse the gift of God if they could not even use it?” (Van Til, 1967:171).

Here, he is asserting that since sin and salvation do not make a difference in the “metaphysical” situation, but only in the “ethical-interpretative” situation, after the fall the natural faculties (metaphysical situation), such as the capacity of “weighing and measuring” and “logical reasoning” of the unbeliever are still preserved and operate like those of the believer. Therefore, he says, “as far as natural ability is concerned, the lost can and do know the truth; and [they] could contribute to the structure of science” (Van Til, 1967:171, cf. Van Til, 1974:254). This is quite contrary to his previously introduced motif of absolute antithesis.

In his often-employed buzz-saw illustration, he makes the same point by saying that while the saw functions most efficiently; the problem is that the direction is “set slanted” (Van Til, 1967:74). In other words, while the unbeliever’s metaphysical faculties function normally; his interpretive (ethical) activities are always wrong in “direction”.

Further, with regard to logic and reason, says Frame, Van Til does not take issue with the unbeliever’s metaphysical capacity. That is, Van Til admits that believer and unbeliever agree that they both obey the same logical laws. He says, “I do not maintain that Christians operate, according to new laws of thought, any more than that they have new eyes or noses” (Van Til, 1955:296). However, Van Til takes issue with the *use* of logic and reason, which belong to the “ethical” realm. The unbeliever always employs them to deny the truth of Christianity and assumes that reason is autonomous and “operates independently of God” (Van Til, 1974:37).

Thus, Van Til’s claim is that there is an absolute antithesis in this ethical dimension of logic and reason (Frame, 1995b:151-155).

In the same vein, there are statements indicating that the formal knowledge of the unbeliever is preserved, while its content is absolutely opposed to that of the believer. In his criticism of C. S. Lewis, he explains that Lewis “confuses things metaphysical and ethical”. Thus, when he indicates “the *Tao*” as general objectivity, says Van Til, “surely this general objectivity is common to Christians and non-Christians”, but it is “in a formal sense only” (Van Til, 1967:59).

Likewise, he says again in his buzz-saw illustration that “the unbeliever may formally understand the truth of Christianity” (Van Til, 1967:74), while s/he has a different interpretation of its content. Regarding theistic proofs, he says that as a gift of God’s restraining grace, the non-Christian “will give a formal assent to the intellectual argument for the existence of God” (Van Til, 1974:198), but the Christian should not believe that he has any “correct notions as to content,

not merely as form” (Van Til, 1969:296).

In summary, in his “extreme antithetical” formulation, Van Til’s claim is that what is antithetical is limited to the “ethical-epistemological” dimension, while with regard to the metaphysical (formal) dimension, he assumes commonality between the believer and the unbeliever.

3.4.3 Frame’s analysis of Van Til’s normative formulation

In the second or “normative” formulation, Van Til is often found to explain that antithesis is a matter of principle or a degree of allegiance. He says that extreme antithesis is possible only in so far as believers and unbelievers can maintain their principles consistently in all cases. He says that “*insofar as* men are aware of their basic alliances, they are wholly for or wholly against God at every point of interest to man” (Van Til, 1974:29). Therefore, only “*to the extent* that [the unbeliever] interprets nature [consistently], according to his adopted principles, s/he does not speak the truth on any subject” (Van Til, 1974:113). However, in actuality, since “the Christian has the incubus of his ‘old man’ weighing him down”, and “the natural man has the incubus of the sense of deity weighing him down”, they cannot either of them consistently follow their principles (Van Til, 1974:26).

Thus, the unbelievers can sometimes speak Christian truth, in spite of themselves. In this context, Van Til denies the idea that the unbelievers cannot have true knowledge: “We mean nothing so absurd as that. The implication of the method here advocated is simply that non-Christians are never able; and therefore, they never do employ their own methods consistently” (Van Til, 1974:103). This implies that as long as their principle is not compromised, Van Til grants that the unbelievers can have true knowledge.

In a similar vein, there are places where Van Til explains in a figurative way that, when the unbeliever has true knowledge, it is his/her “borrowed capital” from the Christian principle. He says, “if the unbeliever then points to the fact that non-Christian scientists and philosophers have discovered many actual ‘states of affairs,’ I heartily agree with this; but I must tell him that they have done so with borrowed capital. They have done so *adventitiously*” (Van Til, 1980:91).

In this formulation, it can be said that common grace may work to weaken the unbeliever’s power to stick to his/her principle. The difference of this formulation from the first formulation is that if the unbeliever is at the point where s/he does not stick to his/her principle, s/he can have

both metaphysical and ethical-epistemological truth. Therefore, the formulation opens more possibilities for common ground between believers and unbelievers.

3.4.4 Frame's analysis of Van Til's situational, existential and practical formulations

In the third "situational" formulation, Van Til often points out the fact that, due to common grace, the unbelievers still remain "situated" in the same world created by God; and they keep being exposed to the natural revelation. Thus, in the midst of their efforts to suppress the revelation (Romans 1:19-20), they sometimes succumb to the truth of revelation, and agree with Christian truth, in spite of themselves. For this formulation, Van Til often uses the illustration that the unbeliever is like a child slapping her father's face, while simultaneously being supported by her father's lap (Van Til, 1980:98).

This formulation acknowledges the possibility that unbelievers can have true knowledge, since they cannot resist the natural revelation consistently and in all the cases.

In the fourth, "existential" formulation, Van Til often distinguishes between mind (intellect) and heart. He says that the effect of sin is limited to the heart, while the human intellect (mind) is preserved intact by common grace. He says,

"The question of knowledge is an ethical question at the root. It is indeed possible to have theoretically correct knowledge about God without loving God. The devil illustrates this point. Yet what is meant by knowing God in Scripture is knowing and loving God: this is true knowledge of God: the other is false" (Van Til, 1967:17).

Here, though Van Til's intention is to explain that theoretical (intellectual) knowledge is not true knowledge of God in its fullest sense, nevertheless, his statements imply that the unbeliever can have intellectually correct knowledge, just as the devil can have. Furthermore, in other instances, Van Til also argues that unbelievers can give intellectual assent to Christian truths, although they need not consistently act accordingly: "We may hold that [the children of Cain] 'knew' the truth intellectually, as fully as did the children of God" (Van Til, 1974:78). These statements, then, imply that in spite of the religious antithesis, the unbeliever can have true intellectual knowledge.

In the final, "practical" formulation, Frame says from his experience of studying under Van Til, that he was not insisting on the extreme antithesis in practical apologetic situations, and did not ever claim that the unbeliever would disagree with the believer on every proposition. Rather, Van Til said that "the actual situation is, therefore, always a mixture of truth with error" (Van Til,

1974:27). Accordingly, Frame advises that if Van Til's presuppositional apologetics is to be rightly applied, one should not expect the unbeliever's response to be always predictably antithetical. "Indeed, it would, I believe, be very wrong for us to go into apologetic encounters taking these statements literally, and acting on the basis of [an absolute antithesis]" (Frame, 1995b:210).

Therefore, Frame says that we can try to use theistic arguments and present theistic evidences in a similar way that the traditional apologists practise, since it is still possible that the unbelievers unexpectedly accept the Christian truth – in spite of their principle.

3.4.5 Evaluation of Van Til's moderate presuppositionalism

Now, from this analysis of Van Til's understanding of antithesis and common grace (hence, common ground), firstly, it is quite evident that the typically known extreme version of antithesis does not represent Van Til's thought in its entirety. Often the criticism by the traditional apologists is not based on an adequate reading of Van Til's writings. In this connection, Frame concludes that "putting together what we have learned, I would suggest that the extreme antithetical formulations, with which his thought is most commonly identified and for which it is most commonly criticized, do not represent him at his best or at his most typical" (Frame, 1995b: 210).

Secondly, the net result of this analysis is that Van Til acknowledges the existence of common ground, due to the fact that, firstly, the metaphysical situation remains immune from the effects of sin; secondly, the unbelievers cannot keep their principle consistently; thirdly, God provides his natural revelation to all; fourthly, the mind (intellect) remains intact, while the heart is the area affected by sin; and finally, as a result, Van Til himself in practice admits to the possibility of agreement between believers and unbelievers.

With regard to these results, now, a few questions arise. Firstly, how could Van Til hold the two seemingly contradictory positions in his system of thought at the same time? In his criticism of other apologetic approaches, he measures them by the scale of "absolute" antithesis, while in the analysis of his own thought; he then compromises the absolute antithesis, by admitting the existence of some common ground. Then, between these two faces of Van Til's approach, one could ask: which one constitutes Van Til's real position?

Secondly, if it is true at all that he admits the existence of common ground, what could the real

difference be between his presuppositional apologetics and the traditional and “inconsistent” presuppositional apologetics that he criticizes?

Concerning the first question, Frame claims that the moderate view is more suited to fit our experience. However, in fact, Van Til often appears to oscillate between the radical and the moderate versions of his doctrine of antithesis and common ground. Especially in his criticism of other apologetic systems, in most cases he approaches and judges them according to his absolute antithetical motif. For this attitude, Frame offers two possible reasons. Firstly, Frame refers to the circumstantial situations that caused Van Til to be overwhelmed by the idea of absolute antithesis.

During the time of his separation from Old Princeton Seminary and the establishment of a new institution, says Frame, Van Til saw himself as the heir of Kuyper and Machen. He “felt responsible to maintain an antithetical mentality in the Machen movement, and to promote it throughout the larger church; and his great concern was that the sense of opposition to unbelief might lose its sharpness” (Frame, 1995b:211). Because of this circumstantial influence, Frame says that Van Til strategically advocated the extreme antithetical position in his criticism of rival (or compromised) apologetic approaches. This naturally made his critics see only one side of his position.

Secondly, Frame says that due to this absolute antithetical mentality, Van Til has “a tendency to confuse issues of piety (what is my deepest loyalty, my commitment?) with issues of method” (Frame, 1994:87). For example, in his attack on the compromised apologetic methods of Roman Catholics and Arminians, he says in a militant language that “in the all-out war between the Christian and the natural man, as he appears in modern garb, it is only the atomic energy of a truly Reformed methodology that would be able explode the last Festung [fortress]” (Van Til, 1967:105).

This militant attitude, says Frame, causes Van Til to commit a “genetic fallacy” in his critique of compromised or inconsistent apologetic approaches. Thus, once he recognizes that an approach has watered-down the doctrine of antithesis, he quickly judges that the whole argument based on it is false, including even arithmetic and logical propositions. For example, in his criticism of Aquinas’s classical approach, which assumes Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophy as being compatible with Christianity, Van Til says, “it is this uncritical assumption that vitiates the *entire* argument for the existence of God that he offers; and in fact, it vitiates his

approach to *every* other problem in philosophy and theology” (Van Til, 1969:173. my italics).

Against this wholesale criticism, Frame argues that in spite of Aquinas’ presuppositions, certain arguments and insights in his thought should be recognized as valid. Insofar as it is admitted that common grace allows unbelievers to discover truths and valuable insights, there is no reason to deny that there are some true insights and arguments in Aquinas’ thought, even if he borrows some ideas from Plato and Aristotle. As a result, Frame concludes that this militant attitude and its consequent “genetic fallacy” contribute to give his critics the impression that Van Til’s presuppositional apologetics stands only on the doctrine of absolute antithesis, and that it results in absurdity.

Another important question that was earlier raised is: If Van Til acknowledges the existence of metaphysical (ontological) common ground, then, what is the real difference between Van Til’s presuppositional approach and the traditional or inconsistent propositional apologetics? After all, all of them acknowledge the existence of common ground. From my understanding, however, there is a crucial difference; and it lies in their different understanding of the *function* of common ground.

Traditional apologists consider the ontological common ground to function as an epistemically neutral criterion. Thus, once the existence of common ground is endorsed, they claim that objective theistic arguments can be established on it. The so-called inconsistent presuppositional apologists also claim that the common ground (such as the law of non-contradiction and basic empirical data) can function as an epistemically neutral test, i.e., a criterion to verify the truth of apologetic arguments. Thus, objective theism can be established and verified on the basis of the common ground.

However, I would claim that if Van Til acknowledges the existence of common ground at all, such common ground is not meant to function as epistemically neutral criterion. Rather, it constitutes a common transcendental condition, which makes possible and gives legitimate boundaries to argumentation and interpretation. In agreement, Frame says that Van Til too would have no reason to deny the law of non-contradiction, as a common (transcendental) criterion for argumentation. Yet, the difference from the traditionalist’s claim lies in the question of *what does it achieve in the actual argument?* Frame (1985:287) says that the law “is, of course, also highly abstract. Nothing more concrete can be derived from the law of non-contradiction alone”.

I believe what he means here is that the law does not function as an epistemic criterion.

Suppose that an argument passes the test of the law of non-contradiction, or logical laws in general. Would this make the argument true? Rather, there could be many arguments that pass the test; but they are still not true. This can be clarified by the example of a simplified version of a design argument.

P1: If there is design in the universe, there is a Designer.

P2: There is design in the universe.

Conclusion: Therefore, there is a Designer of the universe.

In this syllogism, since the argument strictly follows a logical law, it is a logically valid argument. With regard to this logical validity, I believe that both believers and unbelievers unavoidably agree because our rational (logical) faculties function in the same way. In other words, at this stage, the logical laws as common ground can function as a criterion to discern between legitimate arguments and arbitrary or illogical arguments. However, this argument is still not a “sound and convincing” argument to all, because one of its premises (i.e., “there is design in the universe”) cannot be universally accepted. The truth of this premise is determined by one’s religious presuppositions, which cannot be reasoned into consensus, as is discussed in Chapter 2.

In other words, this shows us that in addition to logical laws as a criterion, a concrete issue always requires certain decisions based on religious presuppositions. In this context, the function of logical laws as common ground is limited to providing the transcendental condition for the possibility of legitimate and rational argumentation; but it does not function as a neutral epistemic criterion to determine the truth of a concrete argument.

This observation can be applied to empirical evidence, too. As the Ligonier authors illustrated, Van Til would not deny that both believers and unbelievers have the same perception data from the same experience, such as “a truck is speeding toward the intersection”. However, the data cannot be interpreted in the same way because of the different presuppositions underlying them. For example, unbelievers might interpret the event as cosmic chance, whereas believers would interpret it as being a part of God’s plan. Likewise, Van Til would acknowledge that the historical and archeological facts, e.g., the empty tomb, are a common fact: both to believers and unbelievers alike. However, in contrast to the traditionalist’s claim that the empirical facts must

be interpreted as the objective evidence that “Jesus is the Son of God”, Van Til would claim that it does not lead to that conclusion, because of different presuppositions. For example, some would claim that “perhaps his body was stolen”; “maybe Jesus was a freak accident in a chance universe”; and “the only mere man to come back to life” (Anderson, 2004).

That is, even if certain basic historical facts are accepted as common ground, Van Til would claim that they do not lead to objective and shared conclusions.

In summary, even if it is admitted that Van Til endorses the existence of common ground, his difference from the traditionalists is that the common ground does not function as an epistemically neutral criterion, or lead to an objective conclusion on any concrete issue, contrary to what the evidentialists want to claim.

As a conclusion of this section, we have seen that, to avoid stereotyping Van Til’s position, a more balanced understanding of his approach is needed. In fact, he has provided a modified (more moderate) view of antithesis; and he admits the existence of metaphysical (ontological) common ground. Moreover, I explained that Van Til’s common ground has a different function from that which the traditionalist would expect.

Now, after our interpretation of Van Til’s doctrine of common ground and its function, let us turn to examine Kuyper’s and Dooyeweerd’s views on the issue of antithesis and common ground. In fact, it is well known that on this issue there has been considerable conflict, especially between Dooyeweerd and Van Til.

3.5 The problem of common ground in Kuyperian circles

3.5.1 The conflict between Kuyper (and Dooyeweerd) and Van Til on common ground

While the idea of antithesis has existed since the early church, it is from the time of Abraham Kuyper that the idea has deepened and become radicalized. In addition, it was applied not only to the area of spirituality, but also to the area of theoretical (scientific) thought. Among some who built their system of thought on the basis of Kuyper’s radicalized antithesis, are Dooyeweerd and Van Til. Dooyeweerd developed his “philosophy of the cosmonomic idea”; and Van Til developed his presuppositional apologetic approach. A common phenomenon can be noticed: all three scholars had to take pains to resolve the tension between antithesis and common ground. Among them, both Kuyper and Dooyeweerd explicitly advocate the existence and necessity of

(ontological) common ground, and of a common state of affairs (along with their acceptance of radical antithesis), while Van Til is in conflict with them. In his criticism, to our confusion and contrary to his “moderate” presuppositionalism, Van Til sticks to his radical position and complains that Kuyper and Dooyeweerd are inconsistent and compromising.

Just as he typically criticizes other apologetic approaches, he complains that they give up the absolutely antithetical position. My evaluation, however, is that Van Til’s criticism is again misplaced, and that it contradicts the moderate version of his approach.

In examining their conflict on the issue of common ground, I will have a double focus. Firstly, I will try to explicate what is going on in their debates, so that their views on common ground can be clarified further. Secondly, if the existence of common ground is acknowledged, as Kuyper and Dooyeweerd propose, I will ask what the implications would be for establishing a proper apologetic approach.

3.5.2 Abraham Kuyper on antithesis

In his book, *Principles of sacred theology* (1954), Kuyper lays out his comprehensive view of the nature of science, while his underlying purpose is to show that theology is related to all other sciences, and that it has an indispensable role to play in formulating human knowledge as a whole. For this purpose, he lays out the fact that at the foundation of every science lies faith. Here, by faith, Kuyper does not mean “the faith in Christ Jesus” or “faith in God”, but “that function of the soul, by which it obtains certainty directly and immediately, without the aid of discursive demonstration” (Kuyper, 1954:128-129).

In his examination, he tries to show that our knowledge does not come from scientific investigation alone, but that there is another source of confidence, that is, confidence coming from faith. To prove this, he argues that both rationalism and empiricism, in fact, start from faith. He explains that in our scientific investigations, in order to have certainty on any theory, certain axioms and principles are presupposed as the precondition. These are “not fixed by demonstration, but only and alone by faith” (Kuyper, 1954:137).

Also, in our sense perception, in order to be certain of our sense data, our confidence that our senses function properly is presupposed; and this confidence again does not come by demonstration, but only by faith. Further, Kuyper argues that in our scientific investigations to discover the hidden laws in nature, what is presupposed is that there is a universal pattern in

nature to be found; and this presupposition too comes from faith (Kuyper, 1954:137-138).

After explaining that faith plays an essential role in scientific investigations, Kuyper claims that the recognition of the faith element in scientific activities is a crucial clue in resolving the “unavoidable scientific conflict” (Kuyper, 2008:116). Faith is crucial – not in the sense that it can provide a demonstrative proof to solve the conflict - but in the sense that it will identify what the real problem in the conflict is. That is, our different faith commitments are at the bottom of our scientific conflicts.

For Kuyper, when the faith element is traced to its ultimate level, it is divided into two antithetical faiths, that is, faith in the God of the Bible, and faith in apostate gods. Out of these faiths, Kuyper says there come “two kinds of people”; and they in turn, give birth to “two kinds of science” (Kuyper, 1954:150-155). By two kinds of science, he does not mean that they employ different methods of scientific investigation. Rather, he means that they interpret the same data in completely different ways. For example, with regard to the status of the cosmos, one type of science assumes that the cosmos is in a “normal” condition (hence, “normalist” science); and it “moves by means of an eternal evolution from its potencies to its ideal”.

The other type assumes that the cosmos is in an “abnormal” condition (hence, “abnormalist” science), since “a *disturbance* has taken place in the past, and only *regenerating* power can warrant it the final attainment of its goal” (Kuyper, 2008:132).

Further, Kuyper says that the differences between the two types of science are non-rational in nature, so that settlement by rational argument is not possible. He says, “Because they themselves are differently constituted, they see a corresponding difference in the constitution of all things. They are not at work, therefore, on different parts of the same house, but each builds a house of his own” (Kuyper, 1954:155). He goes on to say:

“If, as we remarked, palingenesis [being born again] occasions one group of men to exist differently from the other, every effort to understand each other [would] be futile on those points of the investigation in which this difference comes into play; and it [would] be impossible to settle the difference of insight” (Kuyper, 1954:160).

Now, after introducing the faith factor and the “two kinds of science” (1954:150-156), Kuyper proceeds to ask his readers to consider the possible problem created by his radical antithetical claim (1954:157ff). If the difference is so radical that settlement between the different parties is

not possible by rational argument, there must be a communication breakdown. However, our common experience is contrary to this consequence. In fact, substantial understanding has been taking place between scholarly parties with opposite faith commitments.

In order to explain this situation, Kuyper says that the notion of common ground is inevitable. In spite of the radical antithesis, there is a certain common area, where our different faith commitments do not make any difference. He says that meaningful communication should be possible, “because there is a very broad realm of investigation in which the difference between the two groups exerts *no* influence” (Kuyper, 1954:157). He then specifies what belongs to the “common realm” in each stage of scientific investigation.

3.5.3 Abraham Kuyper on common ground

Because this issue is the specific concern of this study, we need to examine it more closely by defining the common realm and its significance, as Kuyper describes them. Firstly, he says that the “elementary (or exact) natural science” based on our observation “has nothing to do with the radical differences, which separate the two groups” (Kuyper, 1954:157). This is due to the fact that sin does not change our senses. Thus, the “empiric knowledge”⁴⁵ obtained through the senses is the same for all; and even if we are prone to make mistakes, “those mistakes can be to a large extent overcome by cross-verification” (Kuyper, 1954:157, 107).

For example, he says that “the entire domain of the more primary observation, which limits itself to weights, measures and numbers, is common to both” (Kuyper, 1954:158). He also claims that concerning “the observation in the laboratory” or concerning “the empiric knowledge of the farmer” or of the “naturalist”, the difference between the “view and the starting-point (...) does not enforce itself” (Kuyper, 1954:158).

Secondly, not only in natural science, but also in the lower parts of “spiritual” sciences (i.e., the humanities), Kuyper says, the common ground presents itself. In fact, he says that the human sciences consist of both “psychic” and “somatic” elements; and the latter elements are common to all scholars. The same holds for empiric or material facts. For example, he says, in the case of history, before the significance of historical events is evaluated, the empiric facts, and the

⁴⁵ Kuyper intentionally employs the term “empiric” instead of “empirical” to indicate that the former term is not factually affected by subjective construction in the process of perception, whereas the latter term connotes our subjective involvement.

documents related to them can be objectively observed and studied.

In the study of language, before the meaning of words is examined, the information of the empiric sound and form observed by ear and eye can be common to all. Even in psychology, says Kuyper, there is a physiological side, which needs to be examined in an empiric way. This material side of all human sciences, he says, is common to all; and it is not “dominated by the influence of what is individual in the investigating subject” (Kuyper, 1954:159).

Thirdly, Kuyper says that in the realm of thought, logical laws (and directly inferred arguments) are common to all. He says that “the formal process of thought has not been attacked by sin; and for this reason palingenesis [being born again spiritually] works no change in this mental task”. He adds: “there is but one logic, and not two” (Kuyper, 1954:159).

After proposing these three areas of common ground, Kuyper says that in these common areas, meaningful scientific communication can take place without conflict, regardless of different faith commitments. For example, when a discussion is limited to arithmetical propositions and their solutions, both believing and unbelieving arithmeticians can critically communicate and co-operate with each other in a meaningful way, because their discussion can be verified by the basic arithmetic rules that are common to both.

However, discussion beyond these areas will eventually suffer from communication breakdown, because faith commitment governs the issues in that area; and this, therefore, cannot be resolved by rational arguments. Further, he explains how one should cope with the situation when a discussion arrives at the intersection where a communication breakdown takes place. He says (though not in a very clear way):

“For though it is well-known beforehand that even at this point of intersection no agreement can be reached; (...) yet at this point of intersection, it can be explained to each other what it is that compels us, from this point of intersection, to draw our line as we do. If we neglect to do this, pride and self-conceit will come into play, and our only concession to our scientific opponent will be the mockery of a laugh. Because he does not walk in our footsteps, we dispute not only the accuracy of his results, but also formally deny the scientific character of his work. And this is not right” (Kuyper, 1954:160-161).

Here, the point that Kuyper tries to make is that in a situation where agreement is no longer possible, one could quickly throw away the opponent’s whole argument and respond with “the mockery of a laugh” (e.g., think of the Roman Catholic judgment of Galileo’s heliocentric

theory). However, “this is not right”. Even though the opponent has a different view on the issue concerned, his/her argument needs to be respected for the part where its scientific character is maintained, that is, where his/her thesis can be verified by common ground (facts or rules). This explanation also implies that, regardless of faith differences, critical discussion can take place in the area of common ground.

One more thing needs to be noticed: Kuyper’s common ground does not function as epistemic foundation, as evidentialists would prefer. The latter would claim that since there is an area that is common to all, theism can be objectively established on that basis. However, although Kuyper does not explicitly say so, I would infer that his common ground constitutes only an ontic condition, so that it gives limitations or boundaries to the acceptability of arguments. For example, the law of non-contradiction is not so much an epistemically neutral criterion, but a border to prevent arguments from be(com)ing meaningless.

No concrete issue can be resolved by this law alone. In this sense, Kuyper says, “nothing [would] be accomplished by this [common ground], beyond the confession of the reason why one refuses to follow the tendency of the other” (Kuyper, 1954:161).

In summary, even if Kuyper’s main contribution is to deepen and radicalize the antithesis by identifying the faith element in scientific (theoretical) thought, at the same time he is promoting the existence of a common ground on which “the [faith] difference exerts *no* influence”, and which functions as an ontic condition.

3.5.4 Van Til’s criticism of Kuyper’s conception of common ground

In his book, *Common grace and the gospel*, Van Til discusses the same section of *Principles of sacred theology* that I quoted and discussed above with regard to common ground. Van Til confirms that Kuyper advocates three territories that are common to all parties. In his evaluation, however, Van Til insists that Kuyper’s common ground constitutes an area of “neutral interpretation”; and he complains that Kuyper’s antithesis is not radical enough. But what I observe is that, in the first place, Van Til reads his “obsession” for absolute *interpretative* antithesis into Kuyper’s text. As a matter of fact, Kuyper does not say that his common ground leads to neutral interpretations. Rather, he says that the common ground is the area where any difference in interpretation “exerts no influence”. That is, even if it is admitted that believers and unbelievers have different interpretations of certain facts (e.g., the arithmetic proposition, $2 \times 2 =$

4, or the empty tomb), their different interpretations would make no difference to the mere fact. For example, Kuyper admits that there are different interpretations of the empty tomb, but his claim is that those differences do not change the mere fact that the tomb was indeed empty.

In his interpretation of Kuyper, however, Van Til argues that the common areas are made possible for Kuyper “on the ground of their *interpretative* insignificance”. Further, he says that Kuyper “seems to use these distinctions for the defence of his contention that there is an area of *interpretation* where the difference between those who build, and those who do not build on the fact of regeneration, need not and cannot be made to count” (Van Til, 1972:41, my italics).

Furthermore, he proceeds to explain why Kuyper claims that, in those common areas, no interpretative difference is required. It is because Kuyper thinks that “where sin has not changed the metaphysical situation, the difference [of interpretation] (...) need not be brought to the fore” (Van Til, 1972:43). These statements by Van Til show that he interprets Kuyper’s common ground in terms of an interpretative dimension; while, as far as I read, Kuyper never uses the term “interpretation”.

On the contrary, he intentionally avoids any term with epistemic (or interpretative) connotations (such as “objective” or “neutral”) to describe the status or role of common ground.

In any event, after interpreting Kuyper’s common ground as an area of neutral interpretation, Van Til argues that although it is true that after the fall, sin did not change our “metaphysical situation”; and thus, “our senses”, the “rational faculty” and “the appearance of the world about us” remain the same, this does not mean that the “objective situation” can be known without involving our “subjective situation” in our interpretative endeavour. In fact, a natural man never fails to “seek to interpret himself and the universe without God”; and he “uses his logical powers to describe the facts of creation as though these facts existed apart from God” (Van Til, 1972:43).

Van Til even claims that the most basic academic results, such as the products of “weighing and measuring and formal reasoning” cannot avoid being differently interpreted by different faith parties; and he says that these areas “are but aspects of one unified act of interpretation”. That is, a natural man would count them as “brute or bare facts”, while believers would interpret them as “God-created facts” (Van Til, 1972:44).

In this context, Van Til further counts Kuyper’s position among the Scholastic ones; and he argues that the Scholastic position is wrong, because it excludes certain areas from interpretative influences. Van Til concludes that adopting his radical approach is “to do full justice of

‘antithesis’”, as Kuyper originally taught (Van Til, 1972:44).

3.5.5 Evaluation of Kuyper’s conception of common ground

As far as my own evaluation of the debate is concerned, first of all, I notice that Van Til often ignores and distorts Kuyper’s text. As shown above, after he proposes that radical antithesis results in “two kinds of science”, Kuyper needs to explain how, then, communication between the two faith-groups is yet possible. For this purpose, he posits the existence of common ground. However, ignoring this context, Van Til insists that Kuyper is claiming “interpretative neutrality” in the area of common ground. But, it would be hardly credible that Kuyper denies the interpretative differences in the area of common ground. For example, although Kuyper does not state it explicitly, there is no doubt that he acknowledges that a natural man would interpret an element of common ground as a “brute or bare fact”; while a believer would interpret it as a “God-created fact”.

Therefore, Kuyper’s contention rather lies in the fact that, in spite of our different interpretations, faith commitments do not make any actual difference in the area of common ground. For example, does the faith of believers or unbelievers change the truth of the proposition $2 \times 2 = 4$? Above all, if Kuyper had denied the interpretative difference, he would have given up his core thesis of the religious root of scientific investigation.

In his criticism of Van Til’s presuppositional apologetics, Kelly Clark also raises the same point by way of an illustration. When medication is administered by believers or unbelievers, he asks, do their different faith commitments exert any influence on the effectiveness or chemical combination of the medication? Regardless of their different interpretations of the medication (e.g., provided by God vs achieved by human effort), he suggests that the chemical combination remains the same. However, when Van Til denies the existence of common ground, his argument amounts to saying that a difference in presuppositions “exerts an influence” on medication. This claim is simply absurd (Clark, 2000:255-263).

Furthermore, if Van Til insists that there is only an absolute interpretative antithesis, and no common ground, then Van Til himself should take on the burden to explain how the on-going communication between differing faith-parties is made possible. John Frame expresses the point most vividly. He asks us to suppose the case of denying the common elements in the area of language: “How, then, is communication possible between believers and unbelievers? If I say to

you ‘Good morning’ and mean by that ‘hooray for the San Diego Padres’, what have I communicated?” (Frame, 1995a:90).

In other words, if the argument is pushed to its limits without acknowledging any common ground, it would be possible to say that there are as many worlds as the number of different interpretations. Kuyper’s common ground should be understood as an attempt to avoid this type of problem. After all, if Van Til denies any common ground in the Kuyperian sense, he is contradicting his own “modified” view of antithesis (discussed above); and he is denying the existence of any metaphysical common ground, whose existence, he granted, should be admitted.

Van Til’s other criticism is that by admitting the alleged neutrality of formal reasoning and empiric facts, Kuyper is in the same position as the Scholastics. For this criticism, however, it should be noticed that there is a crucial difference between that of Kuyper and that of the Scholastics. Although both of them admit the existence of common ground, the Scholastics do not acknowledge that faith commitments could affect the direction of scientific thought. They claim, for example, that natural theology is possible; and the objective truth of Christian theism can be demonstrated by removing all subjective obstacles.

On the contrary, Kuyper denies the possibility of natural theology, because he acknowledges the religious root of theoretical (scientific) thought. In fact, Kuyper says, “this is the reason why (...) apologetics has always failed to attain results; and this has weakened rather than strengthened the reasoner” (Kuyper, 1954:160). This again indicates that Kuyper’s common ground is not intended to constitute an epistemically neutral criterion.

In summary, while Van Til interprets Kuyper’s conception of common ground as being inconsistent with the Christian idea of antithesis, I have shown that, in the first place, Van Til distorts Kuyper’s text that explains why he has to propose the existence of common ground. I have also claimed that although Kuyper is the one who radicalizes the antithesis down to the area of scientific thought, in order to explain the on-going communication between two faith groups, he had to propose the existence of an area of common ground. By contrast, Van Til insists on the idea of absolute antithesis (which Kuyper does not deny); and he then misrepresents Kuyper’s position as being characterized by insufficient antithesis concerning interpretation.

Thereby, Van Til ignores the problem of the communication breakdown, which is necessarily brought about by an absolute antithesis; and he contradicts the moderate version of his own approach.

With this summary, however, what has been so far established is that Kuyper supports the *necessity* of the existence of common ground; and he uses several examples to explain the obvious phenomenon of communication between different faith groups. In this context, one should note that there remains a problem with the claim from the epistemological standpoint. That is, even if it is admitted that there is common ground at all, how could it be known by all as common, that is, in any “objective” way?

Kuyper’s claim concerns the “ontic” status of common ground, in the sense that there is something universally given. Yet, when it comes to the epistemological issue, the question is: How do we know that it is common to all? It can only be known to us by the medium of our subjective interpretation, if the absolute interpretive antithesis is to be maintained. In a more concrete example, how is it possible to know an empiric fact as common without the medium of our presuppositions (including faith commitment)? In fact, in the history of philosophy, this issue goes back to Kant’s distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal world; and it is debated more predominantly in contemporary epistemology.

From our intuition, on the one hand, we know that it is undeniable that we all share something in common and live in one world, regardless of different faith commitments. However, on the other hand, when we know something, we know it only through the medium of our subjective interpretation, which is our ontological condition.

As a matter of fact, Kuyper was aware of this problem; and he attempted to give his own answer. I will therefore return to this topic at a later stage (cf. see section 5.2.4). For the present, although keeping this issue in mind, we will have to move on and examine Dooyeweerd’s reflection on antithesis and common ground. In our analysis of his thought, it will become clear that the dilemma mentioned above is also one of the most serious problems that Dooyeweerd attempted to solve.

In his philosophy, Dooyeweerd deepens and systematizes Kuyper’s insights; and he demonstrates in a theoretical way that the structure of theoretical thought is constituted by a religious starting point. However, our present focus lies in the fact that Dooyeweerd follows Kuyper’s position closely on the issue of common ground; and he claims that there are common states of affairs, which are not necessarily affected by religious presuppositions at all.

3.5.6 Dooyeweerd on antithesis and on the common “states of affairs”

As we have seen from Conradie’s criticism in Chapter 2, since Dooyeweerd discovered the religious root of theoretical thought, the threat of circular reasoning has been a continuous challenge to his philosophy.⁴⁶ The criticism was double-edged. If every theoretical thought is prejudiced, there would be no foundation for philosophy at all; and meaningful philosophical dialogue would no longer be possible. Furthermore, his own claim concerning the religious root of theoretical thought would be prejudiced. Conversely, should Dooyeweerd claim that theoretical thought is to some extent unprejudiced, he would contradict his own radical antithesis motif.

In spite of these critiques, in the subsequent examination I suggested that Dooyeweerd consistently maintains that common “structural states of affairs” are compatible with the existence of the religious root of theoretical thought, and that they prevent the complete collapse of communication between parties holding to different religious ground motifs. Moreover, he claims that the structure of theoretical thought and the modal structure of reality that he discovered could be seen as two examples of common structural states of affairs.

From this seemingly inconsistent thesis concerning antithesis and common ground, one could learn that Dooyeweerd closely follows Kuyper’s position, but elaborates the case for common

⁴⁶ As far as I can determine, this issue first emerged in the article of H. Robbers (1935:85-99), who is a Catholic scholar, right after Dooyeweerd’s publication of *De Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (1935). Robbers claimed that if autonomy in nature is denied, the possibility of dialogue would be jeopardized. After him, the humanist author J.C. Franken also criticized the self-applicable problem of Dooyeweerd philosophy in his book-review (1938:81-88) of *De Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee*. If all thoughts are dogmatic, says Franken, the starting point of reformational philosophy is also “dogmatic self-certainty”. To this criticism, Dooyeweerd responded in his articles written in 1938 (193-201) and 1939 (314-339). Later, Dooyeweerd developed his “second way”, that is, his “transcendental critique”; and he explained it in his first book in English, *Transcendental problems of philosophic thought* (1948). In the book, expecting similar allegations concerning “circular reasoning” and “vicious circle”, Dooyeweerd spent the whole preface discussing and defending his theses from those charges. In his *New Critique*, Dooyeweerd also deals with this issue, which I will examine in the section. After his *New Critique*, however, critics, such as Berkouwer, Mekkes, Conradie, Brummer and Van Peursen continued to raise similar issues, as I will show later. Here, the reason why I display the history of these critiques is to indicate that even though I discuss only three passages of the *New Critique* in this section, this issue is not a temporary, marginal problem for Dooyeweerd’s thought. Secondly, I would like to show that Dooyeweerd consistently maintains the same position on this topic – in spite of the fact that so many critics have raised similar critical questions. Basically, Dooyeweerd’s position is that the religious root of theoretical thought and the existence of a common state of affairs can both be maintained at the same time.

ground in a more theoretical way. They both believe that certain structures of theoretical thought and reality are the same for all; and they both claim that such structures are not simply “neutral” or “objective” from an epistemic (interpretative) point of view.

To demonstrate this point, while Dooyeweerd discusses this issue in several places (cf. footnote 48 below), I will examine his *A new critique of theoretical thought*; and I will show how he describes the *status* of theoretical thought and modal aspects of empirical reality. As far as I understand, and by proposing a brief preliminary summary, I would say that, according to Dooyeweerd, in the area of theoretical thought, not only the laws of thought are the same to all, but also any discovery that is directly inferred from the logical laws is “universally valid” as well.

Accordingly, he claims that the structure of theoretical thought, including its religious root, has universal validity, since it is discovered by being directly inferred from the logical laws.⁴⁷ With regard to the modal aspects of empirical reality, they are like the common “empiric” reality in Kuyper, on which religious prejudice does not exert its influence.⁴⁸ However, at the same time, Dooyeweerd denies that they are neutral or objective in terms of interpretation.

As far as I can say, in his *New critique*, I find three distinctive places dealing with this issue. In

⁴⁷ Dooyeweerd defines his “transcendental critique” proper as “a critical inquiry (respecting no single so-called theoretical axiom) into the universally valid conditions, which alone make theoretical thought possible, and which are required by the immanent structure of this thought itself” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:16). He argues that this “sharpening of the method of transcendental thought” is accomplished by dropping all transcendent or “dogmatic” presuppositions, and turning to an exclusive analysis of “the theoretical attitude of thought as such” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:16). In the same article, Dooyeweerd claims that his transcendental critique is of an “ontical” character. He says that communication between schools holding to different religious ground motives “is made possible by the fact that this critique is founded on the *ontical* structure of philosophical thought, which is of universal validity, and is not based on a purely subjective prejudice” (1941a:18). In another article, in the same year, he defines and elaborates the ontical elements of theoretical thought: “‘Ontical’ means ‘founded in the temporal order of reality’, and as such, is unchangeable, and not subject to historical development. The structure of thought is, firstly, of a logical nature; but the order of time connects this logical aspect with all other modal aspects of reality. Its second structural characteristic is the antithetical relationship between the analytical sphere and its field of research. Finally, the modal structure of the *Gegenstand* must be considered as part of the structure of thought. These are all states of affairs of universal validity” (Dooyeweerd, 1941b:172-173, Conradie’s translation).

⁴⁸ About the modal aspects that he discovered, Dooyeweerd says, “the states of affairs (...) urge themselves upon the human mind as soon as they have been detected, because they are really the same for everybody” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 2:73).

the first passage, after examining the second transcendental problem, Dooyeweerd explains that “theoretical synthesis is only possible from a supra-theoretical starting-point”. Then, he asks himself whether this discovery is a proof or not.

“If our criticism should actually prove something stringently, does it not move in a vicious circle? For does a proof not suppose this very autonomy of theoretical thought, the impossibility of which our criticism tried to demonstrate?” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:56).

His answer to this question⁴⁹ is that his analysis up to this point is, in fact, a “stringent proof” and “has laid bare [the] structural state of affairs”, which “may no longer be ignored by anyone”. Should anyone reply that the discovery must be prejudiced because his thesis is self-applicable (in a vicious circle), according to Dooyeweerd, the critique is begging the question and is misplaced. In other words, though it may sound contradictory, Dooyeweerd is saying that his thesis concerning the religious root of theoretical thought does not apply to itself up to this stage, the reason being that the proof “remains strictly within the theoretical sphere”. Here, for Dooyeweerd, “the theoretical sphere” is distinguished from the area of “supra-theoretical presuppositions”, and is an area where no subjective element makes any difference, like the area of “exact natural science” in Kuyper.⁵⁰

Then, our question is: How can this claim be reconciled with his radical antithetical thesis, stating that every discovery or argument is prejudiced by religious ground motives? Dooyeweerd answers this question in a slightly ambiguous manner.

“It is of course impossible, that this transcendental criticism – although up to the question of self-knowledge being of a strictly theoretical character – itself should be

⁴⁹ He continues by saying: “to this question I must reply as follows: What is stringently proved, in my opinion, is the thesis [i.e., the religious root of theoretical thought], (...) [However,] it would be an uncritical *petitio principii* to pretend, that our criticism even at this point moves in a vicious circle by abandoning the autonomy of theoretical self-reflection. Up to now, it has remained strictly within the theoretical sphere, and has laid bare structural states of affairs, which had been ignored under the very influence of the dogma as to the autonomy of theoretical reason. However, these states of affairs, once they have been discovered, may no longer be ignored by anyone who appreciates a veritably critical standpoint in philosophy” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:56).

⁵⁰ This does not mean that no subjective, prejudiced interpretation can be laid on it. Like Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, in fact, lays his own interpretation on the common state of affairs. For example, as will be explained later, Dooyeweerd explains that the meaning of the state of affairs is always in relation to other modal aspects, laws – and eventually the ground motives.

unprejudiced. For in this case, it would refute its own conclusions. But what shall we say, if the very supra-theoretical presuppositions hold here, which [would] free theoretical thought from dogmatic ‘axioms’ standing in the way of a veritable critical attitude? If, as we have demonstrated, a theoretical synthesis is possible only from a supra-theoretical presupposition, then only the contents of the supra-theoretical presuppositions implied thereby, could be questionable, but not the very necessity of them” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:56).

What Dooyeweerd is saying here is that, although it is admitted that the whole transcendental criticism itself cannot be unprejudiced by his supra-theoretical presupposition, it is still possible that the presupposition could be suspended during the process of this transcendental proof; and the process can be freed from “dogmatic axioms” (i.e., presuppositions). As a result, the fact that “theoretical synthesis is possible only from [a] supra-theoretical presupposition” is a formal “necessity”, and thus universally valid; while its content (that is, different presuppositions) can be debated. Our next question is, then, to know how the suspension is possible during this theoretical analysis, if the whole criticism itself is prejudiced.

At the end of the first volume of his *New critique*, Dooyeweerd expresses a similar question. Looking back at the two structural states of affairs in empirical reality that he has analysed (that is, the modal structure and the structures of individuality in their enkaptic⁵¹ interlacements), he says:

“I have to show that these two theories disclose states of affairs, which hitherto had not been subjected to philosophical examination. These “states of affairs” belong to the structure of empirical reality; and we have observed in the Prolegomena that, just as the laws of theoretical thought, *they are the same for every philosophical standpoint*. The only question is: Which philosophy is in a position to give a satisfactory theoretical explanation of these data?” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:526-527. my italics).

In this passage, the states of affairs include the modal structure of empirical reality in addition to the structure of theoretical thought. Here, he distinguishes between the commonness of the structural states of affairs and the interpretative differences. And he adds that this distinction is possible because there are two distinctive areas of theoretical judgment and pre-theoretical

⁵¹ Strauss (2009:140) explains that the term *enkapsis* was introduced by Dooyeweerd to indicate cases when two differently-natured structures are interwoven in such a way that each retains its unique character. For example both the material components and the biotic organs in a human being are “enkaptically” interwoven in the total bodily existence of a person. Enkaptic relations are therefore different from whole-part relations.

prejudice. He says, “philosophical discussion is possible between schools, which do not have the same starting-point, if, and only if, a sharp distinction is made between authentic theoretical judgments (concerning which philosophic discussion is possible) and the necessary pre-theoretical prejudices, which lie at the foundation of such theoretical judgments” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:527).

Here, the distinction implies that in the area of pre-theoretical prejudices, meaningful philosophical communication is not possible, because prejudices cannot be resolved by rational argument. By contrast, philosophical discussion is possible in the area of theoretical judgments, because:

“Philosophical discussion about the theoretical judgment is to be based on the undeniable states of affairs in the structures of theoretical thought and of empirical reality, which precede all theoretical interpretation and are to be established with *epoché* of the latter” (Dooyeweerd 1997, 1:527).

In this passage, two things need to be noticed. Firstly, Dooyeweerd says that philosophical discussion is possible in the theoretical sphere, because the states of affairs can function as criteria against which to verify theoretical judgments, so that people can discuss critically and arrive at agreed conclusions. In other words, the distinction between the theoretical area and the area of supra-theoretical commitments (prejudices) provides the boundary of meaningful communication, as was earlier explained by Kuyper. Practically speaking, this distinction explains the reason why our discussions or communications get often stuck – and we talk past each other. It is because the discussion has gone beyond the limits of the theoretical area; and in the area of supra-theoretical prejudices there is no rational criterion to verify a claim; and consequently, any claim comes to have the same right.

The second thing to be noticed is that Dooyeweerd deals with the very epistemological issue that we delayed to answer in Kuyper’s case, that is, how one can know the common ground prior to our interpretation. Here Dooyeweerd mentions, though very briefly, that the states of affairs “precede all theoretical interpretation and are to be established with *epoché* of [all theoretical interpretation]”. Though he claims that our recognition of the common states of affairs is made possible by *epoché*, still the question might be asked: Is the *epoché*, i.e., the suspension of our prejudice, really possible? And how is it possible?

In Volume two of his *New critique*, some answers to these questions are brought forward.

After his examination of the modal aspects and their analogical concepts, Dooyeweerd states that “the preceding introductory examinations have stressed the necessity of a provisional elimination of philosophical prejudices – so long as we are engaged in a pure description of the ‘states of affairs’ to be accounted for by philosophy” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 2:72). However, after this statement, he anticipates the same kind of criticism raised in relation to the structure of theoretical thought. He asks himself, “but in this context, the same objection can be expected to be encountered in the transcendental critique of theoretical thought, developed in Vol. 1. Does this methodical suspension of philosophical prejudice imply an elimination of the religious starting-points?” (1997, 2:72). To this question, he provides an answer, though again in a slightly ambivalent fashion. He says,

“My answer to this question is that the states of affairs described in the preceding introductory examinations urge themselves upon the human mind, as soon as they have been detected, because they are really the same for everybody. But their discovery and the manner of description are not independent of a religious starting-point” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 2:73).

In this response, he simply repeats the distinction between the existence of undeniable common states of affairs and their different interpretations. And he adds:

“Therefore, I can agree without hesitation that the preceding inquiry into the states of affairs implied in the fundamental analogical concepts was not unprejudiced in a religious sense. But I must, at the same time, deny that this circumstance detracts from the fact that the ‘states of affairs’ here intended are a common basis for philosophical discussion” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 2:73).

Once again, he repeats his wish to “having it both ways”; on the one hand, the inquiry into the states of affairs itself cannot be unprejudiced; but on the other hand, he cannot give up the idea that the states of affairs are the same for all, so that they can function as a basis for philosophical communication. On the question to know *how* the *epoché* is possible he says:

“The *epoché* of the philosophical prejudices required in this preliminary state of our examination is in a certain sense exactly the reverse of the transcendental-phenomenological *epoché* in Husserl. (...) It is impossible to eliminate the religious starting-point of theoretical thought. But it is not impossible to perform a provisional *epoché* of all specific philosophical interpretations of the states of affairs, which are to be established in a precise way before we try to account for them in a philosophical theory” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 2:73-74).

That is, while for Husserl, the aim of the *epoché* is to methodically eliminate (bracket) the natural attitude towards the external world, in order to analyse the inner transcendental consciousness as such, for Dooyeweerd it is, conversely, to provisionally suspend our religious commitment or specific philosophical interpretation, in order to recognize the states of affairs as such.

Dooyeweerd claims that his *epoché* is “not impossible”. What does he mean? Unfortunately, once again Dooyeweerd is content to simply leave this matter there; and he does not give us any further explanation, as if there could be no more questions about it. However, this is a crucial question, which needs to be answered. For example, Conradie (1960:142), after recognizing the importance of this question and complaining that “we are left to draw our own conclusions”, speculates on a proper explanation on behalf of Dooyeweerd.

After examining several alternatives, she guesses that the most probable reason why Dooyeweerd considers his *epoché* possible, is that he regards it as a “pre-theoretical recognition” (i.e., a result of naïve experience). In fact, Dooyeweerd regards naïve experience as something occurring without the involvement of our subjective interpretations (Dooyeweerd, 1941:10).⁵² However, Conradie argues that this interpretation is still not completely satisfactory because, if Dooyeweerd's thesis is to be consistent, he should grant that the “pre-theoretical recognition” (or naïve experience) is also penetrated by “the religious *a priori*” (Conradie, 1960:142). So, she concludes that the possibility of an “*epoché*” claimed by Dooyeweerd is not consistent with his theory of radical antithesis.

In other words, to be consistent with the radical antithesis, the *epoché* should be declared impossible; and it should be admitted that what we know about common ground is always prejudicially interpreted by us.⁵³

⁵² He says, “naïve experience is the natural fitting into the institution [*instelling*] of our consciousness in reality. It is a *given* and not a *theory* that can be disputed” (Dooyeweerd, 1941c:10).

⁵³ With regard to this criticism, in any event, since Dooyeweerd does not give any further clue, we cannot further develop the theory of “methodical suspension”. However, for my part, the fact that this is mentioned in just two short passages in the whole *New critique* (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:526), and the fact that this part was inserted when *De Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* was translated in English, shows that the idea is not something that constitutes an essential part of his thought; and he did not mean it to be a thoroughly examined solution. With this difficulty to solve the problem of the possibility of the *epoché*, however, it is obvious that what Dooyeweerd wants to claim is that the idea of the religious root of

In the same vein, many critics, such as Berkouwer, Mekkes and Brummer raise a similar criticism of Dooyeweerd's view of antithesis. Among them, Van Peursen highlights this problem (1965:157-165). He first exactly summarizes Dooyeweerd's problem and his answer.

“The question arises: when the diversity of meaning finds its unity and fullness only in the perspective of a basic motive radically opposed to the motives behind other philosophies. How then could such a meaning ever make sense to anybody, except to those who are already beforehand convinced of this critique of theoretical thought? (...) Dooyeweerd himself is aware of this kind of question; and he asks what the common basis might be for a philosophical discussion. His reply is the following. (...) Communication is possible in the sense, that there are structures in reality, ‘capable of verification by those who do not share my starting-point’ (Twilight, 57). Although the apostate tendency of sin works in the hearts of men, ‘the framework’ of the temporal world ‘remains intact’ (*New Critique*, 2:33)” (Van Peursen, 1965:161).

As supporting evidence for Dooyeweerd's claim that the structural states of affairs or frameworks of reality are common to all and immune from subjective interpretations, Van Peursen quotes Dooyeweerd's own writings: “These states of affairs belong to the structure of empirical reality; and (...) just as the laws of theoretical thought, they are the same for every philosophical standpoint (*New Critique*, 1:527)”. It is possible to eliminate “all specific interpretations of the states of affairs, which are to be established in a precise way before we try to account for them in any philosophical theory (*New Critique*, 2:74)”.

“Structural data, founded in the temporal order of human experience (...) should be acknowledged, irrespective of their philosophical interpretation (Twilight, 54)”. “Thanks to common grace, relative truths are to be found in every philosophy, although the interpretation of such truths may appear to be unacceptable from the biblical standpoint’ (Twilight, 55)” (Van Peursen, 1965:162).

On the basis of these documents, Van Peursen asks:

“Is it, however, legitimate, within the frame of reference of this philosophy itself, to make such a distinction between the antithesis (apostate motives against the Christian one) and the ‘common basis for philosophical discussion’ (structural data)? (...) It is as if one could step outside the philosophical interpretations and verify there such structural data. He often appeals to naive experience as the realm before philosophical interpretation. But (...) the framework of this philosophy itself does not permit any separation between meaning and the data (structures, states of affairs,

theoretical thought is compatible with the idea of the common states of affairs.

etc.), for the latter cannot be taken as bearers of meaning!” (Van Peursen, 1965:162).

As a result, Van Peursen argues that “the separation made by Dooyeweerd might even be a positivistic remainder, which is in contrast with one of his fundamental theses, namely, that meaning is the way in which everything, fact or datum, exists” (Van Peursen, 1965:163). Thus, he concludes that the common states of affairs, immune from faith-embedded interpretation, should not be acknowledged. In fact, nothing can escape from interpretative subjectivity. In short, Van Peursen’s claim is that an absolute interpretative antithesis must be maintained.

Now, to examine Dooyeweerd’s response to Van Peursen and others, let us turn to the debate between Van Til and Dooyeweerd. In fact, Van Til’s criticism is perfectly in line with Van Peursen’s remarks; and returning to Van Til should keep us more focused on our apologetic problems. At times, however, I will also mention Dooyeweerd’s response to Van Peursen’s criticism.

3.5.7 Van Til’s critique of Dooyeweerd’s conception of common states of affairs

Van Til’s discussion of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy mainly appears in his class syllabus, *Christianity in conflict* (1962), and in a collection of essays, *Jerusalem and Athens* (1980), edited by E. R. Geehan. In *Christianity in conflict*, Van Til discusses two themes in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy, that is, antithesis and communication. With regard to antithesis, on the one hand, Van Til welcomes Dooyeweerd’s criticism of the “pretended autonomy” of human reason (Van Til, 1962:186-202; cf. 1980:92-94). However, on the other hand, he is critical on the issue of communication. Van Til thinks that Dooyeweerd “weakened” his antithesis motif by admitting the existence of a common ground for the sake of communication.

Van Til understands that, according to Dooyeweerd, genuine communication is made possible by the universally valid structural states of affairs. Concerning this claim, however, Van Til asks whether the notion of the common states of affairs is not contradictory to Dooyeweerd’s radical antithetical motif. In the first place, Van Til argues that the whole cosmos is created by God; and what really is, exists as interpreted by God. “Thus the objective state of affairs is what the Bible teaches that it is” (Van Til, 1962:208); and only Christians who accept the truth of the Bible know it, whereas unbelievers are blind to its truth.

Thus, even if there are objective states of affairs, they are known only to Christians.⁵⁴ Therefore, Van Til says that when he acknowledges common states of affairs between believers and unbelievers, Dooyeweerd admits that a certain “neutral area” exists between them, which is an “open inconsistency” with his antithetical motif.

Furthermore, agreeing with Berkouwer’s critique, Van Til argues that Dooyeweerd’s distinction between “transcendent” and “transcendental” criticism is not in line with his antithetical motif. Dooyeweerd claims, according to Van Til, that the transcendent criticism would block any possibility of communication before it starts, since it is dogmatic; and it results from a confession of faith. By contrast, the transcendental critique lays bare the nature of theoretical thought as such; and it is “universally valid” and common to all. Against this distinction, however, Van Til again argues along with Berkouwer that the transcendental criticism itself should be seen as prejudiced by his transcendent, biblical point of view. That is, “the entire transcendental method hangs in the air – except for the fact that it rests upon the fullness and unity of truth accepted on the authority of Scripture” (Van Til, 1962:211). Agreeing with Berkouwer, Van Til paraphrases his point.

“Only if we begin with Scripture as the absolute norm for human experience, says Berkouwer, can we find light in our dialogue. This being so, then, why should we obscure this fact by speaking of a transcendental method that has light in itself apart from its suspension from divine world-revelation, and why should we speak of states of affairs as though they had any light in them apart from their being what they are through the light of Scripture?” (Van Til, 1962:211).

In his answer to Van Til, however, Dooyeweerd considers Van Til’s critique to “rest on a misunderstanding” (Dooyeweerd, 1980:79); and he repeats his point, without any substantial additional information. Dooyeweerd says that his transcendental criticism is devised to save one from the danger of transcendent criticism. For instance, Scholastic theology repeatedly condemned scientific and philosophical ideas – simply because they did not agree with its confessions of faith, regardless of their scientific character (Dooyeweerd, 1980:75). To avoid this kind of mistake, says Dooyeweerd, it was necessary to investigate the structure of theoretical thought itself, and to demonstrate the “*inner point of contact* between theoretical thought and its

⁵⁴ This claim is a sort of an oxymoron. If only Christians knew the truth, it is “subjective” truth to Christians.

supra-theoretical presuppositions” (Dooyeweerd, 1980:76).

In the first phase of analysis of the structure of theoretical thought, it is necessary to start not with a “confession of faith” but with the critical attitude of theoretical thought. “In this first phase of the critical investigation, such a confession would be out of place”. Otherwise, “the dialogue would be cut off before it could start” (Dooyeweerd, 1980:72). In this claim, Dooyeweerd simply confirms his point that his transcendental critique is necessarily processed in the theoretical (scientific) sphere; and the faith element is not involved in it.

However, this is exactly the point that Van Til cannot swallow. Here, Dooyeweerd also anticipates Van Til’s objection that transcendental criticism and the “states of affairs” “have an objectivity which gives them a neutral position over against the biblical presuppositions” (Dooyeweerd, 1980:79). In fact, Dooyeweerd repeats that Van Til holds to this false opinion because he misunderstood his discussion with Van Peursen. Van Peursen, says Dooyeweerd, had “an erroneous opinion that [Dooyeweerd] would have conceived the ‘states of affairs’ in the sense of ‘brute facts’ apart from their meaning” (Dooyeweerd, 1980:79). But Dooyeweerd responds that he has never conceived of “states of affairs” as “‘brute facts’ in the sense of a positivistic empiricism”. “If this were true, there would naturally exist a striking antinomy between my conception of the ‘states of affairs’ and my fundamental view concerning the meaning-character of creaturely reality” (Dooyeweerd, 1980:79).

Rather, Dooyeweerd says that his “states of affairs” were always conceived as having dynamic meaning-character, that is, as referring “outside and above themselves to the universal-context in time, to the creaturely unity of root and to the absolute Origin of all meaning” (Dooyeweerd, 1980:80).

For instance, says Dooyeweerd, the proposition $2 \times 2 = 4$ is not “true in itself”, as is usually believed. Its meaning is in relation to the laws of number and in coherence with all other modal law-spheres – and eventually in relation to the totality view originating from one’s ground motive. In other words, for Dooyeweerd, the states of affairs (including arithmetic truths) do not exist as brute facts; but they always exist in relation to their full meaning; and they are to be interpreted, according to one’s religious ground motive. Therefore, Dooyeweerd denies that his states of affairs exist as brute facts, or may be understood in terms of objectivity or epistemological neutrality.

However, the problem is that Dooyeweerd does not stop here. He adds what is provocative to

Van Peursen, as well as to Van Til. Dooyeweerd continues the statement above to say that regardless of different interpretations, the states of affairs, “as such, must be considered *independent of* our subjective philosophical interpretation”. For instance, with regard to arithmetic propositions, he says, “it must of course be granted, that the judgment $2 \times 2 = 4$ refers to a state of affairs in the numerical relation, which is *independent of* the subjective theoretical view and its supra-theoretical presuppositions” (Dooyeweerd, 1997:116).

Furthermore, Dooyeweerd adds that by repeatedly investigating certain states of affairs one can discover the transcendental structure underlying them, just as he discovered the underlying structure of theoretical thought by examining the states of affairs concerned. In this process of discovery, he says, immediate philosophical interpretation needs to be removed by “suspending our philosophical interpretation of the ‘states of affairs’ at issue” (Dooyeweerd, 1980:80). This is the reason why he claims that the structures of theoretical thought and of empirical reality are “universally valid”.

With regard to this claim, Van Peursen, as well as Van Til, do not agree; and they both criticize it as an “indication of [an] objectivistic view of the states of affairs” and a “positivistic remainder”. At this point, the debate could continue infinitely, with Dooyeweerd denying the objectivist and positivist charges, and his interlocutors accusing him of inconsistency.

3.5.8 Evaluation of Dooyeweerd’s conception of common ground

How should we evaluate Dooyeweerd’s position on this issue? In one sense, it appears to me that Dooyeweerd wants to “have it both ways”, that is, to maintain both our inevitably prejudicial interpretation of reality and the existence of common states of affairs that are not affected by that interpretation. This naturally evokes charges of inconsistency. By contrast, Van Til, as well as Berkouwer and Van Peursen seem to be more consistent in their radical antithesis. However, before a hasty judgment is laid, I think there are several things that need to be considered, in order to evaluate Dooyeweerd’s position properly.

Firstly, it still needs to be asked why Dooyeweerd keeps insisting on the existence of common states of affairs, in spite of reiterated criticism. I think that both Van Til (with Van Peursen) and Dooyeweerd completely agree that our knowledge of the states of affairs is always prejudiced by our ground motives. One should especially notice the fact that Dooyeweerd keeps acknowledging that his transcendental critique “cannot be unprejudiced” (in a broad sense), and

that the states of affairs are relative, but not brute, facts. At some stage, Dooyeweerd even acknowledges that his belief in the existence of the common state of affairs comes from his commitment to biblical presuppositions.

He says, “in fact it was nothing but a result of my biblical conviction that the state of affairs (...) [is] not founded in our subjective consciousness, but in the divine order of creation – to which our subjective experience is subject” (Dooyeweerd, 1980:80).

Then, why does Dooyeweerd have to keep insisting on the existence of common ground? It is because, just like Kuyper, he needs to explain the commonly acknowledged phenomenon that there is substantial understanding and genuine communication between believers and unbelievers, as well as the fact that unbelievers too do find and know many truths (Dooyeweerd 1997, 2:73). That is why he often emphasizes the fact that his transcendental critique “can pave the way for a real contact of thought among the various philosophical trends” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:70). In contrast, if absolute antithesis alone is acknowledged, Van Til, as well as other critics must carry the burden to explain how the on-going meaningful “communication” between differing faith communities is possible. More importantly, they must acknowledge that the charge of circular reasoning (hence, epistemic relativism) is unavoidable for their absolute-antithetical claim.

Secondly, I don’t believe that Dooyeweerd was fully successful in explaining how the states of affairs as such can be discovered, when he employed the notion of *epoché*. However, it still needs to be noticed that he never employs terms of epistemological connotation to describe the status of these common states of affairs. In most cases, he appeals to our common sense and intuition. This can be noticed by his intentional choice of phrases, such as “it is undeniable”, “it forces us”, “it urges itself to the human mind”, and “it does not make sense to deny it”.⁵⁵

This choice of words points towards the fact that the common ground is constituted by conditions or laws. I think this is not always properly reflected in many of the questions, arguments and terms used in the debate reported above. (Even Dooyeweerd’s term “states of affairs” may not be fully appropriate). It is misplaced to ask how objectively we can know this common ground because it confuses the epistemic validity of the common ground with our

⁵⁵ It seems to me that this description also has the advantage of reminding us that there is a passive part in attaining knowledge of the reality, and that human beings are part of God’s creation. We not only influence, but are also influenced by surrounding creations.

possibility to “know” it objectively, as if we were talking about an “object”.

If the common ground is constituted by *conditions* (laws), the point is not whether we “know” them fully or objectively, what matters is that they condition and constrain our epistemic possibilities. They are valid for all.

Thirdly, I also believe that Dooyeweerd’s attempt to “have it both ways” is justified. In fact, it seems to me that it can hardly be denied that we have and experience one common world, even if our interpretations of it are different. That is why we can communicate without substantial difficulty. Klapwijk (1987:123) too argues that Dooyeweerd’s basic insight needs to be acknowledged, in spite of his other critiques. In fact, Klapwijk says, “does he [Dooyeweerd] not deserve support when he speaks of incontrovertible states of affairs? Granted that humans are able to give a new meaning to certain matters and to re-interpret familiar events, it remains the case that the possibilities for doing so are always limited and never arbitrary. Human meaning-giving is always effected within the framework of divine meaning-stipulation” (Klapwijk, 1991:183).

As a summary, we have so far seen that closely following Kuyper, Dooyeweerd also supports the existence of common ground – in spite of his radical antithetical motif. Although it appears to evoke the charge of inconsistency, I believe that Kuyper’s and Dooyeweerd’s claims concerning the existence of common ground fit more adequately into our intuitive understanding of reality. In the following section I will comment on the implications of the existence of common ground for apologetics and epistemology.

3.5.9 The implications of the notion of common ground for apologetics

In relation to our present concern, the question is: If the existence of common ground is acknowledged, along with radical antithesis, how does this acknowledgment affect current apologetic approaches, especially presuppositional apologetics? Although I have mentioned it earlier, in part, let us summarize and clarify the main results here.

In the first place, in order to analyse its effects, the notion of common ground needs to be defined again by summarizing the definitions given by Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Van Til (in his moderate position). I would combine their descriptions, and distinguish two different levels of common ground. At the primary level, common ground constitutes a broad ontological (metaphysical) condition, including our cognitive faculties, such as reason, perception and the

empirical world around us in totality, which remain immune from the noetic effects of sin.

At the secondary and derivative level, the elements of common ground include any discovery and argument directly inferred from the primary common ground. For example, when Dooyeweerd claims that his transcendental criticism is “universally valid”, this indicates that the results of his criticism are an element of common ground in this secondary level. Any scientific discovery, whether made by believers or unbelievers, can also be an element of common ground at this secondary level.

However, this common ground should not be considered to be exempt from our prejudicial interpretation; it does not function as an epistemically neutral criterion or epistemic foundation that leads to an objective conclusion on a concrete issue, since it only functions as a transcendental condition for proper arguments.

Furthermore, if this secondary level of common ground is applied to apologetic arguments, it implies that any argument that is logically valid should be considered to be common (i.e., universally valid) to believers and unbelievers in its *formality*. This point might be clarified by Frame’s criticism of Van Til’s “wholesale argument” (genetic fallacy), discussed earlier. Frame criticizes Van Til for discarding the whole argument of Aquinas, because of his allegedly compromised position. Frame asks whether it is legitimate to claim that Aquinas’ compromised position invalidates his whole philosophy and theology. Rather, Frame argues that up to the point that their logical validity is maintained, Aquinas’ arguments should be considered valid for both believers and unbelievers; and they could be employed by the reformed apologists, too, although they do not guarantee a shared conclusion.

For example, in Aquinas’s cosmological argument from motion, which is one of his “five ways”, Aquinas seeks to prove God as the “first mover” by employing Aristotelian categories. Aquinas explains that motion is a change from “potentiality” to “actuality”. In his example, when a thing gets hot, it is a change from being potentially hot to being actually hot. Since nothing can be both potentially and actually hot at the same time, something else that is hot must cause the change. Again, the cause itself must be, in turn, caused by something else, which is hot. This chain goes on and on. To stop the virtually infinite regression, there must be a “first cause” (mover) that is hot in itself, which is not caused by any other cause. Aquinas calls this “first mover” (cause) God (Frame, 1995b:262).

For this proof, Frame’s contention is that even though Aquinas employs Aristotle’s category, the

argument that is logically valid *in its formality* (i.e., motion is caused by the first unmoved mover) is not invalidated by his commitment to Aristotle's philosophy, although it is admitted that the conclusion is not "sound and convincing" to all⁵⁶; and the God "proven" in this way is an abstract principle, but not the living God of Scripture. To explain this point, Frame says,

"Now my purpose here is not to ask whether this proof is valid or sound. Many responses have been offered, pro and con. My only interest, for the moment, is to ask if there is anything in the argument that is incompatible with the Scriptures. In other words, I am asking whether Aquinas' commitment to Aristotle's philosophy, evident in this very proof, "vitiates" his apologetics *at this particular point*" (Frame, 1995b:262, my italics).

In this passage, Frame agrees with Kuyper and Dooyeweerd that in the area of theoretical judgments, governed by logical laws, our presuppositions do not make any difference. On this basis, he further claims that "it may no longer be possible to distinguish presuppositional apologetics from traditional apologetics *merely by externals* – in the form of an argument" (Frame, 1987:87). This means that both traditionalists and presuppositionalists can agree with the arguments in their formality. However, again, the internal difference between the presuppositionalist and the traditionalist positions is that the latter assumes that the common ground would lead to an objective conclusion; while the former assumes that a conclusion of argument always requires another decision from non-rational presuppositions, such as the truth of premises in the argument that can only be determined by one's faith commitment; and thus, no conclusion can be reached in an objective way.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have firstly introduced Van Til's view of antithesis and common ground. Apart from his (well-known) radical position, Van Til also recognizes and confirms the necessity of the existence of common ground, although it is limited to the metaphysical (ontological) area.

⁵⁶ If one remembers the problem of the cosmological argument discussed in Chapter 2, the controversial point was not the fact that there must be a first cause, but which stopping-point is an adequate one between God and the whole world itself. Its answer is shown to be dependent upon one's religious presuppositions.

However, in his criticism of other apologetic approaches, including those of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd, he insists on the idea of radical antithesis with no common ground, partly due to his uncompromising mentality, and to his particular situation. It was also shown that if his antithesis is not modified by granting some common ground, it cannot avoid the problem of circular reasoning; and this would jeopardize the possibility of communication.

By contrast, two other reformed scholars, Kuyper and Dooyeweerd, accept both radical antithesis and common ground at the same time, in order to save the possibility of communication. We have seen that their views sometimes face charges of inconsistency; and it is asked how the common area can be known as such, prior to our interpretation. Interestingly, this issue of knowing things “as such” is still central in the discussions of contemporary epistemology: an issue, which I believe, was generated by Kant’s notion of the noumenal world. We will return to this issue in the next chapter.

Finally, I have also claimed, in relation to apologetics, that the common ground does not function as an epistemic basis on which the proofs of Christian theism can be established.

While our discussion so far has been limited to the Christian circles of the evidential apologists and the reformed scholars, in the next chapter I will show that the conflict between the notions of plural presuppositions and common ground is also among the crucial problems of contemporary epistemology. I will also discuss how these problems are dealt with in the context of more recent debates between “postmodern apologetics” and the “second generation” of evidential apologetics. This discussion should deepen our understanding of the problem of common ground.

Chapter 4:

Contemporary epistemology and common ground

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, as a response to the evidentialists' charge concerning the problem of circular reasoning and their insistence on the existence of neutral criteria and data, I have shown that reformed scholars also acknowledge and advocate the existence of common ground along with their radical antithetical thesis (although Van Til can be sometimes inconsistent in his claims). At the same time, however, I have shown that even if the existence of common ground is granted, it does not necessarily follow that such common ground guarantees any proof of the truth of Christian theism, because the common ground does not function as an epistemic foundation of such proof.

In this chapter, in the continuation of our discussion on common ground and its implications for apologetics, I will examine paradigm cases of debates in contemporary epistemology, in relation to common ground. It is fairly well-known that there is a tension in contemporary philosophy between *radical* anti-foundationalist trends and *moderate* ones. The former claim that non-rational elements control our cognitive activities in every aspect; and that they leave no room for common factors between different perspectives (or, between “paradigms”, “conceptual schemes”, “linguistic frameworks”, “language games” and so forth).

By contrast, the moderate anti-foundationalist positions claim that even if it is admitted that those subjectively determined factors affect our cognition, there still remain certain common factors, which could function as the transcendental conditions for cognition.⁵⁷

The debate between the two positions in epistemology has continuities and discontinuities

⁵⁷ With regard to contemporary philosophical trends, the editors (Baynes, Bohman and McCarthy) of the collection of essays *After philosophy: end or transformation?* (1987) say that these trends can be divided into two groups, that is, the groups: the “end of philosophy” and the “transformation of philosophy”. In the general introduction to the book, they say that the former group advocates a radical anti-foundationalist position, and is typically represented by such radical postmodern thinkers as Derrida, Foucault, Rorty, Lyotard, and so forth. The latter group holds that linguistic and hermeneutic factors must be considered, but that certain universal (transcendental) conditions must be acknowledged as common ground (Baynes, 1987:7-16). This group is represented by Putnam, Apel, Habermas, and so forth.

with the issue of antithesis and common ground in the (Christian) apologetic discussion. There is obvious continuity, for example, in that both presuppositional apologetics and contemporary epistemology have the same recognition of and emphasis on the non-rational factors influencing our cognitive activities. There are discontinuities as well; but in the present context, I would like to focus on the similarities.

It is, in fact, quite surprising (and to many probably disturbing), that the Christian reflection on these issues seems to parallel perfectly the secular reflection, without providing any particularly new insights, alternatives, suggesting ways out from the secular dilemmas. The Christian reflection, though not in all cases, seems to be “captive” of the same themes and conflicts; and it seems to operate within the same parameters. This is, unfortunately, not surprising if one thinks that, although displaying a vast arsenal of theological resources, the Christian apologetic reflection is not always backed up by solid philosophical resources, stemming from the Christian soil.

In some cases, it is a Thomist philosophy that constitutes the background of Reformed apologetics and theology! In other cases, we have an eclectic “collage” of philosophical contributions, Christian and pagan, ancient and modern, serving as a philosophical reservoir for the Christian thinker. This is a crucial problem to which I will return in the next chapter.

For the moment, it is important to note that the debate between the two epistemic positions, i.e., *radical* and *moderate* anti-foundationalism, has very clear implications even for our discussions (in the previous chapters) concerning the evidential and presuppositional approaches. Furthermore, what I observe is that the conflicts between the two epistemic groups are closely reflected in the debate between two of the most recent apologetic approaches (which show continuities with presuppositional and evidential apologetics), that is “postmodern apologetics” and “second-generation” evidential apologetics.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Evidential apologists may be categorized into two groups in terms of chronology and the issues they are dealing with. The discussion of the first generation evidentialists is mainly concerned with the methodological conflict with presuppositional apologetics. Those who belong to this group may be represented by B. B. Warfield, S. Hackett, N. Geisler, and so on (Classical apologetics) and J. Butler, C. Pinnock, J. Montgomery, and so forth (empirical apologetics). By contrast, the issue that the second-generation apologists tackle is the attack from postmodern philosophy and the epistemological problems of postmodern philosophy. The group that I have in mind as the second-generation evidentialists are mostly those who are associated with the “Biola school”, which is not only constituted by the faculty of philosophy and apologetics in Biola University in the U.S.A, but also by those who have a similar set of

The first two rows of the table below represent a rough sketch of the positions discussed in this chapter. The third row reminds us of the schools discussed in previous chapters. Schools and trends appearing in the same column are supposed to share some affinity, at least in some respect.

Table 2: Epistemological and apologetic trends in relation

1	Radical anti-foundationalism	Moderate anti-foundationalism
2	Postmodern apologetics	2nd generation evidentialists
3	Presuppositional apologetics	Evidential apologetics

Both the epistemological and the apologetic groups have in common the fact that their struggles centre around the same problem of common ground. If I briefly describe the tenets of the two recent apologetic groups, postmodern apologetics denies whatsoever objective truth; and it claims that traditional apologetics should be abandoned, because there is no objective truth to defend. From this point of view, a more relevant strategy, sensitive to the postmodern culture, should be implemented in apologetics (Kenneson, 1995).

In response, the second-generation evidentialists undauntedly maintain that even if the anti-foundationalist turn in contemporary epistemology is acknowledged, there still exist certain rudimentary common factors functioning as an epistemic foundation, on which objective truth (i.e., Christian theism) could be established. With regard to these two recent apologetic approaches, it is obvious that the epistemic position of radical anti-foundationalist philosophy undergirds the claims of postmodern apologetics, while a moderate anti-foundationalist philosophy supports the apologetics of the second-generation evidentialists.

By examining the current epistemic debates and problems, the discussion presented in this chapter should also shed some light on the multiple connections between contemporary “secular” epistemology (and philosophy of science) and the apologetic schools already discussed in the previous chapters.

In our examination of the debates taking place in contemporary humanist philosophy, it will be

reactions to postmodern philosophy. They believe that postmodern philosophy and Christian apologetics are antithetical; and they claim that postmodern philosophy cannot stand because it cannot avoid this self-applicable contradiction. Some authors who may represent this group are W. L. Craig, G. Habermas, S. Scott, D. Groothuis, and so forth.

argued that (as in the discussion between presuppositional and evidential apologetics) it is necessary to adopt a distinctively Christian philosophical point of view to support Christian apologetics. Against the radical projects of such an anti-foundationalist epistemology, certain common factors should be acknowledged; and yet, it should also be stated that those common factors (constituting an ontic common ground) do not function as epistemic neutral criteria to resolve the concrete issues currently in debate.

For this purpose, among the philosophies contributing to the anti-foundationalist “lobby” in contemporary epistemology, I will select and discuss, as paradigm cases of debate, firstly the debate between Kuhn and the neo-positivists concerning paradigm (theory) choice. Secondly, I will examine the debate between Gadamer and Habermas on the “universal” claims of hermeneutics. Thirdly, I will explore the dialogue between some pancritical rationalists and Apel on the necessity and possibility of philosophical foundations.

As is known, there are a variety of factors and philosophies contributing to the anti-foundational lobby in contemporary philosophy, to the extent that scholars complain about the difficulty of defining postmodernism.⁵⁹ In this context, I choose these cases of debate to represent different traditions of philosophy, that is, post- and neo-positivist philosophy of science, continental hermeneutic philosophy and English-American analytic philosophy.⁶⁰ On this basis, I will try to show that each case of the debates studied in this chapter reveals a different feature of the common-ground discussion. The latter is discussed in terms of empirical data and criteria (in Kuhnian and neo-positivist philosophy of science), in terms of universal infrastructures constituting the transcendental conditions of various disciplines, including philosophy (in Habermas and hermeneutic philosophy); and as indubitable empirical evidence and philosophical foundation (in Apel and analytic philosophy).

Taken together, these debates reinforce my thesis that although common factors should be acknowledged, they cannot function as neutral epistemic criteria.

⁵⁹ In fact, as O’Grady (2002:1-22) argues, in the beginning of the 20th century, there were reasonably unified philosophical communities; and Russell, Husserl and James were well aware of each other’s philosophies. However, since the 1950s, philosophical communities are split into distinct traditions; they have little contact; and they tend to ignore each other. Nevertheless, curiously similar tendencies toward anti-foundationalist philosophy have emerged.

⁶⁰ In fact, Apel’s philosophy may not be categorized into analytic philosophy proper. But he is a philosopher who is known to attempt to bridge the continental philosophy and analytic philosophy, and to seek a philosophical foundation in their combination.

I will first look at the debate between Thomas Kuhn and some of his neo-positivist critics. While Kuhn is known to claim (in his “strong” incommensurability thesis) that there is no objective criterion to determine paradigm choice, the neo-positivists claim that to avoid the problem of irrationality and subjectivism, certain objective criteria must be used. Against this criticism, Kuhn responds that his incommensurability thesis in fact does not deny the possibility of certain shared (common) data, language and criteria between rival paradigms. Rather, he claims that, in spite of the shared elements, in the actual process of concrete theory-choice, subjective elements always play a role in the end; and thus objective proof is not possible.

In this discussion, I will highlight the point that Kuhn also acknowledges the common so-called “objective” criteria, just as the evidentialists contend, but Kuhn’s position does not lead to objective decision-making, final proof or theory choice, unlike the neo-positivist critics (as well as the second-generation evidentialist apologists) would like to claim.

Secondly, I will discuss the debate between Gadamer’s “universal claim of hermeneutics” and Habermas’ objections in favour of a “restricted” claim of hermeneutics. Gadamer argues that our “prejudice” affects all forms of knowledge as an ontological condition; and hermeneutics is universal in scope – without any exception. By contrast, Habermas claims that there still must be some universal factor or “meta-theory” underlying our hermeneutic understanding. Otherwise, distorted communication could not be distinguished from genuine communication. In this debate, I will show that Gadamer’s “universal claim of hermeneutics” (which parallels the epistemic position of postmodern apologetics) needs to be restricted, whereas Habermas’ claim for the “deep structure” supporting hermeneutic understanding, needs to be granted in favour of the (second-generation) evidentialist’s position.

However, I will also show that Habermas’ reconstructed deep structure (common ground) cannot function as an epistemic criterion on the basis of which a concrete issue in dispute can be resolved.

Thirdly, I will discuss the debate between the later Popperians (adopting pancritical rationalism) and Karl Apel, arguing in favour of the existence of philosophical foundations, which are not fallible. Whereas the pan-critical rationalists claim that all knowledge is dubitable and fallible; and all forms of appeal to philosophical foundations are an unjustified “dogma”, Apel claims that there still must be “indubitable” paradigm evidences and philosophical foundations. In short, the principle of fallibilism needs to be restricted.

In this debate, I will show that pancritical rationalism (which is parallel to the epistemic position of postmodern apologetics) cannot stand, due to the problem of the self-applicable contradiction. At the same time, I will argue that even if Apel's philosophical foundations can be granted in favour of the (second-generation) evidentialists, they cannot function as an epistemic foundation, on which an objective conclusion can be established, as the evidential apologists would like to claim.

Finally, I will conclude that although the existence of common ground needs to be granted against the claim of radical contemporary philosophy, this does not mean that the evidential apologetic approach can successfully establish the possibility of providing objective proofs of the truth of Christian theism.

4.2 Kuhn's philosophy and the "neo-positivist" criticism

4.2.1 Introduction to the debate

Since Bacon, it has been traditionally believed that science develops in a cumulative way, and that each new theory brings about a more correct and deeper account of reality. However, in his epoch-making book: *The structure of scientific revolutions* (1970), Kuhn claims that scientific progress occurs in a revolutionary way, because old and new paradigms are incommensurable; and no neutral criteria exist to compare them.

Against this claim, however, several "neo-positivist" scholars argue that Kuhn's incommensurability thesis entails problems, such as irrationality in theory choice, a relativistic view of reality, and the threat of a total communication breakdown.⁶¹ To avoid these problems, they claim, objective, rational criteria allowing one to choose between paradigms and theories must be granted. In response to this criticism, Kuhn says that his thesis must be understood as "moderate". That is, he grants that there are certain shared data, uses of language and criteria between scientists holding to rival paradigms. However, the difference from the neo-positivist view is that in spite of the common elements, he claims that theory choice is eventually determined, at least in part, by various subjective factors.

⁶¹ These charges came from scholars, such as Dudley Shapere (1964), Israel Sheffler (1967), Karl Popper (1970) and Stephen Toulmin (1970). Gerald Doppelt calls this type of interpretation of Kuhn "the neo-positivist interpretation" (Doppelt, 1978:35).

In this debate, on the one hand, the neo-positivists' theses would support (or parallel) the evidentialist's apologetic position, in that both of them insist on the existence of common factors which can function as objective criteria to choose between paradigms (or between theism and non-theism). On the other hand, if Kuhn's incommensurability thesis is understood in a moderate sense, in fact, Kuhn's position too is parallel to that of the (second-generation) evidentialists – in the sense that both of them grant the existence of common factors. However, the difference in the case of Kuhn's thesis is that the common factors do not lead to objective decision-making in theory choice or concerning theism.

4.2.2 Kuhn's theory of paradigm shifts

In his book, *The structure of scientific revolutions* (1972), Kuhn describes the structure of scientific progress in distinct stages. For Kuhn, a paradigm is a self-contained holistic perspective, and a total view of things, which guides scientists in their overall scientific endeavour. In the first immature (pre-paradigm) stage, science has not yet acquired an established paradigm. As a particular model gains wide acceptance and emerges as a dominant theory in a scientific community, the model comes to be established as a standard paradigm. In the following second stage of "normal science", Kuhn claims (contrary to Popper's view) that scientists do not spend time critically scrutinizing the accepted scientific beliefs to see if they can be falsified; but they mainly work to defend and reinforce the current ruling paradigm.

Because their expectations in favour of the ruling paradigm cloud their vision and skew their observations, says Kuhn, new discoveries are rare (Kuhn, 1970:52), and any *anomalies* which contradict the predicted results are often ignored – or rationalised. However, as the anomalies continue to mount and normal puzzle-solving fails to resolve such anomalies, the scientists' confidence in the current paradigm erodes; and this situation may throw the ruling paradigm into a phase of *crisis*.

In the following stage, a new competing paradigm emerges and the crisis eventually brings about a transition to the new paradigm. At this point, however, Kuhn states one of his most controversial claims. He affirms that the paradigm shift happens in a "revolutionary" way. It is revolutionary firstly in the sense that the shift does not occur as a result of the accumulation of scientific evidence or as a consequence of gradual, logical and scientific process; but it happens as "a sudden and unstructured event" (Kuhn, 1970:122). It occurs, Kuhn says, "all at once,

sometimes in the middle of the night, in the mind of a man deeply immersed in crisis” (Kuhn, 1970:90). Secondly, the shift is revolutionary in the sense that preceding and succeeding paradigms are “incommensurable”. According to Kuhn “the normal-scientific tradition that emerges from a scientific revolution is not only incompatible, but often actually incommensurable with that which has gone before” (Kuhn, 1970:103). It is incommensurable, he says, because a new paradigm often redefines what is “scientific” and the problems solved by the previous paradigm are no longer relevant problems in the new paradigm (Kuhn, 1970:148).

In addition, the meaning of scientific terms is not usually the same between the preceding and succeeding paradigms (Kuhn, 1970:149).

Furthermore, Kuhn says that there are no paradigm-independent criteria on the basis of which old and new paradigms can be neutrally compared. Rather, criteria are internal to each respective paradigm. He says that a new paradigm emerges as a communal agreement, like the “choice between competing political institutions. (...) As in political revolutions, so in paradigm choice – there is no standard higher than the assent of the relevant community” (Kuhn, 1970:94). This claim implies that the traditional view of theory choice, based on verification or falsification, is not plausible. Rather, Kuhn often describes the process of adopting a new paradigm as a “conversion experience” (Kuhn, 1970:151), which often occurs “in defiance of the evidence” and which “can only be made on faith” (Kuhn, 1970:158).

After all, Kuhn claims that there can be no neutral “proof” for the superiority of a paradigm,

“Though each may hope to convert the other to his way of seeing science and its problems, neither may hope to prove his case. The competition between paradigms is not the sort of battle that can be resolved by proofs” (Kuhn, 1970:148).

Moreover, Kuhn explains that due to the problem of incommensurability, scientists adopting competing paradigms inevitably experience communication breakdowns; and they often find themselves talking past each other. He says that “communication across the revolutionary divide is inevitably *partial*” (Kuhn, 1970:149). It is not possible to restore communication simply by constructing an impartial, neutral language. It is because each word embedded in a different paradigm has different relations with everything else; and thus it has different connotations, which cannot just be neutralized by devising new definitions.

Thirdly, the transition is revolutionary, because a paradigm shift is not simply an extension or

a transformation of a theory; but it is an adoption of a whole new view of reality. In fact, Kuhn claims, quite radically, that as a paradigm changes, “the world changes” as well (Kuhn, 1970:192); and afterwards scientists work “in a different world” (Kuhn, 1970:118). For example, Kuhn explains that what Galileo saw as a pendulum, Aristotle had considered as a swinging stone (or constrained fall). In this case, he says, “Until that scholastic paradigm was invented, there were no pendulums, but only swinging stones, for the scientists to see”.

“Pendulums were brought into existence by something very much like a paradigm-induced *gestalt* switch” (Kuhn, 1970:120). In other words, a new paradigm brings new entities into existence. Because of this type of claim, Kuhn’s thesis is often charged with supporting relativism.

4.2.3 The neo-positivist criticism

On the basis of this summary of Kuhn’s theses concerning scientific revolutions and incommensurability, it seems natural that critics would complain that Kuhn’s view of paradigm shifts or theory choice leads to a vicious circle. Kuhn himself says that “the status of the circular debate is only that of persuasion. It cannot be made logically or even probabilistically compelling for those who refuse to step into the circle” (Kuhn, 1970:34). He further says that “a decision of that kind can only be made in faith” (Kuhn, 1970:158).

As a consequence, critics often argue that Kuhn’s thesis is a “subjective”, “irrational” (Siegal, 1978:141), an “intuitive or mystical affair, a matter for psychological description primarily” (Scheffler, 1967:18) and “depriving science of objectivity” (Kuhn, 1977:329). Among the critics, Israel Scheffler pushes his criticism to the extreme – about Kuhn’s thesis, by saying:

“Independent and public controls are no more; communication has failed; the common universe of things is a delusion; reality itself is made by the scientist, rather than discovered by him. In place of a continuity of rational men following objective procedures in the pursuit of truth, we [now] have a set of isolated monads, within each of which beliefs form without [any] systematic constraints” (Scheffler, 1967:19).

He goes on to argue against incomparability between paradigms; and he claims that Kuhn’s thesis will bring about a *total* communication breakdown between scientific communities. But it is quite contrary to our common experience. In the history of science, says Scheffler, it can be

easily observed that debates and competition between schools adopting different paradigms have always existed; and that common concepts and meanings of language have been retained. Therefore, as long as there is competition between paradigms, there must be a common framework between schools adopting these competing paradigms.

“If competing paradigms are indeed based on different worlds, and address themselves to different problems with the help of different standards, in what sense can they be said to be in competition? How is it that there is any rivalry at all between them? To declare them in competition is, after all, to place them within some common framework, to view them within some shared perspective – supplying, in principle at least, comparative and evaluative considerations applicable to both” (Scheffler, 1967:82).

Thus, Scheffler insists that there must be certain paradigm-independent criteria and standards, which are, in fact, located in the second or meta level. “Though it may be true that standards or criteria for puzzle-solving are internal to their own paradigm, it does not follow that the second-level criteria are also internal” (Scheffler, 1967:82).

In general, neo-positivist critics agree with Scheffler on this point; and they claim that the existence of the second level standards makes it possible to neutrally judge between paradigms (cf. Siegel, 1978:54-56; Harris, 1992:82-89). Carl Kordig also agrees with Scheffler's criticism.

“Kuhn has failed to show that paradigm differences imply evaluative differences at a second, or meta, level; he has not shown that the sharing of second-order criteria by enthusiasts of rival paradigms is impossible. He has, therefore, not demonstrated that scientific transitions consist only in non-cumulative persuasions and conversions” (Kordig, 1971:106).

In summary, Scheffler and the neo-positivists in general take Kuhn's incommensurability thesis to entail the problem of circular reasoning, *total* communication breakdown and irrationality in theory choice (i.e., no neutral (second-level) criteria).

4.2.4 Kuhn's response to the charges of circularity and relativism

After his book: *The structure of scientific revolutions*, Kuhn kept receiving and responding to critiques of the sort described above, although he often complained that they in fact “manifest [a] total misunderstanding” of his theses (Kuhn, 1977:321). Thus, he attempted to clarify his philosophy on several occasions: especially in the postscript to the second edition of his book,

Kuhn discussed in detail the problematic issues that had caused controversy.

The charges of circularity and relativism, in particular, are based on some of his statements affirming that when paradigms change, “the world changes” as well; and afterwards scientists find themselves “working in a different world” (Kuhn, 1970:192). Kuhn asserts that if his view implies relativism at all, it only applies to a certain limited area and in a particular sense. He explains in what sense, after a scientific revolution, scientists see “some areas” in a different way – by explaining the process of our perception (Kuhn, 1970:148-150, 191-198).

Contrary to what is usually assumed, Kuhn says that the process of perception is divided into two stages. These stages are: “stimulus” and “sensation”. When an object is seen, a stimulus of its image falls on the retina; and the latter is, in practice, the same to all who see the object from the same direction and distance.

Yet, Kuhn adds that that image is not what people actually perceive. They rather perceive a sensation, which is produced after the image is filtered through a certain “neural process” occurring between stimulus and sensation. Here, Kuhn’s point is that the neural process is systematically shaped, so to speak, by differences of education, culture, language of the knowing subject, and so forth. The initial raw stimulus is transformed into different data during this process. As a result, what is perceived is a sensation differing from person to person, according to one’s past experience, culture, education and language.

As further examples, Kuhn says that where Aristotle saw a swinging stone (or more precisely a “constrained fall”), Galileo saw a pendulum; and where, Newton saw “flat, homogeneous and isotropic” space, Einstein saw “curved” space. These examples indicate that, even if scientists (and lay persons) have the same stimuli from the same objects, they perceive different data, since the neural process is differently programmed by (a. o.) their respective paradigm.⁶² This is what

⁶² If my understanding is correct, an interesting (to me) illustration can explain Kuhn’s point in a more simple and practical way. A Korean psychologist gave a test to a group of students from Korea, America and other countries (Choi, 2012). After the test, the psychologist showed all the students’ scores to each student, so that one could compare these scores with his own. In response, Korean students showed a drastic displeasure, if their score was lower than others’, which was displayed by an MRI scan. Yet students from other countries did not show displeasure. The Korean psychologist analyzed the results to posit that the difference is due to the fact that Korean students have lived in a highly competitive society and culture where others’ success could be a great threat to their own. Here, the point is that the retinal stimulus (i.e., the image of the score in the test paper) is the same for all students, but during the neural process, which is differently programmed by their past experience, education or culture, the stimulus has

he means when he says that as a paradigm changes, scientists work in a different world. Kuhn adds, “notice now that two groups, the members of which have systematically different sensations on receipt of the same stimuli, do *in some sense* live in different worlds” (Kuhn, 1970:193. his italics).

However, there is an important aspect that one should not miss. After this claim, Kuhn immediately adds that it should be noticed that what makes this different view of the world possible is the existence of the shared world. He states that we have common, “immutable” stimuli that come from the same world (Kuhn, 1970:193); and our general neural apparatus is also the same. He says, “The stimuli that impinge upon them are the same. So is their general neural apparatus, however differently programmed [it may be]” (Kuhn, 1970:201).

He argues that these common (shared) areas enable us to avoid “individual and social solipsisms” (Kuhn, 1970:193), and to make our communication substantially successful. “Given that much in common”, he says, his thesis “is in any case far from *mere* relativism in a respect that its critics have failed to see” (Kuhn, 1970:205) and “conversely, if the position be relativism, I cannot see that the relativist loses anything needed to account for the nature and development of the sciences” (Kuhn, 1970:207).

In this response, what I would like to highlight is the fact that, in spite of the scientists’ different views in certain areas, Kuhn still acknowledges that scientists adopting different paradigms already share certain “immutable” data and the same world.

4.2.5 Kuhn’s response to the charge of “total” communication breakdown

Secondly, with regard to the charge of “total” communication breakdown, Kuhn again explains in what sense a communication breakdown may take place between scientists adopting competing paradigms. The participants of communication receive the same stimuli from an object or event, but they have different sensations from them. In this case, however, the problem is that the participants have no other option, but to use the same terms and locutions to describe the different sensations. In his example, Einsteinians use the term space as implying “curved”, while Newtonians imply notions as “flat, homogeneous, and isotropic”.

Copernicus uses the term earth as a synonym for a moving body; but others, in a different

been differently transformed and delivered to sensation. This different sensation is what people actually perceive. This illustration can show that with the same data, people perceive different things.

paradigm, use it as the synonym for a fixed planet. Therefore, Kuhn claims that the communication breakdown is caused by the same terms and locutions, which have different connotations. Moreover, Kuhn explains that this is not simply a linguistic problem, which could be resolved by stipulating neutral definitions of troublesome terms. Rather, he says, each term is involved in the whole “conceptual web, whose strands are space, time, matter, force, and so on” (Kuhn, 1970:149).

Thus, each term in a different paradigm has a different relationship with all the other terms. Therefore, it is only until a whole view or paradigm is shifted that the participants in the communication understand the other participants’ language completely.

In his explanation of the inevitable communication breakdown, however, it should not be missed that Kuhn again reminds us that it is not a “total” breakdown, as some critics allege; but it is only a “partial” breakdown (Kuhn, 1970:149, 198; 1977:337). It is partial because there is an underlying broadly shared realm of everyday language and common experience. Kuhn (1970:202-204) says that “both their everyday and most of their scientific world and language are shared”, and that the shared language and world make it possible to identify the areas of difference and understand and explain to each other how they differ.

Therefore, Kuhn also claims that his alleged relativism is not “total”; but that it may be “partial” (Kuhn, 1970a: 264-266).

This point would be clarified in his comparison between dialogue and the translation process; when scientists find difficulties in understanding each other in certain areas, in the first place, the participants to the communication may regard their opponents as members of different language communities, and try to translate what the opponents see and say into their own language (Kuhn, 1977:202). As translation proceeds, they come to understand each other’s view to the extent that they no longer regard their opponents’ anomalous behaviour “as the consequence of mere error or madness”.

They can experience vicariously the world that their opponents experience and become good predictors of the opponent’s behaviour (Kuhn, 1977:202). Kuhn acknowledges, of course, that even if they come to understand each other, the “conversion” of one party does not necessarily take place. This only happens after a paradigm shift. However, from the reverse perspective, Kuhn’s point is that in this process, the adherents to different paradigms have no difficulty to identify where they differ, and in understanding why they differ.

In other words, the communication breakdown between two schools is not total, but only partial. This communication and understanding are made possible because they already share an everyday language and a common world.

4.2.6 Kuhn's response to the irrationality charge

Thirdly, with regard to the “irrationality” charge, critics claim that for Kuhn, there are neither rational, objective (second-level) criteria, nor “any good reason of any kind, factual or otherwise” for theory choice. Therefore, theory choice becomes a “subjective” matter and “a matter of mob psychology” determined by “mere persuasive displays without deliberative substance” (Kuhn, 1977:321). For this criticism, Kuhn again complains that this charge is due to the critics' misconstructions of his thesis. Kuhn claims that it is true that he states that the decision “in theory choice cannot be resolved by proof”; and “to discuss their mechanism is, therefore, to talk about techniques of persuasion” (Kuhn, 1977:321).

Yet, this does not imply that there are no good reasons and no criteria to choose between competing theories. Rather, he agrees that the traditional criteria, such as “accuracy, consistency, scope, simplicity, and fruitfulness” are all standard criteria for evaluating the adequacy of a theory, and that they “provide *the* shared basis” for theory choice. Further, he says that he agrees entirely that they constitute “good reasons”; and they play a pivotal role in choosing a theory (Kuhn, 1977:322).

However, in spite of this entire acknowledgement, he also argues that those criteria cannot help but function as “values” (Kuhn, 1970:199). In other words, when they are applied in actual theory choice, the criteria are necessarily applied on the basis of an individual's particular value-weighting. For example, although accuracy is the most decisive criterion for discriminating among theories, the problem that scientists regularly encounter in actual theory choice is that they have to decide on which area they would place more significance, in order to choose a theory.

In the combustion theory, for example, the Oxygen theory could account more accurately for weight relations in chemical reactions than the Phlogiston theory. By contrast, the Phlogiston theory could account for “metals being more alike than the ores”, whereas the Oxygen theory could not (Kuhn, 1977:322). In this situation, then, scientists had to decide on which area they would put more significance, in order to be accurate in choosing a theory. Therefore, in the end,

in spite of their shared criterion of accuracy, the decision had to depend on their personal value-weighting in the significant area.

For some other cases, more than one criterion, such as, consistency and simplicity, could be involved, and be in conflict. For one theory, consistency may be strong and simplicity weak; while the opposite may be the case for another theory. Then, scientists have to decide on which criterion they would place more significance; and the decision again depends on their value-weighting.

Furthermore, Kuhn explains that this process of scientific theory choice can be generalized and applied to most aspects of our everyday life (cf. Kuhn, 1977:330). In the case of everyday experience, the criterion is usually called “maxim”, “norm”, or “value”. For example, when the choice is urgent, says Kuhn, people find that guiding maxims are frustratingly vague, or in conflict. Consider the contrasting maxims “he who hesitates is lost”, and “look before you leap”, or “many hands make light work”, and “too many cooks spoil the broth” (Kuhn, 1977:321). These are all good reasons and objective (second-level) bases on which to make a decision.

However, in an actual decision-making procedure, no one maxim can be a conclusive factor. Rather, each individual has to make his own personal decision between the opposing maxims, for which s/he must take the responsibility.

This situation is even more obvious, says Kuhn, in the case of “values”. Consider the value of “freedom of speech”. In an actual situation, this value is always in conflict with other values, such as the “preservation of life and property”. For example, one can express one’s thoughts, but one is not permitted to “incite to riot” or “shout fire” in a crowded theatre (Kuhn, 1977:321).

Through these explanations and illustrations, what has been shown is the fact that Kuhn does not deny the existence of good reasons and “shared” criteria (which his critics call “objective” or “second-level”) in theory choice and everyday decision-making. His thesis is rather that the shared criteria inevitably function within a mixture of subjective evaluations; and thus, at the end, our theory choice would inevitably depend on subjective factors. In this sense, he says that our scientific decisions are “intrinsically incomplete” and “insufficient”, if they are made only with objective criteria (Kuhn, 1977:324). Therefore, in this limited sense, Kuhn says that “there is no neutral algorithm for theory-choice; there is no systematic deciding procedure, which must lead each individual in the group to the same decision” (Kuhn, 1970:200).

Here, again, the point I want to highlight is that Kuhn does not deny the existence of common

shared criteria in the midst of his claim concerning the “irrationality” of theory choice.

Our analysis of Kuhn’s responses helps us to understand why he argues that his critics’ charge of relativism, irrationality and total communication breakdown is founded on a superficial understanding and partial misconstruction of Kuhn’s theses. It is now clearer that, while arguing that there is incommensurability between paradigms and irrationality in theory choice, Kuhn still acknowledges some common shared data, language and criteria between scientists adopting different paradigms.

4.2.7 The implications for apologetics

The neo-positivist critics maintain the existence of objective data and criteria; and they accuse Kuhn of rampant relativism and subjectivism. However, as a matter of fact, Kuhn has shown that the reality of scientific revolutions and incommensurability does not eliminate the existence of shared criteria for theory choice. Kuhn still acknowledges a broad realm of commonality between schools adopting different paradigms.

In terms of our apologetic interests, Kuhn’s thesis closely resonates with moderate presuppositional apologetics and the position of some Kuyperian authors, as far as they acknowledge both a common shared world; and at the same time, the disagreements caused by supra-rational factors. Specifically, Kuhn explains that in spite of common criteria, theory choice “cannot be resolved by proof”, because subjective “value-weighting” is involved.

This explanation reminds us of Frame’s account of the structure of theistic arguments. He says that on the basis of common logical criteria, people can universally agree with a logically valid argument. However, the conclusion cannot be universally agreed upon, because the truth of the premises is subjectively determined. Further, Kuhn’s broad realm of shared data, language and criteria is resonant with Kuyper’s three realms of commonality and Dooyeweerd’s common state of affairs.

Likewise, the second-generation evidential apologists have commonality with Kuhn’s view, since both of them agree on the existence of common elements and shared criteria between different paradigms. Yet, their differences lie in the fact that Kuhn denies the possibility of objective proof for theory choice (hence, theism), whereas the second-generation evidentialists insist that the common criteria would lead to an objective proof of the truth of Christian theism.

While this current section has dealt with the problem of subjective elements and common

ground in the specific case of paradigm (theory) choice in the area of philosophy of science, the next section deals with the problem of subjective elements and common ground, as our general ontological condition in the area of hermeneutics.

4.3 Gadamer and Habermas: the limits and possibilities of hermeneutics

4.3.1 Introduction to the debate between Gadamer and Habermas

Another important factor contributing to the anti-foundationalist inclinations of postmodern epistemology is the “philosophical hermeneutics” tradition, which can be traced back to the philosophy of Heidegger, and which was later systematically developed by Gadamer.

The debate between Gadamer and Jurgen Habermas was originally launched by Habermas’ essay: *A review of Gadamer’s truth and method*, written in 1967. According to this review, the primary conflict is between Gadamer’s “universal” claim of hermeneutics and Habermas’ concern about whether Gadamer’s claim can make “the critique of ideology” possible or not. That is, if all knowledge is constituted of hermeneutic “understanding” and is “situational” in its nature, then how could one distinguish “systematically distorted communication” from genuine communication?

In order for the discernment to be possible, Habermas claims that there ought to be a final “reference system”, which is beyond hermeneutic understanding; and thus Gadamer’s “universal” claim concerning hermeneutics should be restricted.

Having argued so, Habermas’ burden is to substantiate his claim by proving that there are such universal “real” factors or a “meta-theory”. For this purpose, Habermas launches his project to establish the “universal and unavoidable” infrastructures or conditions for the possibility of understanding among speaking subjects. With regard to this project, however, Gadamer argues that it cannot be successfully accomplished, since the meta-factors that are regarded as universal by Habermas can also be shown to be prejudiced by appealing to another level of hermeneutic understanding.

In the following discussion, in order to examine and evaluate the debate and then see its implication for apologetic epistemology, I will firstly introduce Gadamer’s “hermeneutic claim to universality” and then Habermas’ critique of it. Secondly, in explicating Habermas’ criticism, I will examine Habermas’ two suggestions for the existence of meta-factors (Habermas,

1990:252-272). His first suggestion is with regard to a psychoanalytic model. In this model, Habermas contends that “depth-hermeneutics” can show that a superficial hermeneutic understanding is, in fact, founded on deeper “explanatory” (scientific) theories, which are universal.

In his second suggestion, Habermas claims that there exists a “meta-theory” behind all communicative actions; and this meta-theory can be established through the project of “universal pragmatics”. Thirdly, I will examine Gadamer’s response, in which he insists on the value and necessity of “universal” hermeneutics. Finally, in evaluation, I will argue first of all that Gadamer’s universality claim to hermeneutics cannot be maintained because the position cannot avoid the problem of a “self-applicable contradiction”. That is to say, his universality claim itself needs to be hermeneutized. Secondly, I will claim that even if Habermas’ “general theory” is acknowledged as a common factor, it does not mean that it can bring about an ultimate consensus on concrete issues in dispute.

And, consequently, it cannot support the evidentialist’s claim concerning the possibility of objective proofs for Christian theism.

4.3.2 Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics and Habermas’ critique

In the last part of his magnum opus, *Truth and method* (1994), Gadamer discusses the notion of the linguisticity of our understanding and its ontological significance. That is, when we understand the world, he argues, we necessarily interpret it through the medium of a language inherited from our tradition. This is our ontological condition; and no-one can escape from this situation. In a famous passage, Gadamer says:

“We can now see that this activity of the thing itself, the coming into language of meaning, points to a universal ontological structure, namely to the basic nature of everything towards which understanding can be directed. Being that can be understood is language. The hermeneutical phenomenon here projects its own universality back onto the ontological constitution of what is understood, determining it in a universal sense as language, and determining its own relation to beings as interpretation. (...) That which can be understood is language” (Gadamer, 1994:474-475).

For Gadamer, the only way we can access and understand reality is through the medium of the language of one’s own tradition; and this is our universal ontological condition. In his later

article, *The universality of the hermeneutic problem* (1966), he further asserts that the hermeneutic problem is not restricted to the areas of art and history, but it “is really universal” and applies to every scientific assertion. Since every assertion in science should be understood as made in context, “no assertion is possible that cannot be understood as an answer to a question; and assertions can only be understood in this way” (Gadamer, 1966:11).

Therefore, he says, hermeneutics is “the mode of the whole human experience of the world” (Gadamer, 1966:15).

In response, however, Habermas points out the problems of this universality claim of hermeneutics. Above all, he argues that this claim jeopardizes the possibility of the critique of ideology or “systematically distorted communication”. If no fundamental criteria beyond hermeneutics are available to us, how can we distinguish distorted communication from true communication? He writes,

“Hermeneutics has taught us that we are always a participant, as long as we move within the natural language, and that we cannot step outside the role of a reflective partner. There is, therefore, no general criterion available to us. (...) [However,] the experience of the limit of hermeneutics consists of the recognition of systematically generated misunderstanding as such – without, at first, being able to ‘grasp’ it” (Habermas, 1990b:254).

He proceeds to ask: How can we know that the consensus based on “dialogic agreement” is a true one achieved without compulsion and distortion? Without criteria, he says, “a consensus achieved by seemingly ‘reasonable’ means may well be the result of pseudo-communication” (Habermas, 1990b:266). Therefore, Habermas (1990a:241) claims that there ought to be a “reference system” beyond the results of hermeneutics; and in fact, he attempts to provide some (quasi-) “transcendental” criteria beyond hermeneutics.

In order to achieve this goal, Habermas proposes two strategies in his article *The hermeneutic claim to universality* (Habermas, 1990b:252ff). In his first strategy, he aims to establish a “meta-theory”⁶³ of understanding among speaking subjects, a criterion against which every “communicative action”, including hermeneutic understanding, may be evaluated. However, in

⁶³ Later, Habermas replaces the term “meta-theory” with “rational reconstruction of the regulative rules of communicative competence”. The term “meta-theory” has a positivist connotation, whose project Habermas opposes.

his response to Gadamer, Habermas concedes that this project of meta-theory is not available “in the present context” (Habermas, 1990b:253). Nonetheless, at a later stage, Habermas continues this project under the name of “universal pragmatics”.

In his second strategy, Habermas introduces the notion of “depth-hermeneutics” derived from a psychoanalytic model. In psychoanalysis, he says, hermeneutic understanding is crucially important, but understanding in psychoanalysis must always be aided by “depth-hermeneutics”, which reveals causal explanations and scientific assumptions behind the hermeneutic understanding.

By referring to “depth-hermeneutics”, Habermas claims that “the general conditions of the pathology of everyday communication” will be established; and the individual cases of pathologically distorted communication can be discerned by referring to the general conditions. Further, he contends that when this model is extended to the social group, it should also serve to uncover any systematically distorted communication in society. Through the analysis of this model, Habermas aims to show that an “*explanatory* understanding would be possible, which transcends the limit of the hermeneutical understanding of meaning” (Habermas, 1990b:253).

With regard to these two strategies, I will first examine the “depth-hermeneutics” project to see if it works as “explanatory” or “critical” hermeneutics and serves as evidence to limit the universality claim of hermeneutics. Secondly, I will explore Habermas’ project of “universal pragmatics” as a continuation of his earlier suggested (but unattained) project to see whether the new initiative can provide a universal, meta-theory underlying all hermeneutic understanding.

If the result is affirmative, it would imply firstly that Gadamer’s “universality” of the hermeneutic problem should be restricted; and secondly, that those meta-factors constitute common ground, and thus support the epistemic position of the second-generation evidential apologists.

4.3.3 The depth-hermeneutics of psychoanalysis

To understand Habermas’ “depth-hermeneutics” of psychoanalysis, his illustration of the “scenic understanding” in a neurotic case will be helpful (Habermas, 1990b:255-257). In the supposed case, a patient may show a “privatized” and “excommunicated” use of a certain symbol from public use (for example, abnormal phobia towards a certain object), the cause of which is incomprehensible to the patient. An analyst tries to decode this “symptomatic scene” by relating

it to an “original traumatic scene”. For example, if a patient has a tendency to lose things (symptomatic scene), then the analyst makes the patient reflect through her personal traumatic history to see which event could have caused the symptom.

In this process, by employing his pre-assumed theories, the analyst determines which original event caused the current symptom, and connects the symptomatic scene to the original trauma (e.g., losing her mother in early childhood). This process of “scenic understanding” makes it possible for the analyst to “break through the specific incomprehensibility of the symptom and to assist in re-symbolization, i.e., the re-introduction into public communication of a symbolic content that has been split off” (Habermas, 1990b:256).

Habermas’ point is that when the analyst connects the two (symptomatic and original traumatic) scenes, the analyst refers to deeper “theoretical assumptions” as explanatory theories: for example, theories of “the condition of the emergence of systematic distortion”, “the general interpretation of infant patterns of interaction in personality development”, and so on (Habermas, 1990b:257). In other words, beneath the superficial hermeneutic understanding lies a deeper scientific and explanatory theory. In a more generalized statement, Habermas says, “depth-hermeneutics” shows the possibility of “critical” hermeneutics that goes beyond “the elementary hermeneutical understanding of meaning” (Habermas, 1990b:256).

In his reply, however, Gadamer (1967:18-43) argues that the choice of a psychoanalytic model can still be shown to be prejudiced by referring to another level of hermeneutic understanding. Firstly, he argues that Habermas’ explanation of a psychoanalytic case brings about “methodical alienation”. That is, the general theory that the analyst refers to in making a connection between the two scenes is abstracted from the context, and it is assumed to be neutral and objective. However, Gadamer says, the theory must be one of the prevailing theories in his times, and the product of a tradition.

According to Gadamer “this means that psychoanalysis is exposed again to another act of hermeneutical reflection, in which one must ask: How does the psychoanalyst’s special knowledge relate to his own position within the societal reality (to which, after all, he does belong)?” (Gadamer, 1967:41).

Secondly, Gadamer criticizes Habermas’ assumption that the psychoanalytic approach can be extended and transferred to societal phenomena. In psychoanalysis, the patient and the analyst are not on even terms; the patient is an object of analysis to the analyst. In a societal context,

however, everyone is on even terms. Should it be claimed that there are doctor and patient roles in a societal context, then, the question is: Who should play the doctor (normal), and who should be the patient (deviant)? He also wonders, if a general scientific theory is to be chosen, “whose theory should be chosen as normalcy?” (Gadamer, 1967:42).

Consequently, Gadamer concludes that a “*more* universal hermeneutic reflection” is required to correct these fallacies of Habermas’ depth hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1967:42).

In reply to this criticism, Habermas also admits that an analyst adopts a particular psychoanalytic theory available in his times, and that both the patient and the analyst belong to one larger framework of consensus that binds them together in community. In spite of this recognition, Habermas insists that one should not stop at this consensus, because it is still possible that this consensus is arrived at by forced constraint. He says, “[Gadamer’s considerations] can, however, be shaken by the depth-hermeneutical insight that a consensus achieved by seemingly ‘reasonable’ means may well be the result of pseudo-communication” (Habermas, 1990b:266).

Therefore, he again argues that it is necessary to move beyond Gadamer’s “existing convictions”, and to strive to reveal the “structure of systematic distortion” hidden in social agreements by way of “a critically enlightened” depth-hermeneutical method.

With this reiterated reply, then, the immediate question would be whether Habermas can, in fact, provide the underlying “universal” structure or general criteria that could reveal the systematic distortion.

4.3.4 Habermas’ universal pragmatics: “rational reconstruction of the rules of communicative competence”

Habermas’ effort to seek a general theory or universal structure behind understanding is carried out by his project of “universal pragmatics”, which he placed under the heading of “formal” pragmatics and developed into his “theory of communicative action”. In his essay: *What is universal pragmatics?* (1979), Habermas clarifies that the goal of the project is to identify and reconstruct “universal conditions of possible understanding” or “general presuppositions” of “communicative action aimed at reaching understanding” (Habermas, 1979:1).

In the first place, Habermas explains that “in our socio-cultural stage of evolution”, mutual understanding is made possible through the specific medium of language; and the analysis of

language is an essential part of his project. In his examination of language, however, he deviates from the traditional analysis by focusing on the components of the sentence and delimiting its object domain to phonetic, syntactic and semantic features of sentences in abstraction from their pragmatic dimension.

Habermas contends that this type of analysis causes a kind of “abstract fallacy”. By contrast, he argues that linguistic study should not be separated from “the actual use of language in concrete situations”, that is, *performance* or *speech*. Thus, for his universal pragmatics, certain pragmatic features of *utterance* – that is, not language but speech – become the focal subject domain (Habermas, 1979:26).

4.3.5 Four validity claims as universal presuppositions of utterance

Unlike the abstract analysis of the components of sentences, says Habermas, focusing on “utterance” helps to situate the speaker in relation to the extra-linguistic worlds (i.e., external world, inner world, social world). Thus, there are three different ways to test an utterance. Firstly, an utterance can be tested by its reference to things in the real world (i.e., the external world). Secondly, an utterance can be tested by referring to the intentions of the speaker (i.e., the inner world). Thirdly, an utterance can be tested with reference to the success or failure of its intended performance (i.e., the social world). Among these three dimensions of utterance, the third way of testing is made possible in the context of inter-personal involvement and mutual understanding.

Thus, Habermas says that his universal pragmatics, which seeks the infrastructure of understanding, focuses on this performative dimension of utterance, and seeks to “reconstruct” what is implicit in the performative (communicative) competence. It is a reconstruction of what makes our utterance understandable? – and of what allows a hearer to perform his/her intended action as a result of such understanding. In his terms, formal pragmatics is the project to “reconstruct”, that is, to give an “explicit account” of what is implicitly presupposed in our natural “communicative competence”. That is, the competence to make an utterance not only in a grammatically correct way, but also to influence hearers in the intended way (Habermas, 1979:35).

For example, according to Pedersen (2007:469), in the event that a speaker makes an utterance (e.g., “give me a glass of water”) and, without causing any trouble, a hearer responds to it as the speaker asks in the utterance (i.e., she brings a glass of water). What has implicitly taken place is

that the communicative action is performed in a valid way; and the participants to the communication come to understand each other without problems. Habermas' interest lies in the underlying general conditions for the "communicative competence" that make the communicative action (utterance) understood, and influence the hearer in the intended way.

In his essay: *What is universal pragmatics?* (1979), he summarises that "insofar as [a speaker] wants to participate in a process of reaching understanding, he cannot avoid raising the following – and indeed precisely the following – validity claims" (Habermas, 1979:2). These are:

- "a. *Uttering* something understandably;
- b. Giving [the hearer] *something* to understand;
- c. Making *himself* thereby understandable; and
- d. Coming to an understanding *with another person*" (Habermas, 1979:2).

To "unpack" the meaning of these rather concise phrases, what is necessarily presupposed in utterance (communicative action), in order to make oneself understood is, firstly, that the utterance must be comprehensible and intelligible. For example, if I make an utterance in Korean or in grammatically incorrect English to an American, I cannot expect the hearer to understand me. Secondly, the speaker must communicate "a true propositional content" that can represent something connected to fact and experience, so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker. Thirdly, the speaker must express his intentions truthfully, so that the hearer may believe the truthfulness of the speaker's utterance and trust him. Fourthly, the speaker must choose an utterance that is right or appropriate in the social context, "so that the hearer and the speaker can accept the utterance and agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background" (Habermas, 1979:3).

Among these normative claims, while only the first one is "language-immanent", the others place the speaker's utterance in relation to the extra-linguistic world, that is, to the external world (the second claim), to the inner subjective world (the third claim), and the normative world of society (the fourth claim). Thus, if an utterance fails to be understood, it needs to be examined in the light of the validity claims; and each claim must be tested by its appropriate standards.

Huttunen's (2003) illustration may also be helpful here. Let us suppose that someone contends that "teachers have the right to practise indoctrination in schools". This claim refers to

the social world; and its proper standard for evaluation is justice. Thus, if one is a competent speaker, s/he should correctly challenge this contention by stating that it contradicts that which is commonly considered to be morally correct behaviour.

By contrast, if someone responds by saying, for example, that my “inner self tells me it is wrong” (that is, by appealing to the standard of “truthfulness”), or “it is scientifically proven that indoctrination is wrong” (that is, by appealing to the standard of “truth”), the speaker is not considered communicatively competent (Huttunen, 2003). In other words, this tells us that behind our utterances there is an underlying (though implicit) “rational structure”.

With this analysis, Habermas is hereby emphatic that these validity claims are “universal” and “unavoidable” conditions of possible understanding. That is, no “communicative action oriented towards mutual understanding” could possibly fail to raise all of these validity claims.

4.3.6 Universal presuppositions of discursive communicative action

On top of this claim for a universal structure of utterance, Habermas also proceeds to argue that there must be a particular set of universal presuppositions for the case of an “argumentative form” of communication. If I keep using Huttunen’s illustration above, we may suppose that a hearer rejects a certain communicative action, when s/he doubts certain validity claims of the utterance. This may happen, for example, if s/he doubts that the action (utterance) presupposes or explicates states of affairs, which are not the case; or, if s/he thinks that it gives reasons to doubt the intentions or sincerity of the speaker; or, if s/he thinks that it does not conform to accepted normative expectations.

In this case, Habermas explains that when any validity claim is challenged, in order to “vindicate” and “redeem” the speaker’s validity claim, both the speaker and the hearer need to thematize the challenged validity and discuss it. In this case, Habermas says that their communication moves into a specific type of “discursive” communication. In this type of communication, by contrast to everyday communication (in which the four validity claims are implicit), the validity claims are made explicit and thematized and a reflective form of argumentation is employed.

In this case, Habermas brings up the idea of an “ideal speech situation” and of “idealized presuppositions” of discursive argumentation. In all forms of discursive communication, Habermas says that the actors presuppose certain “idealizing suppositions”, which are rooted in

the very structure of the “argumentative action aimed towards understanding”. The idealizing suppositions are derived from the idea that argumentation should take place in a situation where the equality and symmetry of the participants to the communication are maximally guaranteed, so that no outer or inner coercion could interfere.

In other words, the idealizing suppositions are a more rigorous set of presuppositions, in addition to the above-listed validity claims of everyday communicative action. They are also “idealized” and “counterfactual” presuppositions – in the sense that they are only approximately satisfied by the participants and never completely realized. In his article *Discourse ethics* (1990c), Habermas formulates these idealized presuppositions of discursive argumentation as follows:

- “(2.1) Every speaker may assert only what he really believes.
- (2.2) A person who disputes a proposition or norm under discussion must provide a reason for wanting to do so.
- (3.1) Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
- (3.2) a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever. b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse. c. Everyone is allowed to express his/her attitudes, desires and needs.
- (3.3) No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (3.1) and (3.2)” (Habermas, 1990c:88-89).

In short, here, a participant’s responsibility and authenticity (2.1, 2.2), openness and symmetrical interaction (3.1, 3.2), and excluded inner or outer constraints (3.3), are presented as the universal presupposition of discursive communication action on top of the four validity claims of our everyday communicative action.

Now, in summary of Habermas’ project of “universal pragmatics”, we can say that he first followed a linguistic route, since understanding is achieved by the mediation of language. Then, he analysed the pragmatic dimension of language (utterance) to find its fundamental infrastructure that makes (inter-subjective) understanding possible. As a result, he claimed that what is universally presupposed as an infrastructure in everyday communicative action are four validity claims (comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness, and rightness). Finally, concerning the particular case of “discursive” communicative action, he claimed that a more rigorous set of idealized suppositions (pointing towards authenticity, openness, equality and symmetry among the participants) are presupposed as part of a universal infrastructure.

4.3.7 Gadamer's response to Habermas' universal pragmatics

The purpose of Habermas' universal pragmatics was to reconstruct the "universal" and "unavoidable" infrastructure (or presuppositions) of understanding, showing that the infrastructure is constituted by a set of general criteria – to discern between distorted and genuine communicative actions. At the same time, this infrastructure is meant to show that Gadamer's hermeneutics is not universally applicable, but needs to be restricted.

In order to examine Gadamer's response to this claim, I have to take a somewhat indirect route. The first reason to do so is that their debate stopped before Habermas' universal pragmatics was fully developed; and Gadamer did not discuss Habermas' project after his previous response. The second reason is that there is a structurally unbridgeable gap between the projects of Gadamer and Habermas. This caused a communication breakdown between them, as I will explain below. However, it should be sufficient to discuss Gadamer's earlier response to Habermas' article with regard to the function of reflection, and to conclude with a general evaluation of his philosophical hermeneutics.

Gadamer's initial response to Habermas' project can be traced in his article: *On the scope and function of hermeneutic reflection* (1967). In the article, Gadamer responds to Habermas' description of the function of reflection (or reason). Habermas says that "the power of reflection" includes the ability to go behind the appropriated tradition and to criticize it. He says: "Gadamer's prejudice for the rights of prejudices certified by tradition denies the power of reflection. The latter proves itself, however, in being able to reject the claim of tradition. Reflection dissolves substantiality because it not only confirms, but [it] also breaks up, dogmatic forces" (Habermas, 1990a:237).

In his response, however, Gadamer says that the abstract division between "reflection and tradition" or "reason and authority" implicit in Habermas' criticism, is in itself "a dogmatic prejudice" inherited from the Enlightenment tradition. Rather, he says, reason itself is immersed and shaped by tradition, and is not external to it. Thus, the critical acceptance or rejection of tradition is inevitably a prejudiced judgment (Gadamer, 1977:38-43). As a result, he claims that the hermeneutic problem is still universal in scope; and there is no general criterion, on which a particular tradition may be neutrally judged.

However, this claim cannot subdue Habermas' opposition and his belief in the rationality of

reflection. As already observed, on the one hand, Habermas does not deny the necessity of hermeneutic understanding; but he acknowledges the limitations of reason. In fact, he is the one who introduced hermeneutics into social science. In spite of this fact, the problem is that he cannot tolerate the epistemological consequences of the “universality” claim of hermeneutics. If every criterion is hermeneutized as prejudiced, then, no communication and understanding could be recognized as genuine or distorted. Therefore, he reiterates his point that:

“The methodical cultivation of prudence in the hermeneutic sciences shifts the balance between authority and reason. (...) But in grasping the genesis of the tradition, from which it proceeds and on which it turns back, reflection shakes the dogmatism of life-practices” (Habermas, 1990a:236).

That is, Habermas insists that reason (reflection) can get down to the very origin of tradition and criticize it to dissolve its dogmatism.

4.3.8 A personal assessment of the dialogue/debate

In this way, the debate circles on and on – without any stopping point. Thus, to resolve this problem, I would suggest that a more fundamental issue needs first to be addressed. From my perspective, one of the reasons for their conflict seems to lie in their incommensurably different concerns and interests on the issue. They have different goals and presuppositions. On the one hand, Habermas is more concerned with hermeneutics’ epistemological consequences for social theory and critique of ideology; and so he needs to insist on the critical and epistemic functions of reason. On the other hand, Gadamer’s concern is about laying out the ontological conditions of understanding, so that, in that light, he may debunk the problem of metaphysics and scientism, regardless of its epistemological consequences.

In fact, Gadamer clarifies that his philosophical hermeneutics is not to be understood as a prescriptive methodology or epistemology, but rather as ontology (Gadamer, 1971:296).

In my opinion, the conflict is to a large extent caused by their ultimate concerns (ontological description versus epistemological consequences). In his evaluation of the debate, Ricoeur also points out the transition of concern, in philosophical hermeneutics.

“From Heidegger onwards, hermeneutics is wholly engaged in going back to the foundations, a movement which leads from the epistemological question

concerning the conditions of possibility of the human sciences to the ontological structure of understanding” (Ricoeur, 1990:321).

At this point, Habermas’ obvious question is to know how Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics can cope with its own epistemological consequences. Is there a bridge between the two giants of modern epistemology? This is also a question raised by Ricoeur. Continuing the quotation above, he asks “whether the return route from ontology to epistemology is possible”. He answers in the negative: “Ontological hermeneutics seems incapable, *for structural reasons*, of unfolding this problematic of return” (Ricoeur, 1990:322).

This is obvious, Ricoeur adds, from the fact that “Heidegger himself abandons this question as soon as it is asked”; and from Heidegger on, all the critical efforts of philosophical hermeneutics are “spent in the work of deconstructing metaphysics” (Ricoeur, 1990:322). In other words, from Heidegger on, while focusing on ontological descriptions, philosophical hermeneutics has rendered its epistemological problem a non-issue. The issue was simply dismissed.⁶⁴

This point is also confirmed by Gadamer’s letter concerning Richard Bernstein’s book: *Beyond objectivism and relativism* (1983). Gadamer responds to Bernstein’s (and Habermas’) epistemological concerns: “I do not see why for my part I should not recognize this [Habermas’] task. [However], it certainly isn’t my own concern” (Gadamer, 1991:264). He adds: “I am not talking about what is to be done, in order to realize this state of affairs. Rather, I am concerned with the fact that the displacement of human reality never goes so far that no forms of solidarity exist any longer” (Gadamer, 1991:264).

That is, by reiterating his ontological concern, he simply dismisses the epistemological question.

For this dismissal, can Gadamer’s remark that “it certainly isn’t my own concern” be regarded as sufficient in a philosophical discussion? One could ask, as Habermas did: Why should philosophy (or reason) stop at the ontological description and go no further? In a similar vein, if Gadamer’s hermeneutics indeed denies providing certain criteria for judging traditions, then, it could be objected that his hermeneutics cannot provide the legitimate ground on which the current tradition should be accepted, rather than rejected.

⁶⁴ This is exactly Foucault, Rorty, and Derrida’s attitude towards epistemological issues, as far as I can see. When they are asked regarding the relativistic consequence of their philosophy, they simply respond that it is not an issue of their concern.

Warnke rightly raises this problem; and she calls it Gadamer's "conservatism". If there are no legitimate or independent criteria, then, why ought one to accept the current tradition dogmatically? Why not dogmatically reject it? Thus, she argues that "Gadamer's thesis here is the fundamentally conservative one" (Warnke, 1987:136). If this view is pushed a little further, then, philosophical hermeneutics could be said to harbour relativistic implications. Our understanding is historically finite, and rationality is tradition-bound; and thus, there is no universally valid norm and principle.

Regarding this epistemological problem of relativism, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics would only answer: "It is not my concern". However, Habermas and others (especially, the evidential apologists) naturally cannot tolerate this answer.

On top of this, there is another side of the problem of the universality claim of hermeneutics. That is, if Gadamer claims that every understanding is tradition-bound and thus finite and fallible, how could he claim that his discovery of the hermeneuticity of our understanding is "universal"? Is his claim to universality "trans-historical", and thus an exception to its own rule? This question has also been raised by Karl Otto Apel. In his response, Gadamer simply dismisses this criticism and reiterates his claim that it is a "universally valid" discovery (Gadamer, 1994:xxxiii).

Grondin tries to defend Gadamer in this matter by asserting that Gadamer's ontological claim is only about the description of a common, universal "dimension", and that it is not an epistemic claim (1994:162). However, in order to be consistent with his "universal" hermeneutics, no description should be without prejudice. It seems to me that Gadamer's "universality" claim to hermeneutics simply hides a self-applicable contradiction, since its own claim needs to be hermeneutically processed and recognized as prejudiced.

From this broad analysis of the incommensurable ultimate concerns of Gadamer and Habermas, if we return to Habermas' defence of the universal infrastructure beyond the limits of hermeneutic understanding, we can imagine what the response would be. Gadamer would insist that no claim could be exempted from the scope of hermeneutics, and that the infrastructure should also be evaluated hermeneutically, and regarded as prejudiced. However, the problem is that his hermeneutics would not be able to take responsibility for its own epistemological consequences.

4.3.9 Clarifications and implications for apologetics

In our examination so far, it has been shown that Habermas' universal factors have not been definitely refuted by Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Rather, he avoids dealing with the issue. What does this result imply for our discussion of apologetic approaches? If the infrastructures are admitted to be universal, do they support the evidentialist's claim that there are neutral criteria to establish an objective proof for any concrete issue in debate, especially the issue of Christian theism?

To answer this question, we need to examine whether or not Habermas' universal infrastructure is really intended to guarantee an ultimate consensus on concrete issues. In fact, Habermas often mentions that "consensus" or "agreement" is the condition for the possibility of communicative action. Thus, our question is whether Habermas assumes that, if the infrastructural conditions are acknowledged and faithfully observed, such understanding leads to an ultimate consensus on concrete issues (in our case, on the issue of the truth of theism).

In the first place, we need to clarify Habermas' concept of "consensus". In fact, Pedersen explains that because Habermas often mentions consensus or agreement, critics are likely to get the wrong impression that Habermas' reconstructed structure would lead to "the final consensus that could end all conversation" on the subject matter in dispute (Pedersen, 2008:472). On this problem, Cooke says that this is a mistaken understanding⁶⁵ of Habermas, and explains that, unlike the usual sense of universal accord on a subject matter, "the idea of consensus is, for Habermas, an example of idealizing suppositions implicit in all forms of communicative action" (Cooke, 1993:249).

In other words, like the other suppositions of authenticity, openness, equality and symmetry among the participants, consensus is an example of the idealizing suppositions that participants necessarily assume as a part of the very notion of argumentation. Every participant agrees that those suppositions are implicitly acknowledged, and that they should be observed in argumentation. Without assuming this consensus on the idealizing suppositions, there is no point in participating in such a discussion. Suppose that a discussion is neither authentic nor open,

⁶⁵ In fact, Cooke claims that "in dealing with (...) consensus as an idealizing supposition implicit in the very notion of a serious discussion, I consider the charge often levelled against Habermas that he denies particularity, difference and non-identity in favour of unity, consensus and transparency. (...) I suggest that Habermas' position is sometimes misunderstood in this regard" (Cooke, 1993:247).

equal nor symmetrical among the participants, but that it is coerced by external constraints. The discussion would be meaningless. That is, for Habermas, the idea of consensus, rather than indicating an ultimate agreement on concrete issues, is another universal condition that makes discursive communication possible.

On the basis of this definition, it is clear that Habermas' notion of consensus provides the condition for difference and disagreement in a legitimate way. Best (1996) rightly points out that Habermas' concept of consensus has as its only purpose "to provide a rational basis for an argumentation process that allows for differences and disagreements" (Best, 1996:415), since the participants have consensus on universal conditions, such as, for example, "everyone is allowed to participate", "everyone has an equal right", and so on.

In the same way, other infrastructural elements, such as the four validity claims and ideal suppositions should be understood as having the same function. That is, while Habermas develops these general factors to show that there is a certain rational structure behind our communicative competence and hermeneutic understanding, they are not meant to lead to an ultimate consensus on the concrete issues in dispute. They should be understood as a "rational basis for communicative action", so that they can function only as boundaries and limits to discern irrational or distorted communicative actions from genuine ones.

In other words, within communicative actions that are discerned to be genuine, the general factors cannot work further as epistemic foundations or as objective criteria to decide on concrete issues in dispute. For example, even if my utterance satisfies the universal conditions of the four validity claims (intelligibility, truth, truthfulness and rightness), this does not mean that the hearer must agree with me on the concrete issue in dispute. The observance of the validity claims only makes the hearer genuinely understand the meaning of my communicative action.

At this moment, this reflection on the function of the universal structure of Habermas can be compared and extended to the analysis of Dooyeweerd's "transcendental critique" and Kuhn's "moderate incommensurability" thesis. In fact, Habermas claims that, while his universal pragmatics reconstructs the underlying structure of inter-subjective understanding, this methodology of rational reconstruction could be generalized as "reconstructive science". He says that the "rational reconstruction" not only belongs to social science, but it can also be extended to any discipline that seeks deep "rule systems" that make possible "superficial competent performance and intuitive command" over the domain.

Habermas says that the reconstructive science could include the disciplines of “logic and meta-mathematics, of epistemology and the philosophy of science, of linguistics and the philosophy of language, of ethics and the theory of action, aesthetics, the theory of argumentation, etc.” (Habermas, 1983:260). In other words, Habermas assumes that there is a peculiar fundamental infrastructure in each discipline, and that it can be explicitly identified by way of rational reconstruction.

In the light of this notion of rational reconstruction, I believe that Dooyeweerd’s transcendental critique could be viewed as part of a rational reconstructive science, and that Dooyeweerd’s discovered structure of theoretical thought is one of the deep structures in the discipline of epistemology. At the same time, one should not forget that Dooyeweerd’s structure of theoretical thought does not function as an epistemic foundation or as an objective criterion to settle concrete issues, just as Habermas’ universal pragmatics does not seek objective criteria to reach an ultimate consensus on the issues in dispute.

Further, I would claim that both Habermas and Kuhn give a similar account on the respective functions of the reconstructed structure and shared criteria. Both agree that there are common criteria for theory choice (Kuhn) and authentic communicative action (Habermas); but they also argue that the criteria cannot function as a neutral standard to decide on the concrete issues in a dispute.

If this analysis of Habermas’ reconstructive project is applied to evidentialist apologetics, the result is obvious. Even if some infrastructures of argumentation or communicative action are assumed to be universal, they would not lead to an agreed conclusion on the issues under debate. Likewise, even if the evidentialist’s claim for common and universal factors (such as the law of non-contradiction, common historical facts) is granted, the latter cannot constitute an epistemic common ground or objective criterion on which objective Christian theism can be established.

In the last part of this section, let us move on to one more important factor that contributes to the anti-foundationalist inclinations of postmodern epistemology, namely pancritical rationalism.

4.4 Pancritical rationalism and Apel’s philosophical foundations

4.4.1 Introduction to the debate

While the previous discussions were about the anti-foundationalist trend in empirical science (Kuhn and the neo-positivists) and hermeneutic philosophy (Gadamer and Habermas), the

present discussion moves on to the topic of the philosophical foundations in the context of Karl O. Apel's debate on pancritical rationalism. Apel's philosophy attempts to bring together analytical philosophy and continental hermeneutic philosophy; and it seeks a philosophical foundation in the context of their combination. More specifically, in response to pancritical rationalism that claims that all alleged philosophical foundations can be doubted (fallible), and that any alleged "proof" on the basis of evidence is simply a "dogmatic stopping point", Apel claims that even if he grants the principle of fallibilism, certain "indubitable" evidences and philosophical foundations can still be maintained beyond criticism (doubt).

In this section, I will examine whether Apel's defence of philosophical foundations can be sustained against pancritical rationalism. If Apel's philosophical foundations are indeed acknowledged, then, what would the implications be for the evidentialist's claim concerning objective proof?

In this discussion, pancritical rationalism may well represent the position of postmodern apologetics, in that both groups claim that no final foundation (no stopping point) exists, and that objective proof is not available. By contrast, Apel's claim for philosophical foundations may well support the epistemological position of the second-generation evidentialists, who insist on the existence of indubitable evidence, and deny the tenability of postmodern apologetics.

4.4.2 The fallibilist principle in critical rationalism

Before Apel's argument for philosophical foundations is examined, let us briefly describe critical rationalism and its contentions. This will give us a better idea of the context in which Apel sets forth his claims concerning "the transcendental foundations of philosophical argumentation".

Radnitzky, one of the later Popperians, explains critical rationalism in its distinction from justificationism (or foundationalism). "Justificationism" contends that scientific theory and knowledge in general can be justified on the basis of evidence (e.g., rational proof or experience) (Radnitzky, 1987:281). In contrast, Popper, who coined the term "critical rationalism" (non-justificationism) contends that no theory can be justified by an appeal to the evidence, as Hume had already proved that generalization (theory) cannot be derived from observation (evidence). Rather, Popper says that scientific theory and human knowledge in general are generated by creative imagination to solve the problems arising in a specific historico-cultural setting. Therefore, theories are "conjectural" and "hypothetical" in nature (Popper, 1972:30).

Once a theory is conjectured, it must be tested by criticism, and controlled by “attempted refutation”. In this continuous process of “conjecture and refutation”, knowledge progresses (Popper, 1989:vii), although it never arrives at a final point of certainty. “The quest for certainty (...) is mistaken. (...) though we may seek for truth, (...) we can never be quite certain that we have found it” (Popper, 1966, 2:375). Thus, for the critical rationalist, all knowledge is revisable and fallible.

Following this critical rationalism, Albert, one of the later Popperians, further develops the principle of fallibilism, and contends that any claim for philosophical foundations is always entangled with what he calls the “Munchhausen Trilemma”; that is, 1) An infinite regress in search for further grounding reason; 2) logical circularity due to presupposing the premises, which themselves are in need of justification; 3) dogmatic breaking off of the process of giving reasons (Albert, 1985:18). Thus, Albert says that ever since Aristotle, every claim that some epistemic evidence is certain and indubitable “can be fundamentally doubted”.

In his opinion “any assertion whose truth is certain and, therefore, not in need of justification” is simply “a dogma” (Albert, 1985:19).

Among this fallibilist group, Radnitzky further explains that there is a distinction between “self-applicable” and “non-self-applicable” fallibilists. The latter group claims that, whereas it is granted that the principle is always applicable to the “object-level” knowledge, it cannot be applicable to the “meta-level” knowledge, such as the principle of fallibilism itself, because if the principle is applicable to itself, it would cancel out its own claim.⁶⁶ By contrast, some other Popperians, such as Bartley and Albert hold that, regardless of the level, the principle is applicable to all statements; and thus, the principle itself could be fallible (Radnitzky, 1985:287). This latter position was called “pancritical rationalism” by Bartley (1984:118).⁶⁷

Apel stands against this latter view, and claims that there must be certain indubitable evidences and foundations to which the principle of fallibilism cannot be applied. Apel’s

⁶⁶ Radnitzky (1985:294-296) says that belonging to this latter group are Ayer, Putnam, theologian Karl Barth and Apel.

⁶⁷ Bartley defines as “pancritical rationalist” a thinker who “holds all his positions, including his most fundamental standards, goals, and decisions, and his basic philosophical position itself, open to criticism; one who protects nothing from criticism by justifying it irrationally; one who never cuts off an argument by resorting to faith or irrational commitment to justify some belief that has been under severe critical fire; one who is committed, attached, [and] addicted, to no position” (Bartley, 1984:118).

philosophy, however, should not be mistaken for naïve classical foundationalism on the basis of this claim.⁶⁸ Rather, the current debate between Apel and the pancritical rationalists should be viewed as taking place among the fallibilist philosophers.

4.4.3 Apel’s “indubitable evidences” and “philosophical foundations” against pancritical rationalism

Since Apel believes that it is obvious that self-applicable fallibilism cannot avoid the problem of self-contradiction, he claims that, in order to avoid the problem and make critical rationalism itself a meaningful method, there must be certain philosophical foundations, which are not fallible and are beyond criticism (doubt). In order to substantiate his claim, Apel distinguishes his discussion on “indubitable” foundations into two different levels. They are, in Wittgenstein’s terms, the level of paradigmatic evidence of a particular language game, and that of language games in general.

For the former case, in the end, Apel reluctantly concedes that, even though certain paradigmatic evidence is indubitable, it is relative to language games; and thus, it is revisable *in principle*, while for the latter case, the foundations are “transcendental”, and are not open to criticism.

In the beginning of his article: *The problem of philosophical foundations in light of a transcendental pragmatics of language* (1987),⁶⁹ Apel discusses how he agrees and disagrees with Albert’s pancritical rationalism, in order to explain that his own claim for indubitable evidence should not be mistaken for classical rationalism or empiricism.

Firstly, with regard to Albert’s objection that a philosophical foundation cannot be found in a logico-mathematical system, since its axioms are not proven, but accepted as intuitive knowledge, Apel simply agrees, but adds that this issue has been recognized from the time of Aristotle (Apel, 1987:254). Apel says that Aristotle already explained that the law of non-contradiction is an

⁶⁸ By classical foundationalism, I denote the epistemic position (represented by classical rationalism and empiricism) stating that the foundation of knowledge must be absolutely secure by the evidence, which is infallible, or incorrigible or indubitable or certain. It is naïve in the sense that this position is unrealizable and debunked by Plantinga’s criticism (cf. section 2.4.3).

⁶⁹ For our following discussion, I mainly examine this article in detail. The reason is that, although the present article is his relatively early work, his fundamental ideas are already formulated and, above all, the issues he discusses in the article deal with the typical claims of the evidential apologists against postmodern epistemology.

axiom, which is to be accepted without demonstration. Aristotle said:

“Some indeed demand that even this shall be demonstrated, but this they do through want of education, for not to know of what things one should demand demonstration, and of what one should not, argues want of education. For it is impossible that there should be [a] demonstration of absolutely everything (there would be an infinite regress, so that there would still be no demonstration)” (Aristotle, 1941, 4:6).

In more recent times, says Apel, it is Descartes who started a new approach to the quest for foundations, and who finds his certainties in the evidence (“evidentness”) of our consciousness. In this approach, says Apel, instead of a logic or mathematical system, evidence in consciousness (whether it is a datum from empirical experience or an idea in mind) becomes the requirement of a philosophical foundation; and, at the same time, epistemology is given the status of *prima philosophia* over logic and ontology.

However, Albert’s criticism is that placing the philosophical foundation in the evidence of subjective consciousness cannot avoid the problem of the Munchhausen trilemma either, because no evidence can be final and indubitable.

Against this criticism, Apel argues that Albert commits the error of categorical fallacy, so to speak, because Albert’s trilemma-criticism can only be applied to the case where philosophical foundations are purely deduced from formal logic. In other words, to apply his trilemma-criticism, the (empirical or *a priori*) epistemic evidence in consciousness needs to be purely deduced from formal logic. However, Apel claims that the consciousness’ evidence of classical rationalism and empiricism is neither derived from, nor reducible to, logic. Rather, it involves “the pragmatic dimension of evidence for a knowing subject” (Apel, 1987:255).

In other words, the evidence is not in the same category with formal logic; and thus, it cannot be criticized by the logical criteria of the Munchhausen trilemma.

Apel’s refutation of Albert’s criticism, however, does not mean that he endorses classical rationalism or empiricism, or that he advocates that philosophical foundations can be found in the evidence of consciousness. Rather, his point is that the problem of those approaches should be located in other dimensions. That is, their real problem lies in the fact that they seek the philosophical foundation in the solipsistic individual consciousness, while ignoring the dimension of the “inter-subjective validity” of the epistemic evidence in consciousness.

Apel explains that when any evidence in consciousness, such as “perceptions” or “ideas

(categorical intuitions)” becomes epistemic evidence, it accompanies judgments. For example, an idea of a rose’s redness in consciousness is, in judgment, turned into a statement: “The rose is red”. In this process, with the mediation of language, epistemic evidence is carried over to the area of “the inter-subjective validity of linguistically formulated statements”. Apel (1987:256) concludes that the inter-subjective validity of the statement is determined by the consensus of the linguistic community.

In other words, the evidence needs to be “interpreted” by the linguistic community, and it becomes “theory-laden” (Apel, 1987:262). With this explanation, Apel remarks that the mistake of modern empiricism and rationalism was to ignore this inter-subjective dimension of the evidence, and to attempt to locate philosophical foundation in solipsistic consciousness, separated from the interpretative community.

4.4.4 Apel’s difference from the Popperians

With this affirmation of the inter-subjective validity of evidence, then, on the one hand, Apel agrees with Popper’s and his followers’ thesis that “the evidence of convictions for a particular consciousness is not sufficient for the truth of a statement”, and that scientific-philosophical truth depends on the consensus of a linguistic community (Apel, 1987:256).

However, on the other hand, Apel’s crucial difference from Popper and his followers lies in his claim that, in spite of granting inter-subjective validity (hence, fallibility) to epistemic evidence, it is still indispensable that certain “paradigm” evidences must be indubitable. Apel argues that this requirement is not his own arbitrary opinion; but, in fact, it is supported by C. S. Peirce himself, who founded the principle of fallibilism. According to Apel, Peirce claims that, with regard to Descartes’ methodological doubt, one cannot doubt everything at the same time without making the doubt “contentless paper doubt”.

That is, Peirce assumes that certain indubitable evidence must be presupposed as a condition for the possibility of doubt. In empirical science, he says, if doubt is to be meaningful, one necessarily presupposes that the doubt proceeds from convictions that are taken as certain and assumed to be the standard of what is doubted (Peirce, 1933, 5:265, 376). That is, even if Peirce advocates that all knowledge is questionable and fallible, it is only on the condition that there is indubitable evidence that doubts are possible.

Apel further shows that similar accounts of indubitable evidence are also found in the later

Wittgenstein. In his essay *On certainty* (1971), Wittgenstein says that “anyone who wanted to doubt everything would not get even as far as doubting. The game of doubt itself presupposes certainty” (section 115). That is, whereas all evidence is relative to a language game, certain evidences should be considered indubitable, as a condition for the possibility of the language game itself. Apel also quotes section 114: “Whoever is certain about no facts, also cannot be certain of the meaning of his words”. That is, in order to take part in a language game, one must presuppose certain facts as indubitable; and Apel calls them “paradigmatic” evidence.

Further, Apel points out that Wittgenstein believed that this “paradigmatic” evidence is not “a more or less arbitrary and doubtful starting point of all our argument”; but it constitutes a common field or “a system”, “in which all our arguments have their life” (Wittgenstein, 1971: section 105).

Summarizing these points, Apel states that, for Wittgenstein, each language game has as its “model” or “paradigmatic” evidence certain “convictions (be they principles or contingent facts) that are neither to be doubted, nor to be changed”. A language game proceeds with implicit appeal to this paradigmatic evidence. As an example, Apel illustrates that the conviction that “the earth is a sphere that rotates on its axis and revolves around the sun” functions as indubitable “paradigmatic” evidence for possible meaningful questions in, say, the language game of aeronautics and meteorology. For another example, Apel says “the existence of a real external world outside of consciousness” functions as indubitable “paradigmatic” evidence for “the language game of critical questioning of whether something is real, or is based on illusion” (Apel, 1987:264). Moreover, Apel argues that this notion of indubitable paradigmatic evidence can be extended and applied to our everyday communication. In fact, the latter presupposes various indubitable paradigmatic evidences as certain; and it proceeds with implicit appeals to such evidences.

On the basis of these arguments for the existence of indubitable evidence, Apel says that the “appeal to (paradigmatic) evidence” should not always be equated with an “appeal to dogma”, or an “appeal to an arbitrary stopping point”, as Albert accuses. According to Apel, this means that the principle of fallibilism should be restricted; and it should allow for exceptions (Apel, 1987:264). Apel, therefore, concludes that “numerous imprudent or exaggerated claims of Bartley’s and Albert’s ‘pancritical rationalism’ prove to be untenable”, and that “in fact, the language of the critical rationalists suggests, not infrequently, the misunderstanding of an

anarchic criticism for criticism's sake, a critical reason without standards of criticism" (Apel, 1987:265).⁷⁰

4.4.5 The transcendental foundations of philosophical argumentation

With regard to this conclusion, however, some critics point out that there are tensions in Apel's thought. On the one hand, Apel agrees that evidence should be inter-subjectively validated by the linguistic community, that is, evidence is "theory-laden", revisable and fallible. Yet, on the other hand, he claims that certain paradigmatic evidences can be exceptional and cannot be doubted. Thus, some critics ask why the paradigmatic evidence itself cannot be theory-laden, but, on the contrary, can be known "as such", prior to our interpretation. Apel's view of the so-called "virtually universal doubt" is also a target of Albert's criticism, when the latter says that "a consistent criticism, which does not allow any dogma, necessarily involves fallibilism with regard to every possible stage". Albert concludes: "there is neither a solution of the problem, nor any appropriate stage for the solution of certain problems, which must necessarily and from the start elude criticism" (Albert, 1985:47).

With regard to this criticism, Apel concedes the difficulty, and mentions that Peirce himself was, in fact, in a struggle to reconcile his fallibilist principle with the notion of indubitable evidence, and that he attempted to solve the dilemma – with no satisfactory result (Apel, 1987:266). Thus, at this point, Apel lays a claim that at first glance seems to contradict his previous arguments. He admits that, on the one hand, his claim on the basis of indubitable paradigm evidence needs to be moderated. He suggests that the paradigmatic evidence at the level of *empirical science* can be *in principle* doubted. He says that "all indubitable epistemic evidence must be looked upon as relative to certain language games", and "the evidence presupposed in special argumentative language games is to be considered *in principle* revisable" (Apel, 1987:271). However, Apel immediately adds that this concession does not mean that the indubitable evidence can be completely dissolved into interpretation, and that there is no justifying objective ground.

⁷⁰ The argument for the indubitable "paradigm" evidence might be regarded as a "triviality". That is, even if the paradigm evidence is conceded to be indubitable, the evidence is so trivial that it may not affect any epistemic consequence. But the reason why I have attempted to highlight this issue is that this type of indubitable "paradigm" evidence is the ground of the typical arguments of the first- and second-generation evidentialists. I will also discuss its significance later.

Although it may sound ambivalent, he suggests that both (empirical or *a priori*) evidence and the inter-subjective validity of the statement (that is, interpretation of the evidence) should be regarded as *interwoven*, without completely losing its independence (Apel, 1987:268). That is, paradigmatic evidence is always inter-subjectively validated by the consensus of a community; and it is known to us as interpreted fact. However, at the same time, the interpretation is always grounded on the evidence for its justification. He therefore says, “The answer to the question concerning the inter-subjective validity of knowledge cannot be given by appealing to epistemic evidence for the individual consciousness”.

However, he immediately adds, on the other hand, that “the reinterpretation of our primary experience by means of explanatorily more powerful physical theories must, in turn, be sufficiently justified by appealing to evidence that is paradigmatic for these language games” (Apel, 1987:269-270).

As a consequence, for Apel, the paradigmatic evidence in particular language games has ambivalent epistemic status. Because of this unstable status of the evidence in particular language games, Apel moves further in his quest for philosophical foundations; and he says that one can still find foundations that are not open to revision in the transcendental level of “language games in general”. Apel suggests that a distinction first needs to be made between “the level of reflection on pre-scientific and scientific language games, on the one hand, and the level of transcendental-pragmatic reflection on the structure of language games in general, on the other hand” (Apel, 1987:266).

He maintains that philosophical foundations that are found in the latter transcendental level of reflection are beyond criticism, and cannot be called into question.

Concerning this distinction or hierarchy between the various levels of knowledge, Apel also anticipates the reactions of his critics.⁷¹ He claims that there are, in fact, some examples that cannot be fallible in this transcendental level of reflection. In the first place, with regard to a

⁷¹ Habermas expresses his concern about Apel’s prioritizing of philosophical evidence. He says, “There are no meta-discourses in the sense that a higher discourse is able to prescribe rules for a subordinate discourse. Argumentational games do not form a hierarchy” (Habermas, 1982:231). Papastephanou is also critical: “This would amount to granting philosophy a special status among the disciplines of knowledge; and if philosophy has the privilege of making infallible assumptions, even if only linguistic and not metaphysical-ontological, then such an Archimedean point would give philosophy – through the back door this time – the title that Kant attributed to it: ‘Queen of sciences’” (Papastephanou, 1997:51).

meta-level statement, such as the principle of fallibilism, Apel claims that, in order for the principle to be justified and consistent, the principle itself should not be subject to fallibilism. Otherwise, the principle would cancel out its own claim. He says, “The application of the principle of fallibilism itself leads to something similar to the ‘liar paradox’. If the principle of fallibilism is itself fallible, it is just to that extent not fallible, and vice versa”⁷² (Apel, 1987:273).

Further, Apel argues that in his self-criticism, Bartley, who is the founder of pancritical rationalism, also acknowledged that there must be an exception to fallibilism. He says that logic manifestly does “not belong to that totality (...), which should be subject to proof”, since “the exercise of critical argumentation and logic are inseparably bound together” (Bartley, 1984:146). In other words, logic is the condition for the possibility of critical argumentation; and thus, it cannot be criticized – without presupposing its certainty. In a more precise way, Lenk, criticizing Bartley and Albert, states that “at least some logical rules are fundamentally removed from rational revision”, because “the minimal rules of logic are analytically bound to the idea of the institution of criticism itself” (Lenk, 1970:105).

On the basis of these examples concerning the exceptions to fallibilism in a transcendental (or meta-) level, Apel argues that philosophical foundations can also be found by examining the “transcendental-pragmatic” conditions for argumentation. To perform this analysis, Apel says, since philosophical argumentation is mediated by linguistically formulated statements, the structure of language has to be examined first. However, since the abstract semantic or syntactic analysis of linguistic sentences cannot avoid the problem of abstract fallacy and its trilemma problem, Apel claims that philosophical foundations should be sought in the conditions for the possibility of the “pragmatic” dimensions of utterance in general.

He argues that central among the conditions for pragmatic dimensions of utterance is the presupposition that a “participant in a genuine argument is at the same time a member of a counterfactual, ideal communication community – one that is, in principle – equally open to all speakers, and that excludes all forces except the force of the better argument” (Apel, 1980:119). He argues that any claim to inter-subjectively valid knowledge (scientific or moral-practical) implicitly acknowledges this ideal communication community as a “meta-institution of rational

⁷² In philosophy and logic, the liar paradox refers to a situation in which a statement leads to contradiction, when a classical binary truth value is assigned to it. For example, when a man states: “I am lying”, if he is lying, then, he is telling the truth, and vice versa.

argumentation, to be its ultimate source of justification” (Apel, 1980:119).

In other places, he says that this presupposition can be summarized as the “co-responsibility and equality of rights of all [the] participants” (Apel, 2001:163); and the rules and norms in the ideal communication community can be represented by Habermas’ four validity claims: “the meaning claim, the truth claim, the veracity claim and the moral-rightness claim” (Apel, 2001:166). Apel calls these unavoidable conditions or rules and norms the “indubitable” philosophical foundations for argumentation in general.

Apel proceeds to explain that the indubitability of these philosophical foundations can be proven by the problem of “performative self-contradiction”. That is, whenever one attempts to deny their indubitability, one does it by falling into self-contradiction. For example, when one wants to deny that these transcendental conditions for argumentation are infallible, one cannot help but enter into the realm of argumentation. As one enters into that realm, one cannot make any claim without presupposing the ideal communication community with its rules and norms as certain (such as “her argument is intelligible”, “she is truthful”, “every argument is equal”, and “the partner exists”, and so on). Thereby, when one denies the validity of the conditions, one falls into self-contradiction.

4.4.6 Apel’s critique of postmodernism

On the basis of this transcendental analysis of philosophical foundation and the measure of “performative self-contradiction”, Apel argues that the claim of typical (radical) postmodernism (represented by thinkers such as Rorty, Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida, and so on), can be falsified. He accuses those scholars, firstly, of logical self-contradiction, that is, of the fact that they criticize rationality by means of rational argumentation. Secondly, they are accused of ignoring that they already presuppose certain “non-circumventible” conditions, as listed above, in their refutation of philosophical foundations (Apel, 2001:158).

In other words, they commit a “performative self-contradiction” in their denial of the philosophical foundations, as he described them. Take for example, Rorty’s denial of “universal truth” and his replacement of “objectivity” with striving for “solidarity”. Apel argues that, even if it is granted that no particular community can claim to have achieved a consensus that captures the whole truth of reality, it cannot be denied that “any serious argumentation necessarily presupposes the possibility of such [a] consensus as a regulative idea” (Apel, 2001:160).

Apel claims, together with Habermas, that Rorty forgets that “ideal consensus” is a necessary presupposition, as a condition for the possibility of every argumentation, even though it is “counterfactual”. Without presupposing such an ideal, people could only expect to raise their own voices without hoping for consensus. In the same vein, Apel argues that, while denying the universal truth by means of his argumentation, Rorty forgets that he already enters into the realm of argumentation and presupposes the universal validity claims (such as: there are “equal opportunities”, “equal rights”, “no forced restriction”, and so on). Thus, Rorty is performing self-contradiction in denying the universality of ideal conditions.

Concerning Lyotard's denial of the need for a legitimation of discourse by a philosophical meta-discourse (meta-narrative), Apel argues that Lyotard ignores “the unavoidability of his own philosophical meta-discourse”. After exemplifying Lyotard's typical postmodern expressions (e.g. “consensus does violence to the heterogeneity of language games”; or “invention is always born of dissension” Lyotard, 1984:75), Apel argues that these statements are already a universal validity-claim that Lyotard tries to deny. He (Apel, 2001:161) says: “Doesn't this very argument against the search for consensus implicitly appeal to consensus, so long, at least, as it is an argument, and a part of a philosophical meta-discourse, which displays its character by its universal validity claim?”.

In short, Apel's critique of postmodernism points out two kinds of self-contradiction. The first is that the postmodernists have their inherent logical problem of paradox. The more they emphasize their thesis of “fallibility, contingency and difference”, the clearer it is that they universalize their understanding of reality. Thus, Apel complains that they have their own “dogmatic meta-narrative” or “quasi-divine standpoint”, from which they believe that they can see the totality of reality as it is (Apel, 1988:99).

The second kind of contradiction lies in the fact that they presuppose the transcendental conditions of argumentation as being universally valid. As explained above, in their effort to defend their thesis, they employ argumentation; and, in doing so, they implicitly presuppose that the rules and norms of argumentation are universally valid.

4.4.7 The implications of Apel's epistemology for apologetics

In his debate with pancritical rationalism, Apel has so far claimed that there are both: a) indubitable “paradigm” evidence in particular language games (although it is interwoven with its interpretation); and b) transcendental foundations of philosophical argumentation, which are

beyond criticism. At the same time, Apel has argued that both pancritical rationalists and (radical) postmodern thinkers are affected by the problem of (logical and performative) self-contradiction.

The significance of Apel's argumentation in support of the philosophical foundations for the subject of apologetics is that his arguments are closely related to the evidential apologist's typical arguments. In fact, Apel's arguments in support of the existence of indubitable paradigmatic evidence and his critique of the self-contradictory problem of pancritical rationalism have often been used by evidentialists as objections to postmodern apologetics.

For instance, one of the second-generation evidentialists, Groothuis, claims that there are "essential truths of logic that are necessary for all intelligible thought and rational discourse". Therefore, certain "basic forms of reasoning that are non-negotiable are universally valid" (Groothuis, 2000:176-177). He claims that some "paradigm" truths are indubitable: "A ten-year-old American child, a forty-year-old Japanese politician, a sixty-year-old Liberian farmer all know that torturing an innocent for pleasure is morally wrong" (Groothuis, 2000:146). He believes that these examples prove that the fallibilist principle needs to be restricted.

Another second-generation evidentialist, Smith (2005:158), points out that postmodern apologetics cannot avoid the charge of relativism and the problem of self-applicable contradiction. While examining Christian postmodern thinkers, such as Hauerwas, Kellenberg, Grenz and Franke, Smith points out that they all argue that "truth is constructed by respective communities", and that "language and [the] world do not have [any] inherent relation".

For these claims, Smith says that what they are doing is, in fact, laying universal validity claims on the states of affairs in reality, whose possibility they are supposed to deny. He says that, "They actually presuppose that they can know reality as it truly is, apart from language, in order to deny that that access is possible" (Smith, 2005:158). That is, in Apel's terms, they are committing "performative self-contradiction".

For this criticism of relativism and its related self-contradictory problem, then, what would be the response by the pancritical rationalists, as well as by the postmodern thinkers (hence postmodern apologists)? As a matter of fact, these critiques are not unknown to them. However, among their different responses, one typical reply is that the self-contradictory problem of relativism is a "non-issue" to them, or it is irrelevant to their project. For example, Kenneson, in his defence of postmodern apologetics, claims in a similar vein to Rorty, that the issue of relativism (and its self-contradictory problem) is unnecessarily generated by "Cartesian anxiety"

for epistemic certainty. Rather, he questions, why should we, in the first place, follow the methodological doubt of Descartes, which causes endless objective and subjective dichotomy, instead of trust?

He claims that “we are also free to leave behind the entire epistemological project and the seemingly endless dichotomies generated and sustained by that project. (...) And this project need not continue to preoccupy us” (Kenneson, 1995:158). By this claim, he reduces the charges of relativism and self-contradiction to a “non-issue”. Furthermore, he argues that what is at issue is not how to solve the problem of relativism, but whether we are willing to shift the paradigm and bring to the forefront an entirely different set of questions. Thus, he concludes: “Because I have neither a theory of truth nor an epistemology, I cannot have a relativistic one of either” (Kenneson, 1995:161).

Of course, this response of Kenneson is not simply his own; but it reflects the typical postmodern approach, which is supported by, as we have seen before, a philosophical hermeneutic tradition, and in Kenneson’s case, by Rorty’s philosophy, in particular. For example, Rorty claims that, as individuals or communities share certain experiences and values in common, they come to possess what he calls a “final vocabulary”, which frames their understanding of the world in a particular way.

This vocabulary is “final in the sense that if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their users have no non-circular argumentative recourse” (Rorty 1989:73). On the basis of this concept, Rorty argues that the issue of relativism and its problems are generated by a traditional philosophical conviction, which assumes that knowledge must be justified by a philosophical foundation. Yet, this conviction is dictated by a final vocabulary whose justification cannot be proven. That is, Rorty’s claim is that if one changes the final vocabulary, the charge of relativism no longer becomes an issue.

In this way, both Rorty and Kenneson claim that these problems should be dissolved rather than solved.

These debates might remind us of the heated discussions between Gadamer and Habermas over the priority of ontology and epistemology. In their case, Gadamer simply dismissed the epistemological problems affecting his philosophical hermeneutics, as being a non-issue.

What this analysis shows is that postmodern apologetics cannot defend itself against its own epistemological problems. This is exactly the criticism of the evidentialist apologists against

postmodern apologetics. Scott complains that no-one from the circles of postmodern philosophy and apologetics has ever responded to the repeatedly raised charges of self-contradiction and relativism. As we remember, Ricoeur also describes this situation by saying that there are underlying “structural reasons” for this inability (Ricoeur, 1990:322).

In conclusion, then, our analysis so far has shown that postmodern thinkers did not, in fact, refute Apel’s thesis concerning philosophical foundations; but they simply dismiss it as a non-issue. Therefore, Apel’s argument in support of philosophical foundations is still effective from an epistemological point of view. For this conclusion, someone with a postmodern mindset would naturally complain that Apel’s philosophical foundations cannot be trans-historical. They are still a result of his historico-cultural prejudices. From now on, the dialogue will circle on and on, because it will be replied that their denial of foundations itself amounts to a performative self-contradiction.

In this situation, let us leave aside for a moment the problem to know whether Apel’s thesis about philosophical foundations is sound. An answer to that question, from a Christian point of view will be given in the next chapter, as a conclusion of our discussion on common ground. For the present, with regard to our concern for apologetic strategies we should rather ask the following question: What would the epistemological consequences be, if indubitable foundations are acknowledged?

In other words, we need to know whether these philosophical foundations would function as “epistemic” foundations on which the proof of concrete states of affairs could be objectively established. More specifically, do the indubitable empirical evidences (such as the existence of the external world, the earth’s revolution around the sun, and so on) as well as philosophical foundations (such as the presuppositions rules and norms of argumentation) provide the ground for objective proofs of concrete epistemic issues in dispute, such as the truth of Christian theism?

Apel seems to believe that his philosophical foundations can provide justifications for concrete existential and ethical issues, whereas the pancritical and postmodern thinkers cannot provide meaningful answers. In fact, he (Apel, 1988:174) ironically asks: “What possible comfort could such a [skeptical] person derive from an answer that provides no ultimate justification, but [one] that immediately relativizes itself as being limited or wholly revisable?”

According to Papastephanou (1997:60), however, Habermas would rather claim that the relevance of the transcendental conditions of argumentation should be limited. They can only

disclose and “make us aware of the normative dimension of communication”; but they do not aim to provide justification on concrete ethical situations and the existential meaning of life.

With regard to these conflicting evaluations of the relevance of indubitable evidence and philosophical foundations to the concrete issue, I think Radnitzky’s criticism is convincing and crucial. Radnitzky argues that even though the existence of Apel’s ultimate foundations might be conceded, it is irrelevant to the epistemological issue; and Apel’s use of the terms “justification” and “foundation” is rather particular. Radnitzky says that “if it has been shown that x is a presupposition for activity y, then it has been shown that, if you wish to engage in y, you have to accept x”. However, Apel’s claim is that “by showing that x is a presupposition (belongs to the ‘conditions of possibility’) of dialogue”, he thereby claims that x has “justified” the truth of the activity y (or the issue in dialogue) (Radnitzky, 1987:298).

In a more concrete example, it means that Apel’s thesis amounts to saying that presupposing the existence of the ideal communication community and its norms and rules, justifies the concrete assertions in the dialogue. In other words, the truth of my statement concerning a concrete issue (e.g., the existence of God), is justified by presuppositions, such as “I am sincere”, “my partner understands the meaning of my argument”, “every participant has an equal right”, or “anyone can participate in the dialogue” and so on.

However, it is obvious that even if the presuppositions disclose the conditions for the possibility of genuine argumentation, they do not provide the grounds to justify one’s claim concerning a concrete issue. In this sense, Radnitzky observes: “But this concept of justification is different from the idea of justification in the sense of making good truth claims, of establishing truth, or, in general, validity” (Radnitzky, 1987:298). Radnitzky’s analysis supports my thesis that the common ground only functions as a boundary or the condition for argumentation, but not as an epistemic criterion.

As a consequence, our conclusion is that even if Apel’s philosophical foundations are acknowledged as indubitable and beyond criticism, their epistemic relevance to our concrete issues in dispute (e.g., the truth of theism) is only limited to showing the boundary of genuine and legitimate argumentation. It does not provide the objective, justifying ground for the necessary conclusion of the issue in dialogue. In the same way, whereas the evidentialists’ objection to postmodern apologetics can stand because the latter has no answer to its epistemological problems, their indubitable evidences and philosophical foundations cannot

function as justifying ground to support the objective truth of Christian theism.

4.5 Conclusion

In our discussion on contemporary philosophical epistemology, I selected three cases of debate between the radical and the moderate anti-foundationalist philosophies from different traditions, so that they could display the different features and functions of what they regard as common ground. In the case of the debate between Kuhn and the neo-positivists, the common ground between the different paradigms is constituted by shared empirical data and criteria; and I have claimed that they cannot make it possible to have neutral decision-making concerning theory choice.

In the debate between Gadamer and Habermas, the common ground becomes more deepened and fundamental; and it is constituted by universal infrastructures, which are valid – not only for philosophical argumentation – but also for various other disciplines. I have claimed that such infrastructures cannot resolve any concrete issues in debate in an objective way.

In the debate between the pancritical rationalists and Apel, the common ground is further diversified; and it includes indubitable empirical evidence (in particular language games and transcendental foundations, such as logic, norms and rules (in language games) in general). I have claimed that the empirical evidence and the transcendental foundations cannot make objective proof possible.

In short, the results of these examinations show that in contemporary epistemology, even if the existence of common factors is acknowledged, it cannot function as an epistemic ground to establish objective conclusions about specific issues in dispute. Thus, the implications of these results for (second-generation) evidential apologists are that various elements of common ground cannot lead to any consensus concerning the truth of Christian theism, either.

In the case of Kuhn's theory choice, just as subjective value weighting influences theory choice, it also influences the acceptance or rejection of the premises of theistic arguments; and this renders its conclusions subjective. In the case of Habermas' infrastructures, although they function as conditions for legitimate communicative action (i.e., legitimate theistic arguments), they will not function as neutral criteria, in order to determine the truth of Christian theism. Further, in the case of Apel's indubitable evidences and philosophical foundations, they could be

necessary data to build theistic arguments, but they cannot constitute an epistemic foundation on which one may build objective proofs in favour of Christian theism.

In other words, none of our explorations of contemporary philosophy can support the theses of (second-generation) evidential apologetics.

While in this chapter, our focus has often been on the problems of evidential apologetics; however, it should also be remembered that the radical version of presuppositional apologetics, as well as anti-foundational epistemology, both have considerable problems. In the next chapter, before proposing an alternative apologetic approach, I will argue that the problems and failures of both the major current Christian apologetic approaches are due to the fact that their epistemologies are based on humanist (i.e. immanent) philosophy, which is characterized (in Dooyeweerd's terms) by the conflict between the two poles (i.e. nature and freedom) of the ground motive in which humanist philosophy is rooted.

As an alternative, I will introduce my proposals concerning "integral apologetics", which is based on the biblical ground motive of the creation fall and redemption, as well as on the Christian philosophy developed by Dooyeweerd.

Chapter 5:

Integral apologetics as an alternative approach

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, it has been investigated whether a common ground between Christian and non-Christian interlocutors exists and, if it does, what it implies to establish a proper apologetic approach. In the process of our examination, however, it has been shown that some problems remain unresolved.

Looking back at our discussion, in Chapter 2, it was shown that, even if evidential apologetics is under attack from various anti-foundationalist positions, it still claims that the existence of common ground cannot be denied. If it is denied, it is argued, the inevitable results are problems, such as vicious circles in the argumentation, pernicious relativism, communication breakdowns, and so forth.

In Chapter 3, it was shown that, contrary to a common stereotype, Van Til also admits the existence of common ground in his “moderate” presuppositionalist position. It is true that in his typical “radical” presuppositional approach, he denies the existence of common ground. However, a deeper examination of his position has revealed that Van Til, in fact, acknowledges the problem; and in some instances he modifies his “radical” position by admitting the existence of common ground between believers and unbelievers. As Van Til sometimes oscillates between his radical and moderate views on common ground, his position remains problematic.

It has also been shown that reformed scholars such as Kuyper and Dooyeweerd consistently maintain the existence of common ground. However, it has also been argued that, they try to “have it both ways”, so to speak. That is, on the one hand they recognise the impact of religious commitments and presuppositions on all sorts of cognitive activities while, on the other hand, they also recognise that certain elements of common ground are common to all. Unfortunately, neither Kuyper nor Dooyeweerd has elaborated with sufficient precision and completeness the consequences of this position for apologetics.

In Chapter 4, shifting to the area of contemporary philosophical epistemology, it has been shown that a “radical” anti-foundationalist position, which underpins “postmodern” apologetics,

cannot stand because it also causes the problem of a self-applicable contradiction, communication breakdowns, and so forth. In contrast, it has also been shown that a “moderate” anti-foundationalist position can avoid these problems. However, even in the moderate positions, the non-rational factors (such as paradigm, conceptual schemes, linguistic frameworks and so forth), are acknowledged as ontic universal conditions for cognitive activities. Therefore, some critics claim that the problem of knowing whether our knowledge of common ground is unprejudiced still remains.

The problems that our analysis of the existence of common ground has revealed are: Firstly, that the apologetic approaches grounded on the two most radical epistemic positions (i.e., radical anti-foundationalism and (classical) foundationalism) are not able to operate. On the one hand, the apologetic approaches based on a radical anti-foundationalist epistemology (that is, “radical” presuppositionalism and postmodern apologetics) cannot stand either, because their underpinning epistemology will cause the problems already mentioned above (self-applicable contradiction, total communication breakdown, relativism and so on). On the other hand, evidential apologetics which is based on foundationalist epistemology cannot stand either, because it does not acknowledge the presence of non-rational factors in theoretical thought.

Secondly, even the non-radical or “moderate” positions (e.g. second generation evidentialism) are not satisfactory as they do not overcome but only try to mitigate the problems and dilemmas of the more radical approaches. In particular, they misunderstand the nature and role of ontic common ground by supposing that it can constitute an epistemic foundation on which objective proofs in favour of Christian theism may be erected.

In order to avoid these problems I will return to the reformational model (Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, Van Til) to propose an alternative apologetic approach, which I call “integral apologetics”. I will firstly criticize the philosophical foundations of the two major current apologetic approaches (i.e., (radical) presuppositional and evidential apologetics) on the basis of Dooyeweerd’s “critical” philosophy. I will claim that their problems lie in their philosophical epistemology, which originates from the humanist (immanence) philosophy, whose ground-motive⁷³ is characterized by a tension between the two poles of “freedom” and “nature”.

I will claim that the problems introduced above concerning common ground are inevitable

⁷³ The term will soon be defined and discussed in the following pages. For a brief reminder of its meaning and for historical examples see also the final part of section 2.5.2 above.

when they are approached from the “immanence-standpoint”, which contains an insoluble tension between “objectivism and subjectivism” – originating from the humanist “freedom and nature” ground-motive. In contrast, I will show that those problems could hope to see a solution only when they are approached from the “transcendence-standpoint”, which is derived from the biblical ground-motive of creation-fall-redemption.

As this ground motive is not afflicted by the dialectical tensions characterizing the humanist or the medieval-scholastic ground motives, I propose that it deserves the label “integral”. This new approach, based on the biblical transcendence-standpoint, utilizes Dooyeweerd’s multi-aspectual ontology. It will therefore have a new (Christian) philosophical basis. I call integral also my apologetic approach, because it is based on such a ground motive and on an integral philosophical approach – at least as far as its good intentions are concerned.

In addition, this approach will sketch and suggest new directions for the *practice* of Christian apologetics. It will emphasize, firstly, the shift from “proof” to “persuasion”, as a proper mode of apologetic discourse. Secondly, it will build on the existence of irreducible multiple types of knowledge to acknowledge the multiple dimensions of the apologetic practice. On the same basis apologists can aim, thirdly, to meet the unique needs of an audience in a dynamic dialogical situation.

As indicated above, the first task for this chapter is a critique of the two major apologetic schools, on the basis of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy. To face this task, a preliminary overview of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy is necessary. This would be an overview paying particular attention to those themes and aspects (in Dooyeweerd’s thought) that are important for the type of critique that I have in mind.

5.2 Dooyeweerd’s philosophy: towards “integral apologetics”

5.2.1 An overview of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy

Unlike traditional philosophies – in which a general theory of reality (ontology) and of knowledge (epistemology) are pursued through theoretical thought – Dooyeweerd’s philosophy rather aims at revealing the whole structure of reality as it is given in Creation, through examining the structure of *pre-theoretical* experience. In his work, Dooyeweerd claims that, in order to reveal the structure of reality, what is required in advance is to clear away the obfuscated

and distorted views of reality constructed by the traditional philosophies. One of their fundamental problem lies, he claims, in their undue preference for theoretical thought over every-day (naïve, pre-theoretical) experience, based on the belief that theoretical thought is the only route to true knowledge.

In contrast, Dooyeweerd claims that the structure of (created) reality can be revealed by examining the structure of every-day (naïve, pre-theoretical) experience. Thus, he starts his magnum opus, *A new critique* (1997) by “consider[ing] reality, as it is given in the naïve pre-theoretical experience” (1997, 1:3). Dooyeweerd is convinced that “the *a priori* structure of reality can only be known by [pre-theoretical] experience” (1997, 2:7).

In examining the structure of reality, Dooyeweerd’s philosophy can be divided into two parts. In his “critical” philosophy, he clears away the distorted views of traditional philosophies with his transcendental critique of theoretical thought; and he reveals that our theoretical thought is rooted in religious ground-motives. Amongst four different ground-motives in the history of Western thought, Dooyeweerd shows that the secular ground-motives, based on the immanence-standpoint, necessarily bring about ineradicable dialectical problems. He claims that the problems can only be resolved by adopting the transcendence-standpoint, therefore by replacing the non-Christian ground motives.

In the “positive” part of his philosophy, Dooyeweerd tries to explore the structure of reality. In this part, he describes the structure of created reality by analysing pre-theoretical experience. Dooyeweerd argues that our experience of the created reality is constituted by a number of irreducible aspects; and they are governed by cosmic laws.⁷⁴

On the basis of this division of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy, through examining his “critical”

⁷⁴ The structure of his philosophy can be summarized by sketching the general scheme of his *New critique* (1997), which is composed of four volumes. In the prolegomena and the rest of Vol. 1, Dooyeweerd presents his critique of traditional philosophies by analysing the structure of theoretical thought via a transcendental critique; and he reveals the religious root of the theoretical thought. He then examines what constitutes the religious root (ground-motives) of the Western thought tradition and proceeds to discuss their problems. After that, in the first part of Vol. 2, as his “positive” philosophy, he analyses what constitutes the structure of our every-day experience, which comprises a theoretical attitude of thought as one of the elements; and he then develops “the general theory of modal spheres”. In the rest of Vol. 2, in the light of this modal structure, he again discusses what constitutes the problems of epistemology in traditional philosophy, especially in relation to Kant, Husserl and Heidegger. In Vol. 3, Dooyeweerd continues to develop the structure of reality in terms of its individuality structures and their relationships. Vol. 4 is composed of the index of subjects and authors of the previous three volumes.

philosophy, I will try to bring to light several problems in contemporary apologetic epistemology. I will then present a few tentative proposals for an alternative “integral apologetics” by utilizing the positive side of his philosophy.

5.2.2 Dooyeweerd’s critical philosophy and critique of immanence-philosophy

Concerning Dooyeweerd’s critical philosophy, I have already shown (by discussing the nature of theoretical thought in Chapter 2), that in contrast to the axiom of traditional philosophy that theoretical thought is autonomous and neutral, Dooyeweerd affirms that theoretical thought requires a religious starting point. The reason is that theoretical thought starts, not from a logical “ego”, but from the human person, whose “heart”⁷⁵ is influenced by a religious ground-motive. He defines a ground-motive as the “moving power or spirit at the very roots of man, who so captured, works it out with fear and trembling, and curiosity” (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:58).

After establishing the religious root of theoretical thought, Dooyeweerd proceeds to show that there have been four kinds of religious roots (ground-motives) in the Western tradition of thought (1997, 1:169-498; 2003:7-40). They are the Greek ground-motive of form and matter, the Judeo-Christian ground-motive of creation-fall-redemption, the medieval ground-motive of nature and grace, and the modern humanist ground-motive of nature and freedom.

Dooyeweerd then further argues that, behind these religious ground-motives are two distinctive overarching standpoints: that is, what he calls the “immanence-standpoint” (hence, immanence-philosophy) and the “transcendence-standpoint” (hence, transcendence-philosophy).

The immanence-position (represented by the three dualistic ground-motives mentioned above) presupposes that the basic, self-dependent principle or final reference point (*arché*) that explains everything else, is immanent to temporal reality itself. Because of this immanent nature of the *arché*, Dooyeweerd claims that each ground-motive harbours irresolvable problems in itself. In fact, this leads to the absolutization (idolization) of some aspect(s) of immanent, created reality. As soon as one aspect is absolutized however, it evokes its counter-idol. As a consequence, each ground-motive is composed of two “poles”, which always remain in dialectical tension with each

⁷⁵ For Dooyeweerd, the term heart does not refer to the source of emotions, but to “the concentration point of all our cosmic functions”, to a “subjective totality” lying at the basis of all the functions in time (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:65). He often quotes Proverbs 4:23 “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”.

other, causing irresolvable antinomies.

Among these dualistic ground-motives, our interest lies in the modern humanist “nature and freedom” ground-motive, because the problems of current apologetic epistemologies originate from this specific ground-motive. Dooyeweerd says that this ground-motive emerged from the medieval nature-and-grace motive, when God (associated with the grace-pole) was replaced by the free human personality (freedom-pole) about 500 years ago (2003:149-152).

In the humanist motif, according to Dooyeweerd, the nature-pole requires a determinist conception of nature; and it is expressed through the desire to master and control nature, in what Dooyeweerd calls the “ideal of science” (1997, 1:169; 2003:152). The freedom-pole is constituted by a commitment to the free autonomous human subject; and it is expressed through the “ideal of personality” (1997, 1:169; 2003:153).

Dooyeweerd traces various characteristics, trends and patterns in modern culture and scholarship back to this dualistic ground-motive, causing thereby a dialectical conflict.⁷⁶ He (Dooyeweerd, 2003:154-173) shows how the internal conflict in this motive leads to many problems within the philosophical community, generating dilemmas, such as “material body vs thinking soul” (Descartes), “being vs morality” (Hume), “science vs faith”, “thought vs thing” (Kant).

Among these conflicts and dilemmas, we need to pay special attention to the split between subject and object. In fact, since this conflict emerged (with Descartes), it has developed into modern and contemporary culture; and it still underlies the problems of current Christian apologetic approaches as well.

The humanist ground-motive receives its first clear philosophical formulation in the system of Descartes, the first philosopher who introduced a sharp distinction between the thinking subject (*res cogitans*) and the object in itself (*res extensa*). Descartes’ liberation from doubt is anchored in the human subject, the author of the “cogito”. Uncritically assuming the subject-object distinction as given, through his “Copernican revolution”, Kant places the human mind at the centre, continuing and deepening Descartes’ anchorage of philosophy in the freedom-pole.

Kant’s insight is that knowledge is constructed by the human mind in the process of

⁷⁶ Various aspects of the dialectic tension within this ground-motive are described by Dooyeweerd in several works, for example, in *Roots of Western culture* (2003:149-187), *New critique* (1997, 1:169-498) and his article *Christian philosophy: an exploration* (1996:31-35).

interpreting the various sense-impressions that we receive.

However, this priority, attributed to the freedom-pole, causes an irresolvable problem: the thing-in-itself cannot be known to us, since what we know is limited to the sense-impressions of a thing. As a result, an unbridgeable gulf between the knowing subject and the object (the thing-in-itself) has been established; and since Kant, no-one in Western philosophy has been able to ignore this problem.

After Kant, the philosophers are involved in a dialectical tension between nature (object) and freedom (of the subject). They need to decide whether the object or the subject is foundational to their philosophy. On the one hand, those humanist philosophers who assign primacy to human freedom move in the direction of post-Kantian idealism. On the other hand, and against this move, philosophers like the early positivists, who give primacy to the nature-pole, emphasize the object-side of reality. In between, there are attempts at reaching a synthesis. For example, Hegel proposes dialectical idealism; and, as its opposite, Marxism transforms it into dialectical materialism. They never find a resting place, because the conflict is not theoretical, but religious in nature (Dooyeweerd, 1996:33-34).

In more recent times, this dialectical subject-object tension was manifested for example in the conflict between (early) positivism and interpretivism). The former claims that the “world out there” is mind-independent and it can be known to us as it is; while the latter claims that we cannot know the world as it is, but merely have a subjective interpretation or social construction of it.

5.2.3 Ground-motives in apologetics

On the basis of this Dooyeweerdian analysis of the history of philosophical thought, I am inclined to claim that objectivism undergirds the epistemology of evidential apologetics, since it argues that objective knowledge can be obtained without the influence of any subjective elements. By contrast, subjectivism undergirds the epistemology of “radical” presuppositionalism⁷⁷ and of “postmodern” apologetics in that they claim that our subjective

⁷⁷ It would not be fair to simply argue that Van Til’s work is shaped by the freedom pole (subjectivism) of the humanist ground-motive. However, in his “radical” presuppositional stance, he would be accused of (involuntary) compromise with the humanist ground-motive. His involvement with idealism can be traced as early as in his period of study at Princeton University. His mentor in the Ph.D. program was the British idealist A.A. Bowman and his dissertation was on philosophical idealism. Moreover, the influence of

presuppositions control our interpretation, and that no objective knowledge is available. Thus, both approaches criticize each other, but never reach any stable consensus.

Nevertheless, even in the midst of this conflict, our intuition keeps telling us that the split and gulf between subject and object is forced by human construction; and this is at variance with our every-day experience. In fact, by our every-day experience, we know intuitively that we are already in connection with objects and things (not simply with sense-data); and there is no “essence” left behind in our experience of them. Aware of this discrepancy, in fact, says Dooyeweerd, there have been many efforts in immanence philosophy to create a bridge between thought and thing (freedom and nature), for example by Husserl, Heidegger, and so forth (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:213-214).

Husserl introduced the notion of the “life-world”, and tries to forge a “transcendental method” to penetrate to the essence of things, as a way to remove the split between thought and thing. In contrast, Heidegger tries to overcome the Cartesian divide by eliminating the distinction between subject and object with the notion of Dasein or being-in-the-world. A more recent example of this effort is expressed in Bernstein’s move: *Beyond objectivism and relativism* (1983).

After examining some of these efforts in immanence-philosophy, however, Dooyeweerd warns that no effort can overcome the dialectical subject-object conflict, as long as it is based on the immanence-standpoint. In his evaluation of Heidegger’s philosophy, he says that Heidegger also cannot get away from the conflict because he “moves in the paths of immanence philosophy; his Archimedean point is in ‘existential thought’, thus making the ‘transcendental ego’ sovereign” (1997, 4:88).

As long as philosophers do not search for the ultimate Archimedean point outside of temporal reality, they would have to absolutize one part or aspect of reality to explain everything else. In the meantime, as a countermove, others absolutize other parts or aspects. Thus, Dooyeweerd concludes, “our general transcendental critique of theoretical thought has brought to light that the

idealism on Van Til’s apologetics is clearly revealed by McConnell’s article *The influence of idealism on the apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (2005). Though it is true that Van Til *critically* appropriated philosophical idealism in his apologetics, McConnell says (2005:558), it is undeniable that “his interest in philosophy and background in idealism helped him frame some of the basic questions his apologetical approach attempted to answer”. In a similar vein, Knudsen (2009:110-111) observes that Van Til was to an extent inclined to “move away from evidence” in his apologetic approach. Knudsen quotes similar critical remarks (though written from a sympathetic position) by the South African Calvinist philosopher H. G. Stoker (1980:27, 31, 46, 48, 57 ff.)

philosophical immanence-standpoint can only result in [the] absolutization of specific modal aspects of human experience” (1997, 3:169).

Accordingly, with regard to apologetics, as long as the undergirding epistemology is based on this immanence-philosophical standpoint, the conflict between evidential apologetics and “radical” presuppositionalism or “postmodern” apologetics cannot be resolved.

5.2.4 Dooyeweerd’s “positive philosophy”: tuning subject and object

In order to overcome the subject-object dilemma, inherent in immanence-philosophy, Dooyeweerd suggests that a new standpoint must be adopted, which seeks its starting point in the Origin beyond temporal reality. He proposes that only the biblical creation-fall-redemption ground-motive can provide the transcendence-standpoint. The biblical ground-motive assumes that the whole of reality was created by God, Who is the Transcendent Origin. Adopting the transcendence-standpoint implies some drastically different philosophical choices, which could resolve the problems of immanence-philosophy; and these different choices are the constituents of his “positive” philosophy.

For our discussion, they may be summarized into three elements:

Firstly, Dooyeweerd says that this transcendence-standpoint of the creation-fall-redemption ground-motive assumes that all entities in the cosmos (including things, events, relations, states of affair and so on), are created and are thus dependent, and not self-sufficient. To express this idea, Dooyeweerd states that “*meaning is the being of all that has been created*” (1997, 1:4) (not “being *has* meaning” as a property of substance). This view implies an important consequence: the famous notion of substance, existing on its own, is not acceptable. In addition, this standpoint assumes, since all entities are created in harmony that they all exist in (aspectual) relation, and in reference to each other.

This point, in turn, implies that the knowing subject and the knowable object are not separated, but in an inherent relation with reciprocal aspectual functions. The modalities are simultaneously aspects of experience (ways of explanation) and aspects of the concrete things that we experience.

Secondly, from the fact that God not only creates, but also maintains His creation, Dooyeweerd reminds us that God governs His creation with a certain framework of laws. In our normal experience, we recognize the orderliness of the cosmos, and a certain regularity of the

events taking place in it. The transcendence-philosophy explains these phenomena as made possible by God's laws, which are built into creation. In this view, the created reality is constituted by two sides: law-side and subject-side. The law-side denotes the framework that enables all entities in the cosmos to exist and function; while the subject-side comprises what is subjected to these cosmic laws, that is, all the concrete entities (both objects and subjects) in the cosmos.

Furthermore, with regard to this cosmic law, Dooyeweerd differentiates two ways in which entities in the subject-side of the cosmos are subjected to the law: that is, the way of their function and that of their structure. Accordingly, as Basden succinctly summarizes, there are two kinds of laws for Dooyeweerd: that is, "functional (aspectual) laws" and "structural laws" (Basden, 2008:54). The structural laws guide the structure of individual things and events and enable them to be what they are in spite of changes. In contrast, the functional (aspectual) laws enable things and events to function in aspectual relation to other things and events.

For our purposes, our interest lies especially in the theory of aspectual (modal) laws, because this is relevant to our present concern of the relation between knowing subject and knowable object.

Furthermore, with regard to the status of these cosmic laws, Dooyeweerd assumes that the laws are a distinctive component of reality, whose source is God; and they are universal ontic conditions for the existence and functioning of every entity. This means that these laws are not imposed by humans (as subjectivism might claim), nor are they inherent in the objects, as their nature (as objectivism might claim). They constitute a distinct reality. Explaining the status of the cosmic laws, Clouser says that:

"They are not, therefore, merely our generalizations over the way things with fixed natures behave, as objectivism would have it. Nor are they the order we impose on what we experience, as the subjectivist maintains. Law-order is *sui generis* with respect to both knowing subjects and known objects; it governs and connects both, but is reducible to neither" (Clouser, 2010:5).

Yet, I have to add that this does not mean that the laws are located separately or apart from concrete reality, just as Plato's "Ideas" are supposed to be. Rather, they are embedded in the concrete entities as a "side" of them.

This reality of law as an "ontic condition" (Hart, 1984:82) also implies, in terms of knowing

subject and known object, that both of them are related in the sense that they are governed by the same aspectual (functional) laws in each and every aspect of our experience, as is further explained below.

Thirdly, Dooyeweerd assumes that our everyday experience is constituted by multiple interrelated aspects, which are irreducible to one another (Dooyeweerd, 1997, 1:3) and are “transcendental” in the sense that they are a condition for the possibility of reality to function as it does, and they pertain to all things, in all situations and at all times.

In fact, Dooyeweerd distinguishes and lists fifteen aspects, according to their peculiar “meaning kernel” (or nucleus), which characterizes and qualifies each aspect.⁷⁸ According to the listed aspects, for example, human subjects experience a tree in its different aspectual functions, such as an arithmetic function (the branches can be counted), a physical function (a tree can be weighed), an analytical function (can be discerned from other things), a social function (can provide shade for a social gathering), an economic function (can become commercial wood), a juridical function (is owned by someone) and so forth.

In these aspectual functions, one thing to note is that all the entities function – either as subjects (actively), or as objects (passively),⁷⁹ depending on the aspect in which they function. A tree, for example, functions as a subject (actively) in the first five aspects (quantitative, spatial, kinematic, physical and biotic aspects). In contrast, it functions as an object (passively) from the sensitive aspect onward. For example, in the sensitive aspect, the tree functions as an object to be perceived; in the analytical aspect, it is distinguished and conceptualized; in the lingual aspect it is named; in the aesthetical aspect it is appreciated for its beauty; in the ethical aspect it is loved; in the pistic aspect, it may be worshipped as an idol. In all of these latter aspects, a tree does not perceive, distinguish, name, harmonize, love and worship as a subject; but it functions as an

⁷⁸ In *In the twilight of Western thought*, Dooyeweerd (1960:7) enumerates the fifteen aspects as follows: “Our temporal empirical horizon has a numerical aspect, a spatial aspect, an aspect of extensive movement, an aspect of energy (...), a biotic aspect or that of organic life, an aspect of feeling and sensation, a logical aspect (...). Then there is a historical aspect (...). This is followed by the aspect of symbolical signification (...). Furthermore there is the aspect of social intercourse (...). This experiential mode is followed by the economic, aesthetic, juridical and moral aspects, and, finally, by the aspect of faith or belief”.

⁷⁹ In order to avoid the possible confusion that the terms, subject and object, might cause in Dooyeweerd’s explanation, Clouser chooses different terms. He says that an entity functions “actively” (instead of “as a subject”) and functions “passively” (instead of “as an object”). His terminology seems to work in a better way (Clouser, 2010:5).

object of a human subject's active functions.

This relation between subject and object functions, implies again that the knowing subject and the knowable object are in such an inherent relation that each passive aspectual function of an object can be actualized only when a knowing subject's active function intervenes. For example, without a human subject recognizing the beauty of a tree, the passive latent aesthetic function of the tree could never be actualized. In addition, the gulf between subject and object is bridged by the realization that objects can function as subjects; and human subjects can function as objects (e.g. a certain community can be the object of sociological analysis).

5.2.5 Some consequences for epistemology and apologetics

In terms of our apologetic and epistemic interests, these explanations and explorations amount to saying that, first of all, the mistakenly construed gulf between knowing subject and known object can be removed. Secondly, the existence of common ground is established, since the structures of reality, such as cosmic laws and aspectual properties, are ontically given; and they are created to be correspondent to the human cognitive faculty. Thirdly, and subsequently, the subjectivist view, which claims that all we know is our interpretation or social construction, does not hold water; and, as a result, (radical) presuppositional apologetics and postmodern apologetics (based on subjectivism) cannot stand either.

The “moment of truth” in subjectivism is that without a subject involved, no aspects or properties can be actualized. However, it is also true that objectivism contains some truth, in the sense that aspectual laws and properties are ontically given and human subjects can perceive them in the same way. The position proposed here is not simply a “via media” or a compromise between subjectivism and objectivism – but an alternative position, which recognizes the merits of its interlocutors.⁸⁰

Perhaps some will regard my position as a modified form of objectivism. However, it is important to note that while I accept the existence of common ground, the latter can only function as transcendental conditions for our cognitive activities, not as neutral epistemic criteria

⁸⁰ By contrast, “soft rationalism” simply compromises between hard rationalism and fideism. On the one hand, this position acknowledges the existence of “irreducible personal judgment” and, on the other hand, to avoid full-fledged subjectivism, it admits the existence of “universal principles” as a test of truth (cf. Abraham, 1996).

for concrete issues in debate. For example, let us suppose that everyone can notice the economic laws and properties of a tree and agree that the tree has an economic value. It is nevertheless likely that when the concrete price of the tree is determined, different subjects will evaluate it differently. In the same way, the very possibility of felling trees for economic purposes might be questioned by some, depending on their prejudicial judgments, education, interests, commitments and so forth.

The same applies to the elaboration of theistic arguments. As explained previously, people can all agree with the validity of a theistic argument in a logical sense, if it complies with logical laws, since all humans recognize the logical laws, such as the law of non-contradiction in the same way. However, in determining the soundness and cogency of the argument, people necessarily differ, because of their different views on the premises of the argument.

In conclusion, it has been shown that subjectivism, along with absolute presuppositional and radical postmodern apologetics, cannot be a tenable position. In addition, while “modified” objectivism can be supported only with limitations, it does not lead to a conclusive consensus on concrete issues, including theistic arguments. Therefore, evidential apologetics cannot be a successful apologetic approach, either. An alternative, “integral” apologetic approach should endorse the philosophical back-up sketched above. In the following sections I would like to show that this is not without fruitful consequences, as far as the *practice* of apologetics is concerned.

5.3 Integral apologetics: a few practical proposals

5.3.1 Overview of the proposals

Since the two main current apologetic approaches are not sufficiently satisfactory, I claim that an alternative apologetic approach should be built on the creation-fall-redemption ground-motive. On this basis, I have proposed a philosophical framework for “integral apologetics”, as an alternative apologetic approach. From this perspective, and by still employing elements of Dooyeweerd’s theory of reality, I would like to propose a few practical strategies.

Firstly, integral apologetics should claim that the proper mode for apologetics should shift from “proof” to “persuasion”, because proof in its strict sense is not available. Along with this shift, secondly, to maximize the persuasive potential, this approach should utilize Dooyeweerd’s multi-aspectual understanding of reality, and recognize that there are different types of

knowledge, which are irreducible to one another, but have equal epistemic weight. Therefore, they can all be utilized to facilitate persuasion toward faith. This approach will allow us to overcome the problem of traditional apologetics, which has solely relied on an intellectual (analytical) type of knowledge (theistic *argument*) to defend and promote Christianity. In this way, it has given the false impression that apologetics is a task only for intellectually privileged persons. This approach will diversify the apologetic function into multiple dimensions and provide positive measures to defend and promote the Christian faith.

Thirdly, recognizing that persuasion takes place in dynamic dialogical situations, the integral approach should consider the diverse needs of an audience in its spiritual journey, and should select the most adequate delivery methods in the dialogue. These features would allow us to overcome the limits of both traditional and presuppositional apologetics, which have to date exclusively focused on presenting or defending universally applicable intellectual arguments, regardless of the audience's specific situation and needs.

To propose this integral apologetic approach, an examination of these elements is in order. Of course, this is just an initial selection of problems, an elaboration of solutions that do not aim at completeness or even exhaustiveness. The only purpose for the moment is to show the fruitfulness and possible implications of the project.

5.3.2 Multiple irreducible types of knowledge

According to Dooyeweerd's theory of modal aspects, a human subject can experience an entity (thing, event, relation) in multiple aspects; and, since each aspect has an irreducible meaning kernel, I would claim that his modal theory implies that there are multiple aspectual types of knowledge a human subject can attain from the experience of entity and event. These types of knowledge are different in quality; and they are not reducible to each other. As a result, I would claim that there are such irreducible types of knowledge as: pistic, ethical, juridical, economic, social, lingual, formative, analytical, sensitive, biotic, and so forth.

Here, it should be noted that these different types of knowledge do not mean different knowledge-items of a particular subject matter within the *theoretical (analytical)* aspect. Rather, theoretical knowledge is one type of knowledge among many others.

This can be clarified by the example of experiencing a Christian community. One can acquire a pistic type of knowledge from experiencing the devotion and obedience to God of the

members; an ethical type of knowledge from experiencing their care, generosity and love; an aesthetic type of knowledge from experiencing their harmony, surprise and fun activities; a social type of knowledge from experiencing their social interaction and fellowship; and an analytical type of knowledge from experiencing the distinction, conceptualization and inference of their message, and so forth.

Here, one can imagine that one's theoretical knowledge of the community is quite different in quality from the one attained, for example, by experiencing its friendship and loving care.⁸¹

While recognizing these diverse types of knowledge, one thing to be noted is that one particular type of knowledge should not be absolutized as the foundation for all other types of knowledge, since each type has its own irreducible meaning kernel, and has a unique epistemic weight. However, in the Western philosophical tradition, I would claim that the theoretical type of knowledge, attained from theoretical analysis, has often been absolutized and given primacy over all other types of knowledge. The latter's epistemic values are often ignored, or are not regarded as comparable to the value of theoretical knowledge.

Looking back to the history of apologetics, it could also be said that the focus of the traditional apologetic approach has been mostly on the analytical type of knowledge, i.e., on the different theoretical arguments. That is to say, the theoretical (analytical) arguments have been absolutized, as if they were the only type of knowledge that apologists can appeal to in defending and promoting the Christian faith. Rather, this type of knowledge should be located in a balanced position amongst other types of knowledge; and apologists should realize that other types of knowledge also have a unique epistemic value to which they can appeal.

As a consequence, with the recognition of multiple types of knowledge as epistemic grounds, integral apologetics claims that our apologetic approach needs to be multi-focused and should seek to appeal to an audience via various types of knowledge. The legitimacy of this approach has been well-illustrated by Abraham's (1996:87-89) story of a college student in her spiritual

⁸¹ Perhaps it is helpful reminding here (see 2.5.2 above) how Dooyeweerd distinguishes theoretical (analytical) knowledge from non-theoretical knowledge. Whereas in our "naive pre-theoretical experience" the modal aspects remain in cohesion, theoretical knowledge is attained from their abstraction. In abstraction, each type of aspectual knowledge is distinguished, conceptualized and explicated in words. In the example above, although Rachel's experience is distinguished along the lines of distinct modal aspects, I do not mean to imply that her experience is theoretical. On the contrary, it will retain the characteristic coherence of naive experience.

journey. I summarize it here in some length for its significance to the multi-aspectual approach, which is the focus of integral apologetics.

A college student, named Rachel, has a close friend who is recently converted. Her friend shows a dramatic change in her lifestyle characterized by love for others. As time passes, she wonders what caused the difference in her friend's life. Her friend answers that any change for better in her life is due to the grace of God. At first, Rachel tries to explain the change as the result of emotional and social factors. However, later, she decides to explore Christianity further and comes to read life-stories of saints and finds similar accounts of God's grace in their lives. This makes her think more seriously of the possibility of the existence of certain beings transcending our experience. In addition, she has a chance to read Augustine's incisive account of the problem of evil in this world, which has been one of the issues she has struggled with as an intellectual puzzle. She further decides to explore the story of the Gospel in the Bible and finds that the story of Jesus' life and sacrificial death deeply enriches her natural moral sense. These experiences, in turn, make her remember some questions hibernated in her memory since her adolescence. She has sometimes been puzzled by the finitude and contingency of the world, as well as the existence of beauty, order and seeming design in nature. Now, as she ponders these issues, it seems to her that the Christian's overall view of life renders these issues intelligible. All of these experiences, in turn, make her personally search for God and decide to participate in a local Christian community. In a worship service, she feels a peace of soul profoundly authentic and long-lasting. She eventually decides to give her life over to God in faith.

In this illustration, the student, Rachel, goes through various stages and dimensions of faith over time – to arrive at the point of adopting a new belief system, i.e., Christianity. She was motivated in her choice not only by intellectual arguments. Rather, each of her diverse experiences, such as watching the change of her friend's lifestyle, reading Jesus' life story in the Gospel that enriched her moral sense, having fellowship in a Christian community and having religious experiences in a worship service, all give her a unique epistemic momentum towards adopting Christian theism.

This illustration should help in clarifying how narrow the traditional apologetic approach has been, and how it needs to become multi-focused. Thus, integral apologetics tries to identify and utilize diverse types of knowledge, in order to defend and promote the Christian faith. Further, while the experience of the student in this story is limited to a few dimensions of knowledge,

such as the analytical (intellectual), social, ethical, and pistic, integral apologetics claims that Dooyeweerd's modal theory gives us an exhaustive list of the possible types of knowledge, so that we can utilize as many types of knowledge as possible to facilitate persuasion towards the truth of Christianity.

One of the merits of this multi-focused approach is to make it possible to overcome the wrong impression that apologetics is a task only for intellectually privileged persons, who are familiar with abstract theoretical arguments. Rather, integral apologetics claims that every Christian can make a contribution to the apologetic task by demonstrating the goodness of the Gospel in every possible aspect in his/her life.

Being equipped with the epistemic ground for the diversified apologetic task, our further question in terms of concrete strategy is, what kind of activity (event, work, argument) should be utilized to bring about a positive influence towards our intended (Christian theistic) direction in each aspectual type of knowledge? I believe that this question can also be answered in terms of the cosmic laws and their repercussions in each aspect. Each aspect has its own distinct cosmic laws, since each aspect is a "sphere of laws", such as moral laws, juridical laws, aesthetic laws, economic laws, analytical laws and so on.

The reality of these aspectual laws can be attested by their inevitable repercussions, depending on how one responds to them. Basden (2008:77) explains this phenomenon by referring to the "promise" character of the cosmic laws. Cosmic laws are not a substance that is self-existent or co-eternal with God; but they are created conditions, which consequently have a character of promise – in the sense that, when they are observed, they should produce beneficial repercussions (if they are violated, they will produce detrimental consequences).

For example, if someone acts in line with biotic laws, one would experience vitality and health, but if one fails to keep in line with them, one will experience disease; and this would eventually pose a threat to life.

5.3.3 Actual apologetic strategies utilizing multiple types of knowledge

Recognizing the reality of cosmic laws and their inevitable repercussions, integral apologetics recommends that apologists should choose to act in line with the laws and demonstrate their beneficial repercussions in every possible aspect, so that non-believers could be exposed to different types of experience in support of Christian theism. Obviously, this task cannot be

limited to a few intellectuals, but requires the involvement of the whole Christian community.

In this context, it is encouraging noticing that integral apologetics is not the first or the only apologetic trend supporting this idea. For example Wolterstorff uses the notion of “authentic Christian commitment” to show that every authentic Christian is supposed to be engaged in apologetic activities in different areas of life. He claims that every Christ-follower with “authentic Christian commitment” has a calling to restore the order of creation in the specific area where s/he is involved. He says God has been acting in two ways to restore the creational order from the misery of this world as a result of the fall: firstly and most centrally, by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and secondly, by the “calling out [of] a people who will make decisively ultimate in their lives the challenge to be *witnesses, agents and evidences* of His work of renewal” (Wolterstorff, 1984:73).

Therefore, people are called to proclaim that God is working to restore the original creational order, which is distorted by the result of sin (witnesses), to act in order to bring about such an order in this world (agents), and to show in their own life what such an order would be like (evidences).

In this description, Wolterstorff indicates that these tasks are not limited to academic debates or reserved to professional apologists: they include every area of life and every authentic Christian. As an example, he says that “that involves treating nature with delight and respect [i.e., in line with and recovering aesthetic and ethical order (laws)] and acting in solidarity with the socially oppressed [i.e., in line with and recovering juridical order (law)]” (1984:74).

But the different academic areas are not excluded. He exemplifies the case of psychology. As agents promoting the creational order, Christian psychologists need to reject the pervasive behaviourist or Freudian theories, which “deny human freedom and responsibility entirely” and should “develop theories in psychology, which comport with or are consistent with the belief-content of our authentic commitment” (1984:77).

Wolterstorff concludes that a Christian psychologist pursuing this task “should be viewed as, in fact, engaged in apologetics” (1984:91, fn. 45).

In other words, in agreement with integral apologetics, Wolterstorff argues that all authentic Christians are supposed to participate in living, according to the cosmic order (cosmic laws) in their relevant areas of life, and these actions in fact respond to the call of apologetics.

At this point, however, it also needs to be reminded that these activities in line with the cosmic

laws (including the act of theoretical argumentation) do not conclusively demonstrate the truth of Christian theism. It is because these activities in line with the cosmic laws can also be practised by those committed to other religions or by atheists (as a result of common grace). Therefore, it should be reminded that the effects of these acts are limited to increasing the plausibility of the truth of Christianity; and they can only invite unbelievers to consider Christian theism as a viable option.

Nonetheless, the recognition of this limitation has a benefit for apologists themselves. That is, it should make them more humble in their apologetic efforts; and it would make them rely on the work of the Holy Spirit, since only the Holy Spirit is the only One who eventually changes one's heart.

5.3.4 Audience-sensitive apologetics

The next step that integral apologetics proposes is to understand the character of its audience, and to develop a strategy to identify and match with the specific needs of the audience. In fact, an apologetic act does not happen in an abstract space, but in an actual dialogical situation with a particular person with diverse needs (such as emotional, intellectual, existential, social needs, and so forth). Thus, some might say that, however many tools an apologist has in his/her apologetic tool-box (attained by a multi-aspectual approach), if one chooses inadequate tools in a given situation, they would be useless (Clark, 1993:114).

One should therefore devise strategies to attune to the needs of an audience in an actual apologetic situation.

Again, integral apologetics is not the only trend supporting this project. As a matter of fact, in recent apologetic developments, some authors recommend developing an audience-sensitive strategy. The strategy focuses on two phases: identifying an audience's specific needs; and developing effective delivery methods to meet those needs. I will briefly introduce some of these strategies – and show how they recognize diverse needs and try to develop proper delivery methods. After this appreciation, however, I will also show that these strategies are neither comprehensive nor systematic; whereas the strategies based on our multi-aspectual epistemology could provide a more exhaustive analysis of an audience's needs, and more effective delivery methods.

In their book: *Faith has its reasons* (2005), Boa and Bowman rightly reason that there is no

single perfect apologetic method to fit everyone and every situation. They then stress the importance of recognizing and matching the unique needs of an audience in actual dialogue. They say that “apologists should use common sense, and try to match their apologetics to the person with whom they are speaking” (2005:515). For example, they say, the cosmological argument or transcendental argument would not fit with those who are struggling emotionally as a result of hard personal experiences (Boa and Bowman, 2005:515).

In addition, what is distinct in their analysis of the needs of an audience is that they realize that people are not static; but everyone is in the process of moving towards faith or against faith through specific stages or phases (2005:518). At each stage, they say, a certain apologetic approach would be more suitable than others, since an audience’s needs differ at each stage. In both the farthest and closest stages in the journey towards faith, they say, a fideistic approach would be the most suitable, since it deals with the personal and volitional dimension.

In the middle stages, the most appropriate approaches would be the evidential approach (for specific/empirical objections) and the classical approach (for general/theoretical objections).

From a multi-aspectual viewpoint, however, one can see that the weakness of this analysis is, as Boa and Bowman in part admit (2005:517), that it deals mainly with the intellectual needs of an audience. That is, their apologetics only focuses on solving the intellectual problems of the audience.

William Edgar, who is a Van Tilian presuppositional apologist, advocates audience-sensitive apologetics; and he emphasizes that apologetics must “appeal to the hidden fears, frustrations and personal needs of the hearer”, let alone his/her intellectual needs (Edgar, 2003:61). As examples of a way to meet the diverse and unique needs of an audience, he says that someone with a legal mind would have a stronger need to see “a preponderance of evidence” as the decisive factor in reaching conclusions. Someone with an aesthetic sense would have a stronger need to see “the coherence and beauty of the Christian message” as the convincing factor. Those who are aware of “the great and terrible conflicts around the globe” would have a stronger need to see the practice of justice in the Christian community; while those who are afraid of being ridiculed by their peer group would need to regard the judgment of God as more pressing than that of other people (2003:60-61).

In these examples, in fact, unlike Boa and Bowman’s analysis, Edgar diversifies the audience’s needs into various dimensions (aspects), such as the psychic (sensitive), aesthetic, juridical, and

social needs.

While these attempts to meet the diversified needs of an audience are somehow in line with the project of integral apologetics, my evaluation would be that their analysis is not comprehensive enough; and it has no systematic epistemic ground. By contrast, integral apologetics provides an epistemological basis to recognize, distinguish and assess the diversified needs of an audience in an exhaustive way by applying Dooyeweerd's multi-aspectual epistemology. According to the latter, the needs of an audience can be diversified into various aspects.

An audience might seek (need) something to which it can commit in trust (in the pistic aspect). Christians (i.e., apologists) can then show committed obedience to God. If the need is for loving care and hospitality (in the ethical aspect), apologists could treat people with love, or show how the Christian community practises loving care and self-sacrifice. If one suffers from injustice and seeks justice (juridical aspect), apologists can point to the Christian community acting as an agent of justice in the world. If one is afflicted by boredom and is looking for harmony and beauty in life (aesthetic aspect), apologists can explain how the Gospel leads to a community living in harmony, with fun and beauty. The examples may continue. What apologists can do is to firstly identify the specific needs of the audience, and then show and demonstrate the corresponding activities in line with the cosmic laws in Christian life, community and the Gospel. In short, this analysis based on a multi-aspectual epistemology could better identify, distinguish⁸², and therefore, respond to the audience's manifold needs, so that this approach could help to maximize the possibility of persuasion of the truth of Christianity.

5.3.5 Effective delivery methods in the apologetic dialogue

Dooyeweerd's multi-aspectual epistemology can also serve in the development of an effective delivery method in the apologetic dialogue. In fact, some authors have already recommended the selection of various effective delivery methods for the apologetic interaction. In his book *Dialogical apologetics* (1993), Clark rightly points out that one of the problems of traditional

⁸² In apologetics (but also in psychology) the distinction between different needs or problems is not always an easy task. For example, determining whether a personal crisis is due to emotional or pistic factors may sometimes be quite challenging and can easily lead to dire consequences. Olthuis (1985) explains the usefulness of Dooyeweerd's multi-aspectual philosophy to explore the modal differences and connections between the spheres of faith and emotional life.

apologetics has been its unilateral focus on presenting abstract, universal arguments, regardless of the actual apologetic situation. To avoid this problem and to increase the possibility of persuasion, Clark proposes to shift our attention to developing proper methods to fit the actual situation.

For this purpose, he emphasizes that the methods should address and cope with the four elements of personal dynamics of the interlocutor, which are: “intellectual, attitudinal, cultural, and emotional” (Clark, 1993:112).

Intellectual elements can be dealt with by providing answers to the rational problems with which the audience struggles, although the answers are not always an airtight proof. By the attitudinal element, he means the broad attitude that the audience brings towards Christianity (e.g. antipathy or sympathy). He says that this attitudinal element needs to be approached by adjusting the apologist’s attitude towards the goal of the apologetic dialogue. He recommends that apologists should not be burdened to convert unbelievers in one stroke of dialogue; but they should regard the goal of apologetics as growing together and learning together, while committing to God the task of changing one’s heart.

This attitude would serve to decrease the tensions – and eventually modify the audience’s attitude as well (Clark, 1993:206-208).

By the cultural element, he denotes the background-force that guides an audience’s world-view and preconceptions. Since world-view differences cannot be resolved by rational arguments, it would be natural that there would be some conflict in understanding each other. In this case, he recommends developing the skill of listening, instead of repeating stereotypical arguments (Clark, 1993:209-211). Finally, in discussing the sensitive issue of religion, powerful emotions can arise. In order to ventilate the emotions that such a dialogue might evoke, he recommends that apologists show openness to new ways of seeing things, and that they stretch their latitude of acceptance, while not being judgmental.

They should converse in a way that develops trust rather than undermining it (1993:211-214). In short, Clark has suggested that, in order to cultivate a proper delivery method, various dimensions of dialogue, such as the intellectual (analytical), the psychic (emotional), the social (relational, listening) and the pistic (developing trust) need to be considered.

In addition, in his book *Humble apologetics* (2002), John Stackhouse also proposes to develop appropriate methods to facilitate persuasion. He first criticizes traditional apologetics, saying that

we are not called to “manufacture a ‘one-size-fits-all’ apologetics, and expect it to communicate well with every audience” (Stackhouse, 2002:142). To avoid this problem of traditional apologetics, he offers some specific practical guidelines to engage in an apologetic dialogue, which could help facilitate persuasion. Some of these are: “first listen and understand”; “offer, don’t demand”; “take the issue seriously”; “teach first, preach second”; and so forth. These guidelines are mostly related to ways of cultivating trust and friendship with the audience.

These suggestions for a proper delivery method to help facilitate persuasion in the actual dialogical situation are significant in the sense that these issues have never been seriously dealt with in the traditional approaches to apologetics. However, my evaluation is that these new insights could also be made more comprehensive and exhaustive by employing a multi-aspectual epistemology. According to the latter, the event of an apologetic dialogue can be distinguished into multiple aspects; and in each aspect, apologists could find a proper way to enhance persuasion by acting in line with the cosmic laws.

For example, if an apologist simply downloads stereotypical arguments, it would be acting against the norms of the social aspect, i.e., the norm of respect (Stafleu, 2005: 153); and this could produce detrimental consequences for the dialogue. As a result, the conversation would not go very far. Similar examples could be listed concerning the other aspects. Concerning the lingual aspect, the apologist’s language should be clear and grammatically correct, so that understanding could occur. Concerning the economic aspect, apologetics should not waste time by digressing from the issues concerned. Concerning the aesthetic aspect, apologists should present their arguments in an interesting and harmonious way. Concerning the juridical aspect, due opportunity should be given to the interlocutor to explain his/her point of view sufficiently well. Concerning the ethical aspect, one should patiently listen with care and generosity, instead of supplying stereotypical answers, and so forth.

Even if this list is not complete, the point it tries to illustrate is that a multi-aspectual epistemology, which integral apologetics would seek to adopt, could provide an epistemic foundation to develop the most exhaustive and systematic delivery methods, in order to facilitate persuasion in dynamic dialogical situations.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been shown that the problems of the major current apologetic approaches originate from the immanence-standpoint characterizing the epistemologies that they adopt. The latter are affected by an inherent dialectical tension between the “freedom-pole” and the “nature-pole” of the humanistic ground-motive. It has also been argued that these problems can be resolved only by an epistemology based on the biblical ground-motive; and therefore, by adopting the transcendence-standpoint.

By using Dooyeweerd’s philosophy, it has been firstly shown that the unbridgeable gulf between subject and object is falsely assumed, because no “*ding an sich*” exists behind the functioning of the object. Secondly, I have argued that there are created ontic structures of reality, such as cosmic laws and irreducible aspects and properties, which hold universally true, and are accessible to all knowing subjects, thus constituting common ground.

While the existence of common ground is acknowledged from the transcendence-standpoint, at the same time I have claimed that conclusive proofs in favour of Christian theism cannot be made available (as evidential apologetics wishes to claim). The reason why common ground cannot lead to the formulation of such final proofs is that its function is limited to constituting a transcendental condition for cognitive activities.

After acknowledging the insufficiency of the current apologetic schools, I have proposed that a new apologetic approach should be pursued from the transcendence-standpoint; and I have suggested that an integral apologetic approach could possibly perform the task. I have claimed, firstly, that this approach adopts a shift from proof to persuasion, as a proper mode of apologetics. Secondly, to maximize the persuasive effect, I have argued that this approach should utilize a multi-aspectual approach, grounded on Dooyeweerd’s theory of modal aspects, in order to recognize and appeal to the diverse types of knowledge, which have their unique epistemic weight. As a result, I have also claimed that this new apologetic approach should make it clear that the apologetic task is not limited to the use of intellectual arguments; but it is diversified into various aspects of life.

This implies that all Christians are allowed (actually required) to participate in the apologetic work by showing their specific competences, skills and commitment in all sectors of life, in all scientific disciplines, in all professions and callings. Thirdly, I have suggested that the specific needs of an audience and the proper delivery methods should be taken into consideration by

utilizing a reformational multi-aspectual approach.

Consequently, I have claimed that, with the help of this new conception of the apologetic task, some of the problems of traditional apologetics could be overcome and Christians could present their apologetic arguments in a more relevant and relaxed way. However, at the end, I have also claimed that the function of these strategies is limited only to increasing the plausibility of the truth of Christianity. The final conversion of one's heart remains in the realm of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, I would like to add that the particular strategies mentioned above, inspired by adopting a new “integral” approach, comprise only a few examples to indicate new possibilities. They do not exhaust the possibility of new contributions, based on the transcendence-standpoint, as well as on Dooyeweerd's philosophy. The latter can harbour other resources. Thus, after proposing an integral approach to apologetics, my final task is to invite fellow-scholars to contribute to further research in this field.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

Currently, debates in Christian apologetics are largely theological in their perspective, based on theological literature, and centring on theological problems. In this thesis, I have explored the problem of common ground, in relation to Christian apologetics, by importing into the debate a philosophical component or perspective. From a philosophical point of view, the basic conflict between the two major schools of contemporary Christian apologetics (evidential and presuppositional apologetics) concerns the existence of common ground.

In Chapter 2, it was shown that evidential apologetics has difficulties in acquiring the exegetical support of Scripture for the possibility of natural theology (hence, objective proof), and in demonstrating actual theistic proofs in a conclusive way. Above all, it was shown that the structure of theoretical thought itself requires non-rational presuppositions; and thus absolute objective proof is not possible. In response, however, the evidentialists claimed that it is still undeniable that certain criteria and data are shared by all; and, if the common ground is denied, the problems of “circular reasoning”, communication breakdown, and so forth, are unavoidable.

In Chapter 3, it was shown that the tradition stemming from Kuyper, including Van Til’s presuppositionalism, does not deny the presence of common ground – in spite of its doctrine of radical religious antithesis. Kuyper, Van Til and Dooyeweerd have been shown to grant the existence of common ground between believers and unbelievers (although Van Til was sometimes inconsistent on this point). In spite of the existence of common ground, however, I have argued that the latter constitutes only an ontic condition for cognitive activities, and cannot function as a neutral epistemic criterion whereby a conclusive proof of the truth of Christianity could be established.

In Chapter 4, dealing with contemporary epistemology, I have discussed the “second-generation” evidential apologists and postmodern apologetics. I have argued that postmodern philosophy (and its corresponding postmodern apologetics) cannot avoid self-applicable problems, such as relativism, communication breakdown, and so forth, because it does not grant the existence of common factors between differing commitment-groups. Some “moderate” postmodern thinkers (e.g. Sheffler, Habermas, Apel) have been shown to grant some common

factors between differing commitment groups. Yet, the difference from the second generation evidentialists lies in the fact that the postmodern group of thinkers claim that the common factors cannot function as an epistemic foundation or criterion to resolve concrete issues in debate. As a consequence, the moderate school of postmodern epistemology cannot support the (second-generation) evidentialists in their thesis that objective theism can be conclusively demonstrated on the basis of common ground.

In Chapter 5, I have argued, in agreement with Dooyeweerd, that no epistemological theory based on the immanence-standpoint can get away with the dialectical tension between subjectivism and objectivism. While subjectivism highlights the role of the human personality (the pole of freedom) and claims that there is no objective reality (the latter being constructed by the human mind), objectivism emphasizes the role of objective reality (the pole of nature); and it claims that the human mind passively copies reality, as it appears to the individual.

Our analysis shows that the traditional evidential apologetics (inclined towards objectivism) is not a tenable apologetic approach, since the existence of common ground does not guarantee the objective proof of Christian theism. At the same time, this analysis shows that presuppositional apologetics (inclined towards subjectivism – especially in its radical versions) cannot be supported either, because the existence of the common factors that constitute ontic conditions is undeniable.

Immanence-philosophers themselves have repeatedly tried to reconcile subject and object, although their attempts have not been successful. However, I have shown that this reconciliation is possible in Dooyeweerd's philosophy, because both subjects and objects are dependent on the normative web of modal laws. They are therefore "tuned" to each other, not in any external way, but in an internal and intimate way.

In this situation, Dooyeweerd's analysis has shown that there is a way to account for both the common ground and the different interpretations. According to Dooyeweerd, only a philosophy based on the transcendence-standpoint can resolve this issue. From the transcendence-standpoint, he has shown that there are given ontic conditions for our perception and theoretical thought: the cosmic order for creation is the same for all. Concerning the problem of how concrete states of affairs can be perceived in the same way, although Dooyeweerd did not explicitly give an answer, I suggested that in the end, the answer should be found in the common ground constituted by the given cosmic order, while our interpretations of it could still differ. Although

this solution may be rejected by immanence-philosophers as dogmatic, it has the advantage of solving the permanent and daunting problems of immanence-philosophy. In this explanation, it needs to be noted that the common ground is constituted by ontic conditions shaping our perception and theoretical thought. However, the latter do not function as epistemic criteria to resolve concrete issues in debate.

I have suggested that a new apologetic approach could be erected on this basis. The adjective “new” is justified by the fact that both Kuyper and Dooyeweerd, who provided the world-view and the philosophical basis adopted here, did not contribute directly to the creation of a reformational apologetic approach. This was rather Van Til’s task, but as we have seen in Chapter 3, his position on the issue of common ground is not always clear or sound.

Furthermore, the adjective “integral” is due to the fact that this new approach is based on an integral ground-motive (creation, fall, redemption); and it is supported by a philosophy that aims to be integrally Christian.

In Chapter 5 I have also applied this “integral apologetic approach” to recommend several concrete apologetic strategies. I have firstly suggested that the proper mode of apologetics should be shifted from proof to persuasion, since no objective proof is available. Secondly, in order to strengthen the persuasive power, the focus of apologetics should be diversified into multiple aspects, because each aspect can yield a different type of knowledge, which has its own unique epistemic value. I have explained that this multi-aspectual view is made possible by Dooyeweerd’s modal theory of reality. When the different types of knowledge are unified in the direction of theism, they should be able to strengthen the persuasive power of Christian theism.

Thirdly, the unique needs of the audience and the actual delivery methods in the apologetic situation have been taken into consideration. In fact, the apologetic persuasion does not occur in an abstract situation; and the audience is not a person-in-the-abstract. Rather, persuasion takes place in a dynamic dialogic interaction; and the audience is a living group of persons with unique needs in their spiritual journey.

It has also been shown that while some apologists have, in fact, attempted to integrate these factors into their apologetic models, their approaches are limited, and have not been systematically developed. By contrast, I have shown that Dooyeweerd’s modal theory of reality provides a theoretical foundation for this new approach; and it offers a basis on which to develop these factors in an exhaustive and systematic way.

In retrospect, the possible contributions that our discussion so far could offer to current apologetic theory and practice are the following. Firstly, our discussion has revealed the true nature of theoretical thought: that it is unavoidably prejudiced by non-rational factors. As a result, an objective proof of the truth of theism is not possible; and the evidential apologetic approach based on the neutrality of theoretical thought is not a tenable position.

Secondly, our discussion has contributed to clarify the different views on common ground in the circle of the Kuyperian and reformational philosophy. Contrary to what is generally known, three reformational thinkers, Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Van Til (in the moderate version of his approach), all acknowledge the existence of common ground, in spite of their doctrine of radical religious antithesis. Yet, our discussion has shown that their different approaches can be better understood by distinguishing between the ontological and epistemological dimensions of common ground.

Thirdly, our discussion has also contributed to identifying the problems of “radical” postmodern (anti-foundationalist) epistemology, and to show that this position needs to acknowledge common criteria and the data between different commitment parties, while maintaining the presence of non-rational factors in theoretical thought.

However, it has been shown that the common factors do not function as epistemic criteria to resolve any concrete issues in the forum of debate.

Fourthly, as a result, our discussion has eventually contributed to identifying the real disagreement in the debate between evidential and presuppositional apologetics (and between radical and moderate postmodern epistemologies). While their debates have often focused on the question of whether there is any common ground, our discussion has revealed that the real problem lies in the question of knowing whether this common ground functions as a neutral epistemic ground. It was confirmed that the common ground functions only as ontic conditions for our cognitive activities – but not as epistemic criteria that can resolve the concrete issues in debate – in any objective or neutral way.

Finally, our discussion contributes to providing a solution to the ineluctable conflict between subjectivism and objectivism in immanence philosophy. While immanence philosophy can never resolve the problem from within its immanent standpoint, our analysis has shown that the solution can be provided only from a transcendent standpoint, which seeks a starting point in the Transcendent Origin.

In addition, I have proposed to apply this “integral” model to make new contributions to concrete apologetic strategies. Firstly, as integral apologetics aims to diversify the tasks and domains of apologetics in every aspect of life, it contributes to show that the defence of the faith is not limited to intellectually gifted persons; but all Christians should contribute in their own way. Some Scriptural passages seem to confirm this implication. In the Epistle to the Philippians, the apostle Paul writes that the local Christians all supported his work and participated with him “in the defence and confirmation of the gospel” (1:7). In 1 Peter 1:1, the apostle exhorts the whole church (all Christians scattered throughout the regions of “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”) to participate in defending the faith, when he instructs them to be “always ready to make a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Secondly, integral apologetics helps by acknowledging the whole context in which the apologetic dialogue takes place. Thus, it commends us to be sensitive to the specific needs of the audience. Traditional apologetics has been centred on the speaker and his/her arguments, so that the success of apologetics was thought to consist in presenting universally applicable arguments. In this approach, the audience may be objectified as “an obstacle to be overcome, a prize to be won, an enemy to be vanquished” (Stackhouse, 2002:230).

By contrast, integral apologetics commends us to be motivated by pure love for the audience; and it places the unbeliever’s concerns and interests first, while it seeks to meet them for their benefit. Thus, the aim is to grow together intellectually and personally; and eventually to build up a true relationship with the interlocutor.

Finally, the integral apologetic approach admits that no apologetic activities (including theoretical arguments) can conclusively demonstrate the truth of Christianity. Therefore, indeed, this approach contributes to promoting the humility of the apologist – by recognizing the fact that the crucial act of changing a person’s heart (among others, changing one’s presuppositions and beliefs) is the unique task of the Holy Spirit.

In this sense, integral apologetics agrees with Boa and Bowman (2005:516) that “the validity of apologetics does not depend on its success, but on its utility in facilitating success through the hidden illuminating work of the Holy Spirit within non-Christians”.

Consequently, this style of apologetics guards against a triumphalistic approach that forces by way of logical arguments, or compels the audience to accept the Christian faith; and, if opposed,

it sometimes becomes judgmental. Rather, this approach humbly admits that, as much as Christians want to be committed to the Christian faith, unbelievers can have their own reasons not to commit to the Christian belief.

Thus, instead of attempting to manipulate a religious decision, this approach commends to simply present the case of Christian theism; and it invites all to consider the possibility, leaving the decision-making process to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Bibliography:

Abraham, W. 1996. Soft Rationalism. (In Peterson, M., ed. *Philosophy of religion: selected readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.84-94).

Albert, H. 1985. *Treatise on Critical Reason*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Anderson, C. B. 2003. A Canopy of Grace: Common and Particular grace in Abraham Kuyper's Theology of Science. *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 24(1):122-140.

Anderson, J. 2004. Van Til: Frequently encountered misconceptions. <http://www.vantil.info/articles/vtfem.html>. Date of access: 17 May. 2012.

Anselm, St. 1965. St. Anselm's Ontological Argument. (In Plantinga, A., ed. *The Ontological Argument: from St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books. p.3-6).

Anselm, St. 1965. St. Anselm's Reply to Gaunilo. (In Plantinga, A., ed. *The Ontological Argument: from St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books. p. 13-27).

Apel, K. 1980. *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy*. London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Apel, K. 1987. The Problem of Philosophical Foundations in Light of a Transcendental Pragmatics of Language. (In Baynes, K., Bohman, J., McCarthy, T., eds. *After Philosophy: End or Transformation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press. p.250-290).

Apel, K. 1988. Can an Ultimate Foundation of Knowledge be Non-metaphysical? (In M. Papastephanou, M., ed. *From a Transcendental-Semiotic Point of View*. Manchester & New York : Manchester University Press. p.81-102).

Apel, K. 2001. What is Philosophy? (In Ragland, C.P., & Heidt, S., ed. *What is Philosophy?* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p.153-182).

Aristotle. 1941. *Metaphysics*. McKean, ed., New York: Random House.

Bahnsen, G. 1995. The Crucial Concept of Self-Deception in Presuppositional Apologetics. *Westminster theological journal*, 57: 1-31.

- Bahnsen, G. 1996. *Always Ready*. Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press.
- Bahnsen, G. 2008. *Presuppositionalism Stated and Defended*. Georgia: The American Vision Press.
- Baker, D. 2005. Plantinga's Reformed Epistemology: what is the question? *International journal for philosophy*. 57(2):77-103.
- Basden, A. 2002. Dooyeweerd's Theory of Entities. <http://www.dooy.salford.ac.uk/entities.html>. Date of access: 10 Sept. 2013.
- Basden, A. 2008. *Philosophical Frameworks for Understanding Information Systems*. Hershey. PA: IGI Publishing.
- Basden, A. 2010. Bernstein's "Beyond objectivism and relativism": critique, affirmation and enrichment by Dooyeweerd. <http://www.dooy.salford.ac.uk/ext/bernstein.html>. Date of access 21 Oct. 2013.
- Bartley, W.W. 1984. *The Retreat to Commitment*. La Salle: Open Court.
- Bavinck, H. n.d. *The church between temple and mosque*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Berkouwer, G. C. 1951. *De algemene Openbarung: Dogmatische Studien*. Kampen: Kok.
- Bernstein, R. 1983. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania press.
- Best, S. 1996. The Cambridge companion to Habermas. *The American political science review*, 90:2.
- Bloesch, D. G. 1968. *The Christian Witness in a Secular Age*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.
- Bloesch, D. G. 1992. *A theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity.
- Boa, K. D. and Bowman R. M. 2005. *Faith Has its Reason*. 2nd edition. Waynesboro: Paternoster Press.
- Brent, J. 2008. Natural theology. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/theo-nat>. Date of access: 17, Oct. 2011.

Brummer, V. 1965. The Dilemma of a Christian Philosophy. (*In* Dooyeweerd, H., Philosophy and Christianity. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co. p. 166-177).

Butler, J. 1898. Analogy of Religion. New York: Harper and Bro.

Calvin, J. 1949. Institutes of the Christian Religion, 2 vols. Grand Rapid: Eerdmans.

Calvin, J. 1973a. Calvin's commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans publishing Co.

Calvin, J. 1973b. Calvin's commentaries: John. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Carnell, E. J. 1948. An Introduction to Christian Apologetics. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Carrier, R. 2006. Why don't I buy the resurrection story?
http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/resurrection/lecture.html. Date of access: 5 May 2012.

Choi, I. 2012. Frame: a new view of the world. <http://www.cgntv.net/#/tv/14830/1277/2598/vlist.cgn>. Date of access: 10 Oct. 2012.

Clark, G. 1946. The Christian Philosophy of Education. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Clark, G. 1952. A Christian View of Men and Things. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Clark, G. 1961. Religion, Reason, Revelation. New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Clark, G. 1980. God and Logic. *The Trinity Review*. Nov.:1-7.

Clark, K. J. 1989. Proofs of God's existence. *The Journal of Religion*. 69 (1): 59-84.

Clark, K. J. 1990. Return to Reason. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Clark, K. J. 2000. A Reformed Epistemologist's Response. (*In* Cowan, S.B., ed. Five Views on Apologetics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. p.255-263).

Clouser, R. 2005. The Myth of Religious Neutrality. 2nd Edition. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Clouser, R. 2010. A Brief Sketch of the Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd. *Axiomathes*, 20 (1):3-17.
- Clifford, W. K. 1980. The Ethics of Belief. (In Gordon S. ed. An Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism. Buffalo: Prometheus Books.
- Coffey, D. M. 1970. Natural knowledge of God: Reflections on Romans 1: 18-32. *Theological Studies*, 31:675-691
- Coletto, R. 2007. The Legitimacy Crisis of Science in Late-modern Philosophy: Towards a Reformational Response. Ph. D. Thesis.
- Coletto, R. 2015. Kuyper's Razor: Rethinking Research in Science-and-Religion, Trinitarian Scholarship and God's Eternity. *HTS Theological Studies*, (forthcoming).
- Conradie, A. L. 1960. The neo-Calvinistic concept of philosophy. Natal: the University Press.
- Cooke, M. 1993. Habermas and consensus. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 1(3):247-267.
- Cowan, S. B. (ed.) 2000. Five Views on Apologetics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Craig, W. L. 1980. The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz. London: The Macmillan Press.
- Craig, W. L. 2000. Classical Apologetics. (In Cowan, S. ed. 2000. Five Views on Apologetics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Craig, W. L. 2010. Five Arguments for God. http://thegospelcoalition.org/pdf-articles/Craig_Atheism.pdf. Date of access: 7 July 2011.
- Dawkins, R. 1986. The Blind Watchmaker. London: Longman.
- Descartes, R. 1965. Descartes' Reply. (In Plantinga, A., ed. The Ontological Argument: from St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books).
- Descartes, R. 1984. The Philosophical Writings of Descartes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- De Sopper, A. J. 1950. *Wat is Philosophie?* Haarlem, Bohn.

De Vos, H. 1952. De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee. *Kerk en Theologie*, 3:139-158.

Doppelt, G. 1978. Kuhn's Epistemological Relativism: an Interpretation and Defense. *Inquiry*, 21:33-86

Dooyeweerd, H. 1938. De niet-theoretische vooroordelen in de wetenschap: critiek op een oncritische critiek [The non-theoretical prejudgment in science: critique of an uncritical critique]. *Philosophia Reformata*, 3:193-201

Dooyeweerd, H. 1939. De transcendentale critiek van het wijsgerig denken: Een bijdrage tot overwinning van het wetenschappelijk exclusivisme der richtingen [The transcendental critique of philosophical thought: a contribution to the overcoming of the scientific exclusivism of the directions]. *Synthese* [Synthesis], IV:314-339.

Dooyeweerd, H. 1941a. De transcendentale critiek van het wijsgerig denken en de grondslagen van de wijsgeerige denkgemeenschap van het avondland [The transcendental critique of philosophical thought and the foundation of the philosophical thought-community of the Occidental world], *Philosophia Reformata*, 6:1-20.

Dooyeweerd, H. 1941b. Grondthema's van't Wijsgeerig denken van't Avondland. *Philosophia Reformata*, 6: 170-180.

Dooyeweerd, H. 1948. Transcendental Problems of Philosophical Thought. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publ. Company.

Dooyeweerd, H. 1960. In the Twilight of Western Thought. Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co.

Dooyeweerd, H. 1980. C. Van Til and the Transcendental Critique of Theoretical Thought. (In Geehan, E. R., ed. Jerusalem and Athens. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. p.74-89).

Dooyeweerd, H. 1996. Christian Philosophy: an Exploration. (In Strauss, D., ed. Christian Philosophy and the Meaning of History. Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Dooyeweerd, H. 1997. A New Critique of Theoretical Thought. Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Dooyeweerd, H. 2003. *Roots of Western Culture*. Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press

Dooyeweerd, H. 2012. *Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy*, Vol. 2: Greek and Medieval Philosophy. Grand Rapids, MI: Paideia Press

Edgar, W. 2003. *Reasons of the Heart*. New Jersey: P & R Publishing.

Evans, C. S. 1998. *Faith beyond Reason: a Kierkegaardian Account*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Feinberg, P. 2000. Cumulative case apologetics. (*In* Cowan, S.B., *ed.* *Five Views on Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. p.148-172).

Flew, A. 1966. *God and Philosophy*. London: Hutchinson.

Frame, J. 1985. Van Til and the Ligonier apologetic. *Westminster Theological Journal*, 47(2):279-299.

Frame, J. 1994. *Apologetics to the Glory of God*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Frame, J. 1995a. Van Til on Antithesis. *Westminster Theological Journal*, 57:81-102.

Frame, J. 1995b. *Cornelius Van Til: an Analysis of his Thought*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Frame, J. 2000. Presuppositional Apologetics. (*In* Cowan, S. B., *ed.* *Five Views on Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. p.207-255).

Franken, J.C. 1938. A book review of Dooyeweerd's *W.d.W.* *Themis*, 99:81-88.

Friesen, J. G. 2008. Studies relating to Herman Dooyeweerd Linked Glossary of Terms. <http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/naive.html>. Date of access: 26 Aug, 2012.

Friesen, J. G. 2009. 95 Theses on Herman Dooyeweerd. *Philosophia Reformata*, 74:78-104.

Forrest, P. 2002. Review of Warranted Christian belief by Alvin Plantinga. *Australasia Journal of Philosophy*, 80(1):109-11.

Gadamer, H. 1966. The Universality of the Hermeneutic Problem. (*In* Linge D.E., *ed.* Philosophical Hermeneutics. California: University of California Press. p.3-17).

Gadamer, H. 1967. On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection. (*In* Linge, D.E., *ed.* Philosophical Hermeneutics. California: University of California Press. p.18-43).

Gadamer, H. 1971. Replik. (*In* Apel, A., *ed.* Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik. Frankfurt am Mein: Suhrkamp).

Gadamer, H. 1991. A Letter by Professor Hans-Georg Gadamer. (*In* Bernstein, B. Beyond Objectivism and Relativism. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

Gadamer, H. 1994. Truth and Method. New York: The Continuum Publishing Co.

Gassendi. 1965. Objection to Descartes' argument. (*In* Plantinga, A., *ed.* The Ontological Argument: from St. Anselm to Contemporary philosophers. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books).

Gaunilo of Marmoutiers. 1965. On Behalf of the Fool. (*In* Plantinga, A., *ed.* The Ontological Argument: from St. Anselm to Contemporary philosophers. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books).

Grigg, R. 1990. The Crucial Disanalogies between Properly Basic Belief and Belief in God. *Religious studies*,26:389-401.

Grondin, J. 1994. Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Groothuis, D. 2000. Truth decay. Downers Groves: InterVarsity Press.

Habermas, J. 1979. What is Universal Pragmatics? (*In* McCarthy, T., Communication and the Evolution of Society. Boston: Beacon Press, p.1-68).

Habermas, J. 1982. A Reply to my Critics. (*In* Thompson, J & Held, D., *eds.* Habermas: a Critical Debate. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Habermas, J. 1983. Interpretive Social Science vs Hermeneuticism. (*In* Haan, N., *ed.* Social Science as Moral Inquiry. New York. Cambridge University Press, p.251-269).

Habermas, J. 1990a. A Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method. (*In* Ormiston, G. L., Schrift, A.D., *eds.* The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 213-244).

- Habermas, J. 1990b. The hermeneutic Claim to Universality. (*In* Ormiston, G. L., Schrift, A.D., eds. *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 245-272).
- Habermas, J. 1990c. Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification. (*In* Habermas, J. 1990c. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, p.43-115).
- Harris, J. 1992. *Against Relativism: a Philosophical Defense of Method*. Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Henk, H. 1984. *Understanding our World: an Integral Ontology*. Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America.
- Heidegger, M. 1963. *Being and Time*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Heidegger, M. 1976. *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hick, J. 1964. *The existence of God*. London: Macmillan Company.
- Hill, D. 2001. Warranted Christian Belief – a Review Article. *Themelias*, 26(2): 47-49.
- Hume, D. 1998. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co.
- Huttunen, R. 2003. Habermas and the Problem of Indoctrination. (*In* Peters, M., Ghiraldelli, P., Žarnić, B., Gibbons, A., eds. *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy of Education*. http://www.ffst.hr/ENCYCLOPAEDIA/doku.php?id=habermas_and_the_problem_of_indoctrination. Date of access: 27 Nov. 2012.
- Ive, J. 2012. *The Outline of a Christian Worldview and of a Working Christian Philosophy*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Kalsbeek, L. 1975. *Contours of a Christian Philosophy*. Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation.
- Kant, I. 1965, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Indianapolis, NY: The Bobs-Merrill Company Inc.

- Kenneson, P. 1995. There is no Such Thing as Objective Truth, and it is a Good Thing, too. (*In* Phillips, T & Okholm, D., eds. *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*. Madison, WI: InterVarsity Press. p.155-172).
- Kierkegaard, S. 1967-1978. *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*. Howard, V. and Hong, E., eds. 7 vols. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kierkegaard, S. 1985. *Philosophical Fragments*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kierkegaard, S. 1992. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Klapwijk, J. 1987. Reformational Philosophy on the Boundary between the Past and the Future. *Philosophia Reformata* 52:101-134.
- Klapwijk, J. 1991. Antithesis and Common grace. (*In* Klapwijk, J and Griffioen, S., Groenewoud, G., eds. *Bringing Into Captivity Every Thought*. Lanham: United Press of America. p. 169-190).
- Klapwijk, J. 2013. Abraham Kuyper on Science, Theology and University. *Philosophia Reformata*, 78: 18–46.
- Koons, R. 1997. A New Look at the Cosmological Argument. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 34:193-212.
- Kordig, C. R. 1971. *The Justification of Scientific Change*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Kuhn, T. S. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kuhn, T. S. 1970a. Reflections on my Critics. (*In* Lakatos, I. and Musgrave, A., eds. *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. London: Cambridge University Press. P. 231-278).
- Kuhn, T. S. 1977. *The Essential Tension*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kuyper, A. 1909. *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*. Kampen: Kok.
- Kuyper, A. 1931. *De Gemeene Gratie*. Kampen: Kok.
- Kuyper, A. 1954. *Principles of Sacred Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Kuyper, A. 2008. *Lectures on Calvinism*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.

- Lenk, H. 1970. Philosophische Logikbegründung and rationale Kritizismus. *Philosophische Forschung*, 24(2): 88-109.
- Lewis, C. S. 1948. *Miracles*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lewis, G. 1990. *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims*. Lanham, MD: University press of America.
- Lyotard, J. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mackie, J. L. 1982. *The Miracle of Theism*. Oxford; Clarendon Press.
- McConnell, T. 2005. The Influence of Idealism on the Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til. *Journal of the evangelical theological society*, 48(3): 557-588
- Mendelson, J. 1979. The Habermas-Gadamer Debate. *New German Critique*, 18:44-73.
- Martin, M. 1990. *Atheism: Philosophical justification*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- McCarthy, T. 1982. Rationality and Relativism. (In Thompson, J. B and Held, D., eds. *Habermas: Critical Debates*. Massachusetts, The MIT Press. p.57-78.
- McConnel, T. 2005. The Influence of Idealism on the Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til. *Journal of the evangelical theological society*, 48(3): 557-88.
- Mitchell, B. 1974. *The Justification of Religious Belief*. London: Macmillan.
- Moo, D. J. 1991. *Romans 1-8*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Nash, D. 1968. *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.
- Nolan, L. 2011. Descartes' Ontological Argument. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-ontological>. Date of access 01 July 2011.
- O'Grady, P. 2002. *Relativism*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Oliphint, K. S. *Covenant Apologetics: Principle and Practice in Defense of our Faith*. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway.

Papastephanou, M. 1997. Communicative Action and Philosophical Foundations: Comments on the Apel-Habermas debate. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 23(4): 41-71.

Pascal, B. 1966. *Pensees*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Paul, H. 2001. Review of Warranted Christian belief by Alvin Plantinga. *Mind*, 110 (440):1110-15.

Pedersen, J. 2008. Habermas' Method: Rational Reconstruction. *Philosophy of the social sciences*, 38(4):457-485.

Peirce, C. S. 1933. *Collected papers*, Vol. 5. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Plantinga, A. *ed.* 1965. *The Ontological Argument: from St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Plantinga, A. 1966. Kant's Objection to the Ontological Arguments. *Journal of Philosophy*, 63(19): 537-546.

Plantinga, A. 1967. *God and Other Minds*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Plantinga, A. 1974a. The Ontological Argument. (*In* Rowe, W. L. and Wainwright, W. J., *eds.* 1989. *The Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*. 2nd ed. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. p.108-125).

Plantinga, A. 1974a. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Plantinga, A. 1974b. *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

Plantinga, A. 1983. Reason and Belief in God. (*In* Plantinga, A. and Wolterstorff, N., *eds.* *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. p.19-93).

Plantinga, A. 1983a. The Reformed Objection Revisited. *Christian Scholars Review*, 12: 57-61.

Plantinga, A. 1985. Self-Profile. (*In* Tomberlin, J. E. and Inwage, P. V., *eds.* *Alvin Plantinga*. Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel.

Plantinga, A. 1998. Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century. (*In* Sennet, J. F., ed. Analytic theist. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Plantinga, A. 2000. Warranted Christian Belief. New York: Oxford University Press.

Popper, K. 1966. The Open Society and its Enemies. Vol. 2. London: Routledge and Kegan Pad.

Popper, K. 1970. Normal Science and its Dangers. (*In* Lakatos and Musgrave, eds. Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.51-58).

Popper, K. 1972. Objective Knowledge: an Evolutionary Approach. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Popper, K. 1977. The Open Society and its Enemies. 11th ed. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Popper, K. 1989. Conjectures and Refutations. London: Routledge.

Pratt, R. 1999. Common Misunderstandings of Van Til's apologetics. IIIM Magazine Online. Vol. 1: no. 40.

Ramm, B. 1953. Protestant Christian Evidences. Chicago: Moody press.

Radnitzky, G. 1987. In Defense of Self-Applicable Critical Rationalism. (*In* Radnitzky, G. and Bartley, W. W., eds. Evolutionary Epistemology, Rationality, and the Sociology of Knowledge. Illinois: Open Court. p.279-312).

Radnitzky, G. and Bartley, W. W., eds. 1987. Evolutionary Epistemology, Rationality, and the Sociology of Knowledge. Illinois: Open Court.

Ratzsch, D. 1992. Abraham Kuyper's Philosophy of Science. *Calvin Theological Journal*, 27:277-303.

Reichenbach, B. 1972. The Cosmological Argument: A Reassessment. Springfield: Charles Thomas.

Reichenbach, B. 2010. Cosmological Argument.

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/cosmological-argument>. 10 July 2011.

Ricoeur, P. 1990. Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology. (In Ormiston, G. L. and Schrift, A. D., eds. *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*. Albany: State University of New York Press. p.298-334).

Robbers, H. 1935. Christelijke filosofie in Katholieke en Calvinistische opvatting [Christian philosophy in Catholic and Calvinistic view] *Studiën. Tijdschrift voor godsdienst, wetenschap en letteren* [Studies. Periodical for religion, science and literatures], 67:85-99.

Rorty, R. 1962. Realism, Categories, and the 'Linguistic Turn.' *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 2 (2): 307-322.

Rorty, R. 1989. Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity. New York: Cambridge University press.

Russell, B. 1964. BBC Radio Debate. (In Hick, J. ed. *The existence of God*. New York: Macmillan).

Scheffler, I. 1967. Science and Subjectivity. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.

Shapere, D. 1964. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. *Philosophical Review*, 73(3):383-394.

Siegel, H. 1978. Relativism Refuted. Dordrecht/ Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company.

Smith, S. 2005. Truth and the New Kind of Christian: the Emerging Effects of Postmodernism in the Church. Wheaton: Crossway Books.

Smith, S. 2005. Postmodernism and the Priority of the Language-world Relation. (In Penner, M., ed. *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.

Sproul, R. C., Gerstner, J. and Lindsley, A. 1984. Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics. Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation.

Stackhouse, J. 2002. Humble Apologetics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Strauss, D.F.M. 1990. The Best-Known but Least-Understood Part of Dooyeweerd's Philosophy. *Journal of Christian Scholarship*, 42 (1 & 2):61-80.

Strauss, D.F.M. 2009. Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines. Grand Rapids, MI: Paideia Press.

Sudduth, M. 2009. *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*. Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Swinburne, R. 2001. Plantinga on Warrant. *Religious Studies*. 37(2):203-214.

Sykes, R. 1977. Soft Rationalism. *International journal for philosophy of religion*. 8(1):51-66.

Teigas, D. 1995. *Knowledge and Hermeneutic Understanding*. London and Toronto: Associated University Presses.

Tertullian. 1839-1841. On the flesh of Christ 5. (*In Opera*, ed. Leopold, E. F. Leipzig. p.4:66).

Toulmin, S. 1970. Does the Distinction between Normal and Revolutionary Science Hold Water? (*In Lakatos and Musgrave eds. Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 39-48).

Troost, A. What is Reformational Philosophy? Dyke, H. V., ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Paideia Press.

Vanhoozer, K. 2005. Pilgrim's Digress: Christian Thinking on and about the Post/modern way. (*In Penner, M., ed. Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.

Van Peursen, C. A. 1965. Does Meaning Make Sense? (*In Dooyeweerd, H. Philosophy and Christianity*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co.)

Van Til, C. 1955. *The Defense of Faith*. 1st edition. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Van Til, C. 1995. *Christianity in Conflict*. Vander Hill, S.T. unpublished edition.

Van Til, C. 1967. *The Defense of Faith*. 3rd ed. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Van Til, C. 1969. *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Van Til, C. 1971. *Psychology of Religion*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Van Til, C. 1972. *Common Grace and the Gospel*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Van Til, C. 1974. *Introduction to Systematic Theology*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Van Til, C. 1978. *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.

Van Til, C. 1980. Response to Dooyeweerd. (*In* Geehan, E. R., ed. *Jerusalem and Athens*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. p.89-127)

Warnke, G. 1987. *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Westphal, M. 1999. Hermeneutics as epistemology. In J. Grece and E. Sosa eds. *Epistemology*. Malden, Oxford: Blackwell publishers: 415-435.

Westphal, M. 2005. Onot-theology, Metanarrative, Perspectivism, and the Gospel. (*In* Penner, M., ed. *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press. p.)

Wittgenstein, L. 1971. *On Certainty*. New York: Perennial/Harper & Row.

Wolterstorff, N. 1984. *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.