

Glossary of Terms and Phrases

Apologetics: The vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life. The word “apologetics” derives from the combination of two Greek words: *apo* (“back, from”) and *logos* (“word”), meaning “to give a word back, to respond,” i.e., in defense.

Antithesis: “Antithesis” is based on two Greek words: *anti* (“against”) and *tithenai* (“to set or place”). “Antithesis” speaks of opposition or a counter point. As Christians we must recognize the fundamental disagreement between biblical thought and all forms of unbelief at the foundational level of our theory of knowing and knowledge.

Atomism: A form of materialism which holds that the material Universe is composed of indestructible particles. In fact, the word “atom” is from the Greek *a* (“no”) and *temnein* (“cut”), which speaks of the smallest material particle that can be cut down no smaller. Atomism necessarily denies Monism in that it affirms infinite atomic differentiation in reality.

Autonomy: “Autonomy” derives from two Greek words: *auto* (“self”) and *nomos* (“law”). It effectively means “self law,” or “self rule.” Human autonomy asserts that man’s reasoning is the ultimate criterion of knowledge.

Begging the question: “Begging the question” (technically known by the Latin phrase *petitio principii*) is a fallacious manner of reasoning wherein your premise includes the claim that your conclusion is true, that is, your argument assumes the very point to be proven.

Brute fact: An uninterpreted fact that stands alone without reference to some other fact, principle of interpretation, and especially to God. Presuppositional Apologetics denies brute factuality in that all facts are created and controlled by God according to his plan and for his glory.

Circular reasoning: “Circular reasoning” (technically known by the Latin phrase *circulus in probando*) occurs when one assumes something in order to prove that very thing. Circular reasoning is often very subtle and hard to detect.

Deism: A natural religion view which was very prevalent in the 17th and 18th centuries. This belief about God is derived solely from natural revelation and reason and not special revelation. The God of deism created the world, but does not interfere with it by means of providence, miracle, incarnation, or any other Christian affirmation.

Discursive reasoning: Analytical reasoning that proceeds by moving from fact to fact, point by point, in a logical fashion, rather than by intuition.

Egoism: This ethical system holds that self-interest is the proper motive for human conduct. This should not be confused with “egotism” which is conceit.

Enlightenment: The European intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries in which ideas concerning God, reason, nature, and man were blended into a worldview that inspired revolutionary developments in art, philosophy, and politics. Central to Enlightenment thought were the use and celebration of reason. For Enlightenment thinkers, received authority, whether in science or religion, was to be subject to the investigation of unfettered minds.”

Deconstructionism: Deconstructionism is a principle of modern language analysis which asserts that language refers only to itself rather than to an external reality. It challenges any claims to ultimate truth and obligation by attacking theories of knowledge and ultimate values. This philosophy attempts to “deconstruct” texts to remove all biases and traditional assumptions. Deconstructionists argue, therefore, that no written text communicates any set meaning or conveys any reliable or coherent message.

Dialectic: “Dialectic” (from the Greek *dialogo*, “to discourse”) is the philosophical process (the “dialogue”) whereby truth is arrived at by the exchange of ideas between opposing viewpoints.

Dialectical Materialism: The Marxian interpretation of reality that views matter as the sole subject of change and all change as the product of a constant conflict between opposites arising from the internal contradictions inherent in all events, ideas, and movements.

Discursive: A form of reasoning that is analytical and which proceeds by moving from fact to fact, point by point, in a logical fashion, rather than by intuition.

Dualism: The metaphysical system that holds that there are two ultimate realities, usually designated as mind and matter.

Economic Trinity: The “economic Trinity” looks at the Trinity in terms of the scheme of salvation, the plan of redemption: The Father elects us and sends the Son, the Son becomes incarnate and dies for us, the Spirit calls and sanctifies us. The notion of the

economic Trinity focuses on the roles of each member of the Trinity. Neither the Father nor the Spirit died on the cross, only the Son.

Empirical: Knowledge that is observational, relying on sense perception. It is guided by experience rather than theory.

Epistemological self-consciousness: One who is “epistemologically self-conscious” engages life in a way that fully comports with his theory of knowledge. That is, his behavior and reasoning are perfectly consistent with his basic commitments regarding the world and knowledge.

Epistemology: “Epistemology” is based on two Greek words: *episteme* (“knowledge”) and *logos* (“word, discourse”). It is the study of the nature and limits of human knowledge; it addresses questions about truth, belief, justification, etc. It investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of knowledge, discovering what we know and how we come to know it.

Ethics: The branch of philosophy known as moral philosophy. It studies right and wrong attitudes, judgments, and actions, as well as moral responsibility and obligation

Existentialism: A philosophy concerned above all else with freedom and self-expression. It exalts the experience of living over against knowing, willing over thinking, action over contemplation, love over law, personality over principle, the individual over society.

General Revelation: General revelation is the doctrine that God reveals himself in nature. This form of revelation is directed to all men (thus it is called “general” revelation). Though God’s revelation in nature does not show man the way of salvation,

the Trinitarian nature of God, and many other such divine truths, it does show that God exists, that he is powerful, and that man is responsible to him.

Generation X: “Generation X” is the sociological term that speaks of people born in the 1960s and 70s, whose teen years touched the 1980s. It is based on a British study by Jane Deverson who studied teenagers of this era, finding that they tended to “sleep together before they are married, don’t believe in God, dislike the Queen and don’t respect parents.” The letter “X” was a symbol of teen defiance and was adopted by civil rights protestor Malcolm Little who changed his last name to “X.”

Incarnation: “Incarnation” derives from the Latin *incarnare*, “to become flesh.” This is based on two Latin words: *in* (“in”) plus *carn* (“flesh”). It speaks of the coming of the invisible, spiritual God in bodily form in Jesus Christ.

Infinite regress: The result when a suggested explanation or purported standard is challenged, causing the argument to point back further to a more basic commitment that sustains the explanation, and when that commitment is challenged, it points to an even more basic commitment, on and on ad infinitum

Metaphysics: “Metaphysics” is derived from the Latin word *metaphysica*, which is based on the compound of two Greek words: *meta* (“after, beyond”) and *physika* (“physics, nature”). It literally means “beyond the physical,” that is, beyond the physical world of sense perception. It is the study of the ultimate nature of reality, the origin, structure, and nature of what is real.

Monism: “Monism” is derived from the Greek word *mono*, “single.” Monism is a metaphysical system asserting only one ultimate substance or principle in the Universe. Monism denies the multiplicity of things, holding that those many things we deem real are simply phases of a one and are somehow illusions.

Nihilism: Nihilism teaches that the world and man are wholly without meaning or purpose. The world and man are so absolutely senseless and useless that there is no comprehensible truth. The word “nihilism” is derived from the Latin *nihil*, which means “nothing.”

Noetic: “Noetic” is derived from the Greek word *nous*, which means “mind” (see: Luke 24:45; Rom. 7:23; Phil. 4:7). The “noetic effect of sin” is one aspect of the doctrine “total depravity,” which declares that the fall reaches deep down into a man’s very being, even to his mind, his reasoning processes.

Omnipresence: “Omnipresence” is derived from the Latin words *omni* (“all”) and *praesens* (“present”). It speaks of God’s personal, simultaneous presence everywhere throughout the universe.

Ontology: The study of the nature of being.

Ontological Trinity: The “ontological Trinity” is God’s triune being in itself, the one being of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Polytheism: “Polytheism” is derived from the French, *polythiesme*, which is based on the combination of two Greek words: *polu* (“many”) and *theos* (“god”). Polytheism is the

belief in many gods, wherein particular gods are thought to govern specific aspects of the world and life.

Pragmatism: The philosophical system which holds that the meaning of an idea or proposition lies in its observable practical consequences. Pragmatists argue that we must live to solve our problems, even though we do not need to theoretically account for explanations. We must be able to adapt to the environment, solve our problems and get ahead in life. Pragmatism shuns the traditional problems of philosophy: We do not need certainty, but utility.

Predication: Predication” is a logical concept borrowed from grammar. In logic predication is either the affirming or denying of something. It is the attributing or negating of something to the subject of a proposition. For instance, consider the following two statements of predication: “The sun is hot”; “The dark side of the moon is not hot.” The first affirms (predicates) hotness of the sun; the second denies hotness of the dark side of the moon.

Presupposition: An elementary (or foundational) assumption in one’s reasoning or in the process by which opinions are formed. It is not just any assumption in an argument, but a personal commitment that is held at the most basic level of one’s network of beliefs. Presuppositions form a wide-ranging, foundational perspective (or starting point) in terms of which everything else is interpreted and evaluated. As such, presuppositions have the greatest authority in one’s thinking, being treated as one’s least negotiable beliefs and being granted the highest immunity to revision.”

Proletariat: “Proletariat” derives from the Latin *proles* (“offspring”). In ancient Rome this signified the lower class poor in society. In Marxian theory it speaks of the working class which does not possess capital or the means of production.

Reformed theology: Reformed theology is the strongly Calvinistic, covenantal theological branch of evangelicalism. A good summary of the Reformed view of theology may be found in the famed doctrinal formulation known as the Westminster Confession of Faith (drawn up in the mid 1640s in England).

Relativism: Relativism teaches that knowledge is relative due to the limited state of the mind and that there can be no absolutes to give a set meaning or value to any human thought or action.

Special Revelation: Special revelation is that disclosure that is given to God’s people (hence, it is “special”). It comes from God by means of direct, personal, verbal (or visual) communication, either through special, prophetically endowed messengers or through the written record of those messengers.

Subliminal: “Subliminal” derives from two Latin words: *sub* (“below”) and *limmen* (“threshold”). It speaks of that which is below the threshold of consciousness, that which is just out of conscious perception. Advertisers have discovered that people unconsciously pick up on and are influenced by flashes of information just below the normal limits of perception.

Transcendental reasoning: Transcendental reasoning seeks to discover what general conditions must be fulfilled for any particular instance of knowledge to be possible. It

asks what view of man, mind, truth, language, and the world is necessarily presupposed by our conception of knowledge and our methods of pursuing it.

Universal: In philosophy, any truth of a general or abstract nature—whether it be a broad concept, law, principle, or categorical statement. Such general truths are used to understand, organize, and interpret particular truths encountered in concrete experience.

Utilitarianism: The ethical system which holds that men must seek the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

Worldview: A worldview is a network of presuppositions (which are not verified by the procedures of natural science) regarding reality (metaphysics), knowing (epistemology), and conduct (ethics) in terms of which every element of human experience is related and interpreted.”