포스트모더니즘에 대한 기독교적 접근

A Christian Approach towards Post-modernism

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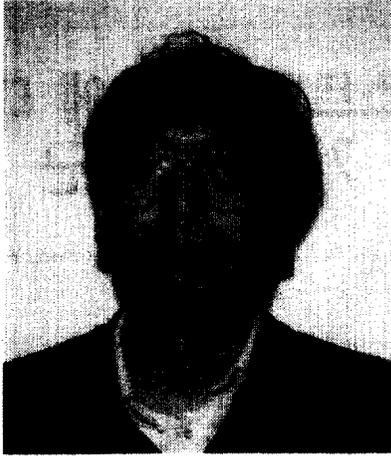
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한글 초록

이 글의 목적은 서양 철학의 최근 동향을 간략히 서술하고 그것이 기독교적 학문 연구와 관련될 수 있는 점들을 살펴보고자 하는 것이다. 필자는 이 주제를 다섯 가지로 나누어 생각하고자 한다. 첫째로 서양 철학이 어떻게 현재의 상황, 즉 소위 포스트모더니즘 논쟁의 상황에 이르렀는지를 설명할 것이다. 둘째로 포스트모더니즘의 핵심 내용을 소개함으로서 그것을 정의하고자 할 것이다. 셋째로 철학의 이러한 동향이 기독교 학문 연구에 어떠한 영향을 미칠 것인지에 대하여 논할 것이다. 넷째로 기독교 학자가 실제로 이러한 상황에 어떻게 대응할 수 있는지의 한 실례로서 한스 게오르그 가다머의 해석학을 살펴볼 것이다. 끝으로 이 논고는 개혁주의 노선에 서 있는 북미의 기독교 사상가들이 철학의 이러한 동향에 대해 어떻게 대응하고 있는지를 소개하고자 한다.

철학의 포스트모더니즘 논쟁은 20세기의 서구 문화의 일반적 분위기와 밀접한 관계가 있다. 즉 포스트모더니즘은 데이빗 클렘이 지적한 바와 같이 "일차 세계대전 이후 유럽의 지성인들 사이에 팽배한 근대주의적 이상에 대한 환멸에서 비롯된 것"이다. 이러한 불만과 위기감은 금세기 후반에 들어 과학에 대한 신뢰 상실과 환경문제에 봉착하면서 더욱 심화되었다. 20세기 초반부터 일부에서 일어난 문명의 위기의식이나 과학적 세계관에 대한 비판이 최근 들어 마침내 17세기 이후 4세기 이상 지속해온 "근대(近代)의 종말"에 대한 종합적이고 본격적인 논의로 발전하게 된 것이다.

하지만 포스트모더니즘을 규정하기란 그리 쉽지 않다. 그것은 이 동향이 아직도 하나의 통일된 체계를 이루기보다는 여러가지 주장들이 논쟁을 벌이며 전개되는 단계에 머물고 있기 때문이다. 포스트모더니즘을 넓게 보려면 적어도 근대 철학에 대한 극단적 비판인 데리다의 해

체주의뿐 아니라 수정주의적 계몽사상가인 하버마스의 비판이론, 그리고 가장 온건한 대안이라 볼 수 있는 철학적 해석학을 주창하는 가다머 등의 삼대 조류는 물론 그 외에도 여러 학자들의 상이한 주장들을 모두 고려해야만 한다.

물론 포스트모더니즘의 여러 유파들에 어떤 공통성이 없는 것은 아니다. 무엇보다도 포스트모더니즘의 가장 두드러진 특징은 반형이상학적 자세라고 할 수 있다. 서양 철학의 중심이라고 할 수 있는 형이상학은 결국 복잡한 실재(實在)를 이해하기 쉽고 다루기 쉽게 이론적으로 체계화 하려는 노력이었다. 형이상학은 근대에 들어와 과학의 영향으로 지나치게 객관주의적이 되고 말았다. 포스트모더니즘은 이 점을 비판한다. 그러나 이 비판은 객관주의적 진리관의 몰락이 가져오는 상대주의의 위험을 어떻게 극복하느냐 하는 또 하나의 어려운 부담을 지워준다. 결국 포스트모더니즘의 논쟁은 객관주의와 주관주의의 양극적 위험을 어떻게 극복할 것인가에 있다. 이와 연관하여 포스트모더니즘의 또 다른 과제는 주체를 중심으로 삼는 근대 철학의 사고방식을 비판, 극복하는 것이다. 이들은 또한 근대 철학의 이론 중심적인 추상성에 반발하여 실천적·윤리적 요소들에 관심을 기울이고, 나아가서는 문화, 사회, 정치적인 양상들을 철학의 본질적인 분야로 다루고 있다. 끝으로 포스트모더니즘은 일견 반계몽주의적이며 반인본주의적 성향을 가진다.

이러한 움직임에 대해 기독 학자들이 관심을 가져야 할 이유는 분명하다. 그것은 우리들에게 세상의 문화와 그것의 정신에 맞서 도전하고 복음의 진리를 드러내야 할 책임이 있기 때문이다. 특히 포스트모더니즘은 근대의 계몽주의 붕괴 후유증으로 비판적·허무주의적 상대주의의 위험을 내포하고 있기에 그것을 비판적으로 주시하는 것은 중요하다. 가다머의 철학적인 해석학은 일상 언어를 통한 이해가 가진 존재론적 구조를 분석함을 통하여 객관주의와 상대주의를 모두 극복할 수 있

는 새로운 진리관을 주창하고, 아울러 그 철학을 기반으로 책임과 공동체적 정신을 기조로 한 문화, 사회관을 펼친다. 또 북미의 일단의 기독철학자들의 움직임 역시 포스트모더니즘 시대의 논의에 의미있는 일익을 담당하고 있다. 포스트모더니즘의 상황은 그리스도를 대적하여 높아진 모든 것을 주의 진리 앞에 굴복시켜야 할 사명을 가진 기독 학자들에게 커다란 도전과 기회를 제공한다.

Introduction

This essay aims to provide a brief overview of a rather recent development in Western philosophy. My purpose is to sketch this development with respect to its significance for Christian higher learning and education. To accomplish the task, I have divided this essay into five sections. In the first section, I describe how Western philosophy has arrived where it is now, namely the so-called "post-modern" discussion. I then attempt to define post-modernism by explaining its core aspects. Section three elaborates on how this development in philosophy may be linked to Christian scholarship and Christian higher education. Next section describes Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics in order to give an actual example of how a Christian thinker may respond to the development. Finally, the essay concludes with some observations regarding how some of North American Reformed thinkers have attempt to cope with the development.

I. The Road to Post-modernism

The rise of the so-called "post-modern" debate in philosophy is closely related to the general atmosphere in Western culture since the early 20th century. As David E.Klemm points out, "post-modernism arises out of the disillusionment with the modern ideals felt by European intellectuals after World War I."[1] Culture critics regard the twentieth century as the century of crisis. As early as the beginning

of the third decade of this century, some scholars who were deeply shocked by the devastation wrought by World War, the decline of morality the decrease of unity in society, began to write about their sense of crisis in Western culture.[2] A growing suspicion about the 17th-century Enlightenment's valuation of science has been greatly intensified by them. For them, the scientistic foundation of modern civilization contains the seeds of the modern crisis.[3]

According to their historical analysis, the world began to change in the seventeenth century, when scientists like Galileo introduced the idea of "knowledge directed to the power of making, a knowing mastery of nature," i.e., technology.[4] This new worldview brought massive power and material benefits. This scientistic way has become perhaps the most influential and powerful worldview in human

1) David E.Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry, vol.* I(Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), p.19.
2) Scholars in various fields such as Ernst Troeltsch, Oswald Spengler, Pitrim A. Sorokin, Arnold Toynbee, and Christopher Dawson believed that the dark reality of the twentieth century crisis was so overwhelming that the future of the Western civilization was much more at stake than was generally believed. Especially some philosophers, Such as Max Scheler, Arnold Gehlen, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger, to name only a few, have suggested that the scientistic worldview is the actual source of the crisis.
3) For instance, Heidegger severely criticized the modern scientistic civilization, especially in his later works like *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*(New York:Haper & Row, Publishers,1977).
4) H.-G. Gadamer, "Theory, Technology, Practice: Task of the Science of Man," *Social Research* 44(1977) p.534. Also see H.-G. Gadamer, "What is Practice?" in *Reason in the Scientific Age*(Cambridge:MIT Press, 1982)/ p.70. "In prescinding from the primarily experienceable and familiar totality of our world," Gadamer insists, "it [science] has been developed into a knowledge of manipulable relationships by means of isolating experimentation."

history. However, critics wonder about the ideals of scientistic culture. For example, their analysis of a burning issue of our time, namely the crisis in the environment, demonstrates their perspective clearly. It was not so long ago that the long suppressed suspicion about the defects of modern civilization finally began to surface and then suddenly there appeared a flood of criticisms of the modern way of life.[5] Today, there is much discussion about the "closure of modernity," and talk about life after the collapse of scientistic objectivism is found everywhere.[6]

Thus, the post-modern discussion is related to the collapse of scientistic objectivism. The scientistic objectivism was inspired by the rise of modern science: philosophy was not exempted from the influence of the new worldview. Moreover, since philosophy used to occupy the central place in learning and knowledge, the exclusive claim to objective truth made by science was particularly challenging to philosophy. Soon it was apparent that a fundamental adjustment in

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5) Stanley Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.10. Rosen points out that together with Husserl and Heidegger, the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School (such as Horkheimer and Adorno) "may be given full credit for spelling out the tyrannical and positivist elements in the scientific Enlightenment."
6) It is therefore rather natural that, in the discussion of "post-modernity," the search for a way-out from the crisis coincides with the search for a new, i.e., non-scientific foundation of human experience, and the search for a new and better worldview. As James Olthuis describes the trend, "there is a flurry of activity to refurbish old worldviews even as impassioned voices insist that only new worldviews can save our world from total collapse." As a result, today there exists "a veritable showcase of worldviews all championing their wares and charms."(James Olthuis, "On Worldview," *Christian Scholar's Review,* XIV 2, 1985. p.153.

philosophy was necessary. This adjustment, resulting from the effort to reconcile traditional philosophy with the rising influence of science, was exactly what occurred in the early phase of modern philosophy.

Descartes is the prime example of those who accommodated the changes by reconstructing philosophy with the articulation of a new method. Descartes abandoned Medieval Scholastic metaphysics as empty speculation.[7] The new philosophy must be consonant with science, which was believed to be able to secure certain knowledge mathematically. Accepting mathematics as his model of "clear and distinct" knowledge, Descartes introduced the ideal of methodological certainty into philosophy.[8] According to this ideal, methodological epistemology would secure the certainty of human knowledge, and thereby, the foundation of culture on the basis of its objectivity. From this perspective, the scientistic-objectivist epistemological philosophy was the only protection against the menace of relativism. Thus, such a scientistic objectivism almost right away implied what is now commonly known as "foundationalism."[9] Modern methodological

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7) cf. Descartes' discussion of method in his *A Discourse on Method.*
8) Modern philosophy is characterized by shift of interest from metaphysical objects to the question of method of knowledge and its certainty. For example, although English empiricists opposed Cartesian innate ideas which still maintain speculative tenor, in so far as they also focused on the process, method, and certainty of knowledge than the object itself, they are also modern and Cartesian.
9) The term, foundationalism, is an invention of the philosophy of science. Imre Lakatos used it for the first time in discussion with Karl Popper. cf. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), and especially Lakatos' article in the book, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," pp.91-197;

philosophy sought to provide theoretical justification for scientific knowledge, and thereby considered itself as the theory of theory. Thus, it once again assumed for itself the role of exclusive adjudicator for culture. However, as we considered earlier, what actually happened was that modern philosophy supplied science with a forceful theoretical means to invade first the realm of the "human sciences," and then that of praxis. This was accomplished by way of justifying the exclusive truth claim of science. According to this viewpoint, other agents of knowing, such as arts and religion, are either of secondary importance or must be subservient to scientific knowledge with a lesser value claim.[10]

It was the Enlightenment, then, with its famous maxim "Dare to

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especially pp.132ff. As Jonathan Dancy points out, classical foundationalism is "a research programme which sets out to show how it is that our beliefs about an external world, about science, about a past and a future, and about other minds can be justified on a base which is restricted to infallible beliefs about our sensory states. It is suggested that if we can do this, the demands of epistemology are satisfied. If not, we relapse into skepticism." *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1985), pp.53f. However, today foundationalism often points to a much broader concept than it was originally coined for. Today it refers to any attempt to provide absolutely justifiable foundations that are both universal and ultimate for scientific reasoning. Foundationalism attempts to find a method that secures theoretical certainty. Such foundations are designed to safeguard us from falling into errors in our thinking, knowing, and acting. Also, such foundations function as the intersubjective arbiter because they are objective. These ultimate foundations have often been called by different names. In the history of philosophy, common designators for the concept are "laws," "reason," "norm," "canon," "form," and "permanent neutral framework." (cf. R.Rorty, *Mirror* p.315.)
10) H.-G. Gadamer, "The Power of Reason," *in Man and World* 3(1970):8f.

use your reason (Sapere aude)" that solidified the absolutism of the modern philosophical worldview. From then on, the tradition of philosophy as epistemology, backed by the dominant Enlightenment spirit, lived on for almost four centuries pushing Western culture toward completing a scientistic reformulation. This trend, spiritually and philosophically, reached its climax with the Hegelians who devoted their philosophical inquiry to the construction of a system that presupposed "the existence of an objective truth in terms of which the world could be seen as an 'expression' by the systematic philosopher."[11]

However, this tradition of philosophy, and especially its expression in Hegelian "scientism" with the concomitant objectivistic ideal of truth and culture, did not go unchallenged. Kierkegaard, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Dewey, and finally Heidegger, just to give a few examples, objected to the scientistic ideal of objective truth as dogmatism. For them, "truth is frail and human, more a matter of 'truth-for-us' than 'truth-as-such.'"[12] Naturally, an irreconcilable conflict existed between those who supported these challengers and people who were committed to the Enlightenment and its objectivist-scientistic vision of life. The latter feared such challenges, mostly because of the implied relativism.

The conflict between objectivistic scientism and subjectivistic relativism is inherent in this twofold legacy of the Enlightenment. On

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11) Robert R.Sullivan, "Introduction," in *Philosophical Apprenticeships* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985), H.-G.Gadamer, translated by Robert R.Sullivan, p.x.
12) *Ibid.*

the one hand, there is daring, that is, daring to know and do everything according to the scientific method, an attempt at unity and objectivity; on the other hand, there is the never ending search for freedom of individuality and subjectivity.[13] This was the essence of the modern dilemma. Thus, we found ourselves in a culture in which science and its technological application increasingly had the final word in almost every thing. But, science never had been really able to refute the fundamental challenge that was posed by critics. Clearly, science was a poor substitute for the original purpose of philosophy. It was understandable that people like Kant, Hegel, and Husserl desperately attempted to recover the lost privileged status of philosophy. For example, Hegel suggested that "philosophy should resume its task of providing the foundations for all the sciences under its own leadership." But, Hegel's attempt, as well as the attempts of Kant and Husserl, ultimately failed.

As a result, today the realm and role of philosophy, if there

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13) Stanley Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics*, pp. 3ff. Rosen explains well the double-sided effect of the Enlightenment in the modern era in terms of the conflict that it has created: the unique conflict between the optimistic view of science, or what he calls the "scientistic" daring and the "desire for individual and political freedom." For a complete analysis of the conflict in the Enlightenment tradition, see Herman Dooyeweerd's *Roots*. (Chapter Six, "Classical Humanism," pp. 148-174.) Dooyeweerd argues that the conflict originated when "the humanistic religion of human personality in its *freedom* (from every faith that claims allegiance) and in its *autonomy* (that is, the pretension that human personality is a law unto itself)" clashed with the "control motive of autonomous man" which aims to subject nature and all of its unlimited possibilities to man by means of the new method of mathematical science."(Root, pp. 149, 152.)

should by any at all, appears much more limited. Or as Richard Rorty argues in his famous book, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, for some people, it is now time that philosophy has to give up the wrong self-image and the fundamental misunderstanding of its role.[14] Rorty's claim well reflects the thrust of the so-called post-modern sentiment against the old faith in philosophy as the science of sciences which provides the foundation of culture. As editors of After Philosophy point out, even philosopher realize the philosophy is at a turning point. Things philosophical cannot simply go on as they have.

II. Characteristics of post-modern Thinking

The post-modern development of philosophy is hard to judge for at least two reasons. First, the development is currently in progress.

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14) Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1979), p.3. Rorty argues that the modern people generally accepted: "philosophy as a discipline thus see itself as the attempt to underwrite or debunk claims to knowledge made by science, morality, art, or religion. It purports to do this on the basis of its special understanding of the nature of knowledge and of mind. Philosophy can be foundational in respect to the rest of culture because culture is the assemblage of claims to knowledge, and philosophy adjudicates such claims." Rorty has an excellent survey of the history of the idea of method. In *Mirror*, Rorty provides an excellent description of the process by which modern philosophy fundamentally has became the epistemology of modern science, and at the end, comes to realize the futility of its project. (cf. Introduction and chapters I - V.) Rorty comes from the linguistic analysis tradition, that is, the last heir of methodological philosophy.

We are already living in a post-modern period. The change in philosophy reflects a general change in culture. post-modern philosophy is only a part of this large picture. We are very much part of the development which is still developing, and there is no way to foresee the ultimate result of it.[15] Even the meaning of the word post-modernism is not well defined yet. It is still defined as something that comes after what we know as modern, scientific, positivistic, and metaphysical era.[16] However, what seems to be clear from these descriptions is that it concerns with a decline of the order that we are accustomed for centuries. Therefore, it marks a most significant paradigm shift in philosophy since the time of Descartes.

firstly, post-modern development of philosophy is a vast phenomenon which is by no means a unified movement. Just as what we generalize as modern philosophy is in fact a complex development, so is post-modernism. The names used to refer to it show its broad nature. It is often refered as post-scientific, post-positivistic, post-philosophical, or post-metaphysical developments. I believe that there are at least three divisions in this movement: (1)radical critique (Derrida, Deconstruction), (2)modified rationalist (Habermas, critical theory), (3)moderate way (Gadamer, hermeneutics). [17]

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15) B.-h. Son, *Philosophy for Today*, (Seoul: Jee-hak Sa, 1986), p. 18. Son insists that while we are attempting to evaluate the contemporary thoughts, we are more liable to be influenced by it than any other past thoughts.

16) As Bob Dylon says, "something is happening here, but you don't know what it is."

17) cf. Baynes, Kenneth, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarty. eds. *After*

I will now sketch a few important characteristics of the post-modernism. First, the most clear thing about post-modernism is its anti-metaphysical stance. Post-modernism is "a reaction against the tradition in Western philosophical thinking that is traceable to the Greek classical thinkers who created a metaphysical world of objective truths that stands opposed to the real physical world."[18] The anti-metaphysical orientation of post-modernism is well reflected in what is presupposed in the movement, namely "linguistic turn." Post-modern thinkers departed from traditional ocular image of knowing as representation of reality in human mind and from the idea of philosophy as psychological investigation of reflection. Instead of investigating the nature of ideas, substance, and universals, post-modern thinkers turn to language, which is medium of

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Philosophy: End or Transformation? (Cambridege: The MIT Press, 1987.) pp. 1-18. The book has a valuable introduction to the development. According to the editors, representatives of the principle positions in the current end-of-philosophy debates are: (a)Poststructuralism: Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, (b)Postanalytic philosophy: Wittgenstein, Quine, Donald Davidson, Hilary Putnam, Michael Dummett, Richard Rorty (c)Hermeneutics: Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur (d)Critical Theory: Jürgen Habermas, Karl-Otto Apel. Also, main issue concerns whether philosophy should be brought to an end or transformed and continued.

18) H.-G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Apprenticeships,* Robert R. Sullivan's note on p. 162. He also maintains that "the restoration of philosophy as an activity that uses ideas as "hypotheses"(Natorp) or "perspectives"(Löwith) or "prejudices" (Gadamer), "understanding/ being in time" (Heidegger) and thus makes them a part of this-worldly reality is a dominant thread in the life's work of Heidegger, Jaspers, Löwith, Gadamer, and others associated with *Existenz* philosophy in Germany. Thus, their effort can be interpreted as one of overcoming the Tradition."

intersubjective communication and understanding. As D. Klemm says, "at the center of the post-modern paradigm is neither the manifestation of the sacred nor rational self-assertion, but the linguistic event of dialogue."[19] In this connection, many of the post-modern thinker's method of philosophizing is phenomenological and sociological rather than psychological, analytical, transcendental, and epistemological.

Secondly, the subject-centeredness of modern philosophy is criticized. This is related to the linguistic turn. With the linguistic turn, hardly and post-modern thinkers regards "the subject of knowledge and action as punctual, atomistic, disembodied; none understands rational autonomy in terms of an ideal of total disengagement; none appeals to immediate, intuitive self-presence as a sensible ideal of self-knowledge."[20] For them, the subject is not considered to be a dominant center of knowing which stands over against object. They acknowledge that there is no knowledge without a background-history, prejudice, schemes, ontological givens - and that background can never be wholly objectified. In this sense, post-modern thinkers are "fallibilists and finitists."[21]

Thirdly, in comparison to the abstract metaphysical tendency of modern Philosophy, post-modern thinkers consider practical, ethical,

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19) D.E.Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry, vol. I*, p.22
20) Thomas McCarty et al. eds. *After Philosophy*, p.8
21) Vaden House's description of Richard Rorty's post-philosophical stand with the phrase, "no Gods or God's double," can be generally applied for the postmodern thinkers. (This is the title of his doctoral thesis of Rorty's idea of "conversation of mankind" that he defended at th Free University of Amsterdam in 1992.)

socio-political dimensions to be integral parts of the task of philosophy. This is implied in the linguistic turn since the turn implies a recognition of intersubjective and communal nature of knowledge. This is also the result of departing from the idea of an historical, individualistic, and autonomous reason. Post-modern thinkers do not suppose that the construction of theories is to be alienated and free from its praxis. For them, philosophy is not merely abstract theory but is related society and politics. For example, Gadamer's hermeneutics ultimately intends to show the importance of practical reasoning which he thinks is being lost in the modern world due to the domination of methodological scientific reasoning. On this basis, he argues that philosophical hermeneutics is the modern heir of Aristotle's practical philosophy.

Fourthly, post-modernism is anti-Enlightenment and anti-humanism. Post-modern thinkers opposes the Enlightenment whose essence lies in the assertion of human autonomy and the faith in scientific objectivity as the foundation of culture. This statement needs to be qualified. Post-modernism is anti-Enlightenment is so far as it opposes the Enlightenment tradition supported by modern philosophy. Yet, deep in its motive, most post-modern thinkers still assert, in a very subtle and obscure ways, some of ensuing ideal of the Enlightenment: human autonomy, freedom, the power of critique, emancipation - although they qualify these words with much less humanistic notions. While being critical of modernity, post-modern thought is nonetheless deeply indebted to the ideals of the modern age. In that sense, the post-modernism is the continuation of the

modern.

III. Why Christian Scholars need to aware of Post-modernism?

Christian scholarship must be aware of post-modernism for two reasons. On the one hand, negatively speaking, it is not avoidable. Man's thinking is not only internal and individualistic. Learning comes from outside, from others. This itself shows why we needs to know what is going on. Being a socio-cultural creature by nature, human beings are unavoidly living in mutual influence. The Christian cannot stand outside of this cultural influence. We are not of the world. However, we must not forget that we are in the world. This is our reformed principle. We also have to realize that whether we like it or not, our actual life is profoundly influenced by the world in which we live. As believers we are called to test the spirits of our age by the Spirit's sure Word. This involves gratefully acknowledge genuine insight into creation but also critiquing a movement's distorting influence.

Post-modernism has some positive aspects - for example, its critique of the humanistic Enlightenment and its dogmatic rationalistic objectivism. In post-modern thought, philosophy has reached a substantial degree of self-critique. In many cases it has even moved beyond critique to destruction (Rorty and Derrida). For people who have faith in the foundation of philosophy and science, this brings a crisis[22] (Heidegger). And this sense of crisis is the essence of the

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22) As Richard Bernstein shows, this criticism highlights the dilemma between

post-modern debate: How can we overcome the crisis? Should we reformulate and continue the tradition? Should we radicalize the crisis. This element is significant for Christians since they have engaged in battle with humanism and Enlightenment since the seventeenth century.

There are negative things about post-modernism as well. In particular we must recognize the danger of the relativistic overtone of some radical post-modern thinkers. Such a relativism implies many potential dangers. For example, by justifying the status quo it may invite most despotic dictatorship and political oppression. It may deepen the decline of morality. It may contribute to social disintegration.

On the other hand, positively speaking, we are called to be engaged with the world in which we are living. As we may remember from the examples of the early apologists and especially Augustine's City of God, genuine Christian scholarship always arose from a deep desire to engage with contemporary challenges in crisis. Especially, those who cherish the Reformed tradition should not be defensive or passive, or especially indifferent. For example, Dooyeweerd's effort to analyze the roots of Western culture was a noble attempt to show how we as Christian inherit a distinctive understanding of the foundation of our existence (creation-fall-redemption motive) and to show how we can challenge another understanding of culture. I believe that this sense of calling is still a living tradition in Reformed circles. Let us listen to what a

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objectivism and subjectivism. Hence the sense of crisis.

contemporary Reformed confession says about our situation:

"But rebel cries sound through the world: some, crushed by failure or hardened by pain, give up on life and hope and God; others, shaken, but still hoping for human triumph, work feverishly to realize their dreams. As believers in God we join this struggle of the spirits testing our times by the Spirit's sure word."[23]

Having confessed this about the situation, Reformed Christians cannot ignore what is happening in philosophy since it has such potentially enormous implications. The trend in our culture is turning toward post-modernism. The effect of this shift will result in a very different world than the modernism. Therefore, we must be able to understand it in order to cope with it. Post-modernism, just like other philosophical thought, is a movement of ideas which can be analyzed, challenged, engaged in dialogue, and changed. The Christian must be engaged in the process with its unique truth - the public truth of the gospel.

In fact, as Harry Fernout points out, post-modernism provides an opportunity for the Christian to be involved actively.[24] Post-modern is characterized by its dialogical search for answers and new direction. It is more open to the Christian voice than any other

23) *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1988). pre.3.
24) Harry Fernout, "Response to John Cooper," in *A Reformed University in a Secularized and Pluralistic World: RUNA Conference,* March 11 and 12, 1993, Grand Rapids.

philosophical thought that has existed in the Western intellectual tradition. Therefore, it is a good time to be involved. Also, more importantly, for those who are called to be educators of future generation, actively engaging with the post-modern development of philosophy is required on order to be fair to our students who will be more directly and deeply affected by these movements. The job of educator is to equip students. In order to equip student, we need to do our best in understanding, and informing them about, and equipping them for what is going on.

IV. Gadamer as an example of Christian Response

For me, Hans-Georg Gadamer, a leading philosopher of today, known for his philosophical hermeneutics, can be a good example of a Christian response to the post-modern development.[25] His major work, Truth and Method, was considered to be the most important study in the philosophical hermeneutics. It inspired many philosophical debates which includes his debates with both Habermas (1970s) and Derrida (1980s). These debates situate Gadamer at the center of the post-modern debate.

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is not a new methodolgy of epistemology or social sciences. Instead his concern is to show how the domination of rationalistic methodological epistemology

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25) Gadamer is Emeritus professor of the University of Heidelberg. Once a pupil of a renowned philosopher of Heidelberg, Heidegger, he was called there in 1949 to be the successor of Karl Jaspers.

brought a reduction in knowledge and life. He points out that methodological epistemology is based on the worldview of humanistic Enlightenment with its ideal of autonomy, objectivity, and rationalism. He argues that the autonomous and objectivistic idea of knowledge is based on the prejudice of the Enlightenment prejudice against prejudices. He sees human reason as a participant of play or conversation, not as the autonomous dictator of truth.

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, in the critique of objectivistic and rationalistic philosophy implies culture critique. It focuses on "rationalization" and its reductionistic life and society, instrumental reason, loss of practical reasoning, freedom, identity, creativity, sense of responsibility and therefore, the decline of individual and social ethics: these are essential to human nature, according to Gadamer. The significance and the potential contribution of Gadamer's hermeneutics for the formation of post-modern culture lies mainly in his project of recovering the "philosophical" foundation of life. Gadamer proposes this transformation of philosophy as the remedy for the cultural crisis effected by the collapse of the objectivist methodological foundationalism and the subsequent rise of relativism. Thus, his project involves an apparently paradoxical and ambitious attempt. On the one hand, it tries to avoid the old scientistic foundationalism. Yet, on the other hand, it opposes the radical movement of "the end of philosophy" by suggesting an alternative foundation of life with hermeneutics. In short, his philosophical project may be summarized as an attempt at a philosophical theory providing a non-foundationalistic foundation.

In comparison to other post-modern critiques, Gadamer's approach and his philosophical position imply a new understanding of reason, man, and culture which is congenial to Christian worldview.[26] His emphatic efforts to recover the original idea of reason as a responsive agent is a good example.[27] He insists that modern foundationalism fails in its inability to fulfill its promise - namely the objective foundation of knowledge and culture. Thus, he shows that a philosophical reason, be it theoretical, methodological or practical reason, is inherently unable to provide the foundation consisting of universal norms, laws and rules of knowledge. Moreover, Gadamer's project centers around the confirmation of what he calls the "theoretical ideal of life," "paradigm of being," or what others calls universals, norms, or logos. In a sense, his phenomenological ontology

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26) I am aware that Gadamer is a Christian from Lutheran background. Caputo also points out that there is much similarity between Gadamer's position and Christianity. He claims that "that is why Gadamerian hermeneutics is so attractive to theologians." J. Caputo, "Gadamer's Closet Essentialism," in *DD*. p.260f.

27) H.-G. Gadamer, "Historical Transformations of Reason," in Theodore F.Geraets, eds, *Rationality To-day: Proceedings of the International Symposium on "Rationality To-day" held at the University of Ottawa, Oct. 27-30, 1977*, (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1979), p.7. Gadamer is aware that the idea of methodological reason can be traced back to the Greeks since the idea is associated with rational thinking.(H.-G.Gadamer, "Theory," p.533.) Here he insists that while the ancient Egyptian geometricians and Babylonian astronomers simply accumulated knowledge from practice, "the Greeks transformed this know-how and knowledge into a knowledge of principles and thus into demonstrable knowledge which one became aware of to enjoy for its own sake out of, so to speak, a primary curiosity about the world." Gadamer also notices that this is the beginning of the separation between science and its applications: theory and practice.

of arts, play and language is an effort to show the existence and priority of the foundation of life and the passive and responsive nature of human rationality.

This particular aspect of Gadamer's hermeneutical-ontological thinking appears to some critics as more similar to theology than to philosophy. For example, Caputo opposes Gadamer's hermeneutics because of the ontological orientation. According to Caputo,

"What Gadamer offers is a theory or deep truth of deep essence - where the function of the "deep" metaphor is twofold: (1)it sees to it that the essence is deep enough to forbid definitive formulations or final, canonical versions - the only canon is the longevity and vitality of the tradition itself, and (2)it insures that beneath the multiplicity of historical formulations and multiple applications there rests an underlying, undying truth, deeper than we can say, too rich to be exhausted in a single try, too deep to be tapped in a single draft, but always keeping watch over the multiplicity of forms, seeing to it that they do not get out of hand."[28]

Caputo then argues that Gadamer's affirmation of a "very liberal, non-teleological, non-hierarchical version of a fundamentally conservative, traditionalist, essentialist idea" is the very reason why his hermeneutics is so attractive to theologians.[29] Also, David Klemm brings out the same characteristic of Gadamer's hermeneutics by

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28) J.D.Caputo, "Gadamer's Closet Existentialism," in *DD*, p.260.
29) *Ibid.*, pp. 260f.

focusing on its speculative ontology. Klemm even insists that Gadamer's "speculative ontology" can be very easily overturned to theology.[30]

Thus, the allegedly "theological" nature shows that Gadamer's hermeneutics involves something more than "philosophical" efforts, despite his emphatic claim of the "philosophic" nature of the project. We need to pay particular attention to the fact that what critics like Caputo refer to as a "theological" element is Gadamer's unconditional affirmation of the "deep truth" or the "theoretical ideal of life" as the foundation of life. In other words, Gadamer's unconditional affirmation of the foundation is an act of faith which properly belongs to a different dimension of life than that of theory and philosophy. Such a willing affirmation of the existence and priority of the "deep truth" seems to indicate that even Gadamer himself recognizes the dependency of "hermeneutical-philosophical" dimension on a more fundamental dimension, which I refer to as the "religious" dimension.

However, I have a strong reservation about those who believe that Christians may simply adopt Gadamer's hermeneutics as the theoretical-philosophical foundation for Christian theology or for theories of culture. For example, I disagree with Robert P. Scharlemann and David Klemm who seem to suggest that Christians just need to add a theological dimension to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.[31] Their approval of Gadamer's philosophical project is

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30) David E.Klemm, "Introduction," in *Hermeneutical Inquiry*, Vol.I, pp.45-53.
31) Robert P.Scharlemann, "Being 'As Not' : Overturning the Ontological," In

insufficiently critical, and does not strike me as even a proper response to what Gadamer proposes as the hermeneutical way or dialogical approach. Contrary to their approach, I interpret the approach as a call to be faithful to one's own viewpoint while being willing to welcome others insights appreciatively. Therefore, my question is whether one should simply adopt Gadamer's philosophy and use it as the foundation for developing a distinctively Christian view of knowledge, truth, ethics, culture, and society.

Taking this perspective makes me to realize that a certain difficulty remains since Gadamer perceives the foundational "religious" dimension to reflect a "theoretical" nature, due to the Greek "philosophical" prejudice. This is not merely a matter of referring to the same reality with a wrong name. This confounds the situation since considering the "theoretical" aspect of life as the foundation of life results in privileging one aspect of life as the ultimate foundation. Gadamer's identification of the foundational "paradigm of being" as the "theoretical" ideal of being entails many typical errors related to

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D.Klemm, *Inquiry Vol II*. pp.275-285. David Klemm argues that the "theory of interpretation provides the epistemological grounds for showing that understanding of objective meaning is possible and for justifying the method for interpretation." This is what he, in conjunction with his mentor, Robert Scharlemann, means by the phrase the "theological overturning of theory of interpretation." Klemm argues that hermeneutics is 'overturned' by the theological depth when it encounters a meaning that cannot be integrated into the system of interpretation." Therefore, for Klemm, the task of theological hermeneutics is to reflect on "the overturning of otherness." rather than reflecting simple otherness as in hermeneutics as the theory of interpretation. cf. *Hermeneutical Inquiry*, pp. 45-53.

the age - old "philosophical" prejudice, namely rationalism, idealistic reductionism, optimism, and elitism. These have been the fundamental difficulties with which the legacy of the classical Greek philosophy has afflicted almost all philosophers, scientists and even theologians of Western intellectual tradition.

Therefore, the only way to move Gadamer's hermeneutics beyond the "philosophical" prejudice is to search for a tradition that correctly perceives the "religious" nature of the foundational dimension of life, and to supplement the "religious" dimension to his perspective. Here, we may think of a possible fusion between Gadamer's hermeneutical horizon and the traditional Christian horizon, which clearly stands on the affirmation of the "religious" nature of the foundational dimension of life. Traditional Christians have believed in God's ordinances, which are revealed through the Scriptures and the creational order. This is the very foundation of existence, and so includes human knowledge and culture. Such an attempt to supplement the Christian version of a "religious" dimension would likely be favored by Gadamer for the following reason.

There may be two kinds of objection to the usefulness of such an attempt. First, one may argue that since Gadamer is a Christian and has already integrated Christian elements into his hermeneutics, such a fusion would either be unnecessary of futile. Gadamer already integrated many Christian elements in his hermeneutics. For example, he turns to "theology-like" speculative ontology - such as the centrality of the Sache in understanding - to explain the core ideas of his hermeneutics. He also draws upon some Christian ideas, such as

"verbum" and "incarnation," in order to show how the Sache comes into language.[32] This is possible only because Gadamer's basic framework of hermeneutics is congenial to the biblical worldview in many respects. Again, Gadamer's affirmation of the foundational ideals of life compares more closely to the Christian perception of God's ordinances as the foundation of existence than either the Enlightenment idea of absolute sovereign subjectivity as the sole maker of truth of the deconstructionist denial of the possibility of the foundational truth. Moreover, Gadamer asserts his openness to any tradition for dialogue. Since Gadamer even expresses hope to broaden his horizon by a fusion with even non-Western thoughts, there would be no reason for him to object a further integration of his philosophical perspective with a biblical point of view.

However, despite the many Christian elements of Gadamer's hermeneutics, his noble efforts to preserve and revive the best of Western tradition are clearly unsuccessful in overcoming the fundamental "philosophical" prejudice.[33] Therefore, an important

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32) H.-G.Gadamer, TM 89, pp. 418-491. "This includes the sections he calls Language and verbum," and "Language as horizon of a hermeneutic ontology."

33) In fact, Gadamer is not the only one who comes from a Christian background and still fails in overcoming the prejudice. That is because the fusion between the Christian worldview and Greek philosophical perspective does not always produce a desirable result. With regard to such a fusion, Christians remember that the early history of the "apologists" had certain regretful results. Ever since early Christian thinkers, such as Justin Martyr (c. 125-165), identified the Greek *logos* with the Johannine *logos*, Christian thinking has often became problematic. Because of the assumption of the commonness of *logos* for both Christians and non-Christians, theology also came under the spell of the "philosophical" prejudice of the Greek

characteristic in such an attempt of fusion is to clearly recognize what is uniquely available in the Christian worldview to overcome the weaknesses of Greek philosophical perspective. Christian elements play only minor role in formulating Gadamer's hermeneutics and his philosophy of culture. It will be therefore helpful to point out what Gadamer fails to appreciate among certain important elements of the Christian worldview in order to overcome the problematic "philosophical" prejudice.

Secondly, one may still ask whether it is possible to distinguish Christian tradition from Greek philosophical tradition. It may be argued that despite the differences in theory, Christian tradition and Greek philosophical tradition in history practically combine together as the Western tradition. Realizing Gadamer's Christian background does not make this question unnecessary or superfluous. Instead, the question seeks to find careful ways to appreciate Gadamer's valuable insights without being uncritical of the non-Christian elements, especially the Greek philosophical influence, of his thought.

V. Christian options and its potential contributions

Instead of attempting to deal directly with these objections, I would prefer to show how certain Christian philosophical movements successfully distinguish and maintain unique Christian elements in

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classical thinking. The so-called "Logos Theology" has had much detrimental effects on the development of Christian thinking.

their philosophical enterprises. Also, I would like to suggest that, due to the Christian elements, these movement are able to propose substantially superior suggestions, since they are engaged in the "philosophical" dialogue with other contemporary schools of philosophy on the issue of overcoming the crisis of our culture. In the recent process of adopting the philosophical ideals of Dutch Neo-Calvinist tradition into the North American scene, two separate movements, namely the Reformed Epistemology and Reformational Philosophy, have emerged.[34] In their interests to develop Christian epistemology and Christian worldview respectively, they are fully aware of the significance of the "post-modern" development in philosophy and actively participate in the philosophical struggle for developing a non-foundationalistic view of knowledge and culture. Their pursuit of a new way to ground life and culture against the modern scientific foundationalism is increasingly proven to be worthy in the "post-modern conversation".[35]

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34) The Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition inherits the Christian heritage of John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, and Herman Dooyeweerd. The Reformed Epistemology movement is the attempt to adopt the tradition in the spiritual *milieu* of linguistic analysis philosophy and its epistemological concerns. Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas P.Wolterstorff, William P.Alston and others represent the movement. On the other hand, Hendrik Hart, Calvin Seerveld, James Olthuis and Albert Wolters at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ontario, Canada has led Reformational Philosophy. This movement have been interested primarily in developing a culturally relevant Christian Worldview.

35) The authors of both movements have published many articles and books on the issues of the "post-modern struggle." Besides their articles on the Christian ideas of reason in *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, (Lanham: University Press of

Obviously the uniqueness of these movements lies in their efforts to present certain elements of Christian tradition in the " post-modern conversation." It is true that, due to the fundamentally similar nature of their project against both foundationalism and radical deconstruction, the basic strategy of Reformed Epistemology and Reformational Philosophy demonstrates certain similarity with the strategy of some contemporary thinkers, particularly of Gadamer's hermeneutical ontology. Reformational philosophy, for instance, affirms the normativity and priority of what it calls as "Law," or "Word of God" over the human response to it. Accordingly, reason is considered to be an agent that "subjects" itself to the "Word." Reason is seen as a dependent agent. It is dependent, rather than absolute and autonomous, in response to the "Word of God."

However, in the effort to present the unique elements of Christian tradition, reformational philosophy is clearly different from Gadamer's philosophy at least in one aspect. It is Reformational philosophy's insistence that the foundation of life is "religious" in its nature. It insists that the foundational principle of life, that is, "Word of God" or "Law" has a "religious" nature. In this respect,

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America, 1983) which represents their cooperative effort (co-edited by Hendrik Hart, John Van Der Hoeven, and Nicholas· Wolterstorff) to deal with the problem of reason, many independent works are available on the "post-modern" issues. The best examples are N.Wolterstorff's *Reason Within the bound of Religion,* and H.Hart's *Setting Our Sights by the Morning Star: Reflections on the role of the Bible in post-modern times* (Toronto: The Patmos Press, 1989); H.Hart and Kai Nielsen, *Search for Community in a Withering Tradition: Conversations between a Marxian Atheist and a Calvinian christian,* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990).

Reformational philosophy represents what Christians have held. Christians do not limit the way of knowing God's ordinances to a methodological epistemology. Therefore, Christians can be very sympathetic to Gadamer's effort to seek out a non-foundationalistic ground of knowledge and life. However, biblical tradition maintains that "the fear of the Lord," in listening to God's laws and responding to it with trust, is the beginning of wisdom.[36] This ideal of wisdom entails a fundamentally different perspective of life from that of the classical Greek philosophy. Among many differences between the biblical idea of wisdom and the Greek idea of Logos, Christians do not view wisdom fundamentally "theoretical" in its nature is significant. Neither does Christian tradition perceive the response to God's ordinances primarily as "theoretical." Consequently, Christian tradition presents an alternative "prejudice."

Thus, for Reformational philosophy, the "Word of God" is addressed to one's entire existence. "Word of God" is by no means limited to the "theoretical" ideal of life. Instead, is encompasses the principle of physical, biological, emotional, psychological, economical, historical, social, cultural, theological aspects of life as well as of "theoretical" aspect of life. At the same time, Reformational philosophy also maintains that human activity in every aspect of life, including theoretical and rational, is ·guided by what it calls the "religious ground motive." The "religious ground motive" is "a spiritual force that acts as the absolutely central mainspring of human society." "It governs all of life's temporal expressions from the

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36) proverbs 1:7, 9:10

religious center of life, directing them to the true or supposed origin of existence."37) In short, Reformational philosophy argues that the foundation of life is seated in the relation between the "Word of God" and the human "religious" response to it. Quite naturally, Reformational philosophy not only affirms that "without the horizon of faith no human endeavor either exists or is possible."38) it also specifically recognizes that "religion is necessarily a central factor in all philosophizing."39)

The strength of this view is that it rejects the error of privileging the "theoretical" dimension of life as the foundational dimension. Therefore, it does not imply the optimistic and elitist hope of solving various kinds of practical and cultural problems by appealing to the "theoretical" principle of life. In comparison, Gadamer's hermeneutics dwells on optimism when it prescribes a "philosophical" remedy for the crisis of our culture. As we have seen, the hermeneutical overcoming of the conflict between "nature" and "freedom," between theory and praxis and between science and ethics has certain value. However, its validity is limited and far from sufficient to be the solution of the crisis of our culture, because the core problem of today is not primarily a "theoretical" nature. As Gadamer himself made clear, the crisis of our culture is due to the

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37) Hrman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture : Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options,* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979). p.9.
38) Hendrik hart, *Understanding Our World: An Integral Ontology,* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984). p. 307.
39) Albert M. Wolters, "The Intellectual Milieu of Herman Dooyeweerd," in C.T.McIntire, ed., *The Legacy of Herman Dooyweerd,* p. 17.

collapse of foundationalism and our inability to cope with it. This is a spiritual crisis which is concerned with the foundation of life. Thus, due to its allegiance to the Christian tradition, Reformational philosophy is not only able to avoid the "philosophical" prejudice of the Western intellectual tradition, but is also able to suggest both how to understand the nature of the crisis of our culture with more accuracy and how to approach a solution with much broader relevance.

VI. Suggested Readings on Postmodernism

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