

Integration and the Christian Scholar

J. P. Moreland

***Presented to the "Christian Scholarship Conference,"
Ohio State University October 22, 1999
Columbus, Ohio***

Thoughtful Christians are agreed that an important component of Christian scholarship is the integration of faith and learning, as it is sometimes called. Because Christians are interested in the truth for its own sake and because they are called to proclaim and defend their views to an unbelieving world and to seek to live consistently with those views, it is important for members of the believing community to think carefully about how to integrate their carefully formed theological beliefs with prominent claims in other fields of study. As St. Augustine wisely asserted, "We must show our Scriptures not to be in conflict with whatever [our critics] can demonstrate about the nature of things from reliable sources."¹

However, the task of integration is hard work and there is no widespread agreement about how it is to be done generally or about what its results should look like in specific cases. In what follows, I shall do three things to contribute to the integrative enterprise: 1) describe the relation between integration and spiritual formation; 2) discuss current integrative priorities for the Christian scholar; 3) analyze the epistemic tasks for and models employed in integration, as well as the central role philosophy plays in the integrative task.

Integration as an Expression of and Aid to Spiritual Formation

Before we proceed, it is crucial that we reflect a bit further on what is so important about the task of integration at this particular moment in the church's history. To begin with, there is a widespread hunger throughout our culture for genuine, life-transforming spirituality. This is as it should be. People are weary of those who claim to believe certain things when they do not see those beliefs having an impact on the lives of the heralds. Among other things, integration is a spiritual activity—we may even call it a spiritual discipline—but not merely in the sense that often comes to mind in this context. Often, Christian scholars express the spiritual aspect of integration in terms of doxology: The Christian integrator holds to and teaches the same beliefs about his/her subject matter that non-Christians accept

but goes on to add praise to God for the subject matter. Thus, the Christian biologist simply asserts the views widely accepted in the discipline but makes sure that class closes with a word of praise to God for the beauty and complexity of the living world.

Now the doxological approach is good as far as it goes; unfortunately, it doesn't go far enough in capturing the spiritual dimension of integration. We draw closer to core of this dimension when we think about the role of beliefs in the process of spiritual transformation. Beliefs are the rails upon which our lives run. We almost always act according to what we really believe. It doesn't matter much what we say we believe or what we want others to think we believe. When the rubber meets the road, we act out our actual beliefs most of the time. That is why behavior is such a good indicator of a person's beliefs. The centrality of beliefs for spiritual progress is a clear implication of Old Testament teaching on wisdom and New Testament teaching about the role of a renewed mind in transformation. Thus, integration has as its spiritual aim the intellectual goal of structuring the mind so a person can see things as they really are and strengthening the belief structure that ought to inform the individual and corporate life of discipleship unto Jesus.

Integration can also help an unbeliever to accept certain beliefs crucial to the Christian journey and aid a believer in maintaining and developing convictions about those beliefs. This aspect of integration becomes clear when we reflect on the notion of a plausibility structure. A person will never be able to change his/her life if he/she cannot even entertain the beliefs needed to bring about that change. By "entertain a belief" I mean to consider the **possibility** that the belief **might** be true. If someone is hateful and mean to a fellow employee, that person will have to change what he believes about that co-worker before he will treat him differently. But if a person cannot even entertain the thought that the co-worker is a good person worthy of kindness, the hateful person will not change.

A person's plausibility structure is the set of ideas the person either is or is not willing to entertain as possibly true. For example, no one would come to a lecture defending a flat earth because this idea is just not part of our plausibility structure. We cannot even entertain the idea. Moreover, a person's plausibility structure is largely (though not exclusively) a function of the beliefs he or she already has. Applied to accepting or maintaining Christian belief, J. Gresham Machen got it right when he said:

"[G]od usually exerts that power in connection with certain prior conditions of the human mind, and it should be ours to create, so far as we can, with the help of God, those favorable conditions for the reception of the gospel. False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion."^[2]

If a culture reaches the point where Christian claims are not even part of its plausibility structure, fewer and fewer people will be able to entertain the possibility that they might be true. Whatever stragglers do come to faith in such a context would do so on the basis of felt needs alone and the genuineness of such conversions would be questionable to say the least. And believers will not make much progress in the spiritual life because they will not have the depth of conviction or the integrated noetic structure necessary for such progress. This is why integration is so crucial to spirituality. It can create a plausibility structure in a person's mind, favorable conditions as Machen put it, so Christian ideas can be entertained by that person.

Current Integrative Priorities for the Christian Scholar

But how does a Christian scholar decide on what to spend his/her energies in the integrative task? There are so many areas of study, what criteria are there to help one prioritize his/her efforts? Is there a taxonomy of issues that expresses some priorities that Christian scholars ought to adopt? I'm afraid I have a lot more thinking to do on this before I am prepared to offer anything approximating an adequate answer to these questions. Any taxonomy here would likely express the interests and biases of the taxonomist and I am no exception to this rule. Obviously, one's own sense of personal calling, one's own curiosities will and should play an important role here.

But besides this, I think the following three criteria are not too wide of the mark. First, integration should be focused on those areas of study that seem to be intrinsically more central or foundational to the Christian theistic enterprise. The deeply ingressed metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological commitments that constitute mere Christianity should be preserved. Second, integration should be focused on areas that are currently under heavy attack. A third and, perhaps, less

important criterion is this: integration should be focused on those areas of study in which such activity is under-represented relatively speaking.

It is up to Christian scholars in each discipline to decide how these criteria inform their intellectual work. However, I think points one and two converge so as to yield an integrative mandate for contemporary Christian scholars, especially those who work on the interface between science and Christian faith. There is a very important cultural fact that Christian scholars must face when they undertake the task of integration: There simply is no established, widely recognized body of ethical or religious knowledge now operative in the institutions of knowledge in our culture, e.g., the universities. Indeed, ethical and religious claims are frequently placed into what Francis Schaeffer used to call the upper story, and they are judged to have little or no epistemic authority, especially compared to the authority given to science to define the limits of knowledge and reality in those same institutions. This raises a pressing question: Is Christianity a knowledge tradition or merely a faith tradition, a perspective which, while true, cannot be known to be true and must be embraced on the basis of some epistemic state weaker than knowledge?

There are at least two reasons why this may well be **the** crucial question for Christian intellectuals to keep in mind as they do their work. For one thing, Christianity claims to be a knowledge tradition and it places knowledge at the center of proclamation and discipleship. The Old and New Testaments, including the teachings of Jesus, claim not merely that Christianity is true, but that a variety of its moral and religious assertions can be known to be true.

Second, knowledge is the basis of responsible action in society. Dentists not lawyers have the authority to place their hands in our mouths because they have the relevant knowledge on the basis of which they may act responsibly. Now if Christian scholars do little to deflect the view that theological and ethical assertions are merely parts of a tradition, ways of seeing, a source for adding a "theological perspective" to an otherwise unperturbed secular topic, and so forth that fall short of conveying knowledge, then they inadvertently contribute to the marginalization of Christianity precisely because they fail to rebut the contemporary tendency to rob it of the very thing that gives it the authority necessary to prevent that marginalization, viz., its legitimate claim to give us moral and religious knowledge. Both in and out of the church, Jesus has been lost as an intellectual authority and the Christian intellectual should carry out his/her academic vocation in light of this fact.

I agree with those who see a three-way worldview struggle in academic and popular culture among ethical monotheism (especially Christian theism), postmodernism, and scientific naturalism. As Christian intellectuals seek to promote Christianity as a knowledge tradition in their academic discipline, they should keep in mind the impact of their work on this triumvirate. Both space considerations and my own view of priorities forbid me to say much about postmodernism here. I recognize it is a variegated tunic with many nuances. But to the degree that postmodernism denies the objectivity of reality, truth, value, reason (in its epistemic if not psychological sense), to the degree that it rejects dichotomous thinking about real/unreal, true/false, rational/irrational, right/wrong, to the degree that it takes intentionality to create the objects of consciousness, to that degree it should be resisted by Christian intellectuals, or so I believe.

Scientific naturalism also comes in many varieties but, very roughly, a major form of it is the view that the spatio-temporal cosmos containing physical objects studied by the hard sciences is all there is and that the hard sciences are either the only source of knowledge or else vastly superior in proffering epistemically justified beliefs compared to non-scientific fields. In connection with scientific naturalism, some have argued that the rise of modern science has contributed to the loss of intellectual authority in those fields like ethics and religion that, supposedly, are not subject to the types of testing and experimentation employed in science. Rightly or wrongly, there are three ways that science has been perceived as a threat to the intellectual credibility of Christianity:

- 1) Some scientific claims call into question certain interpretations of Biblical texts (e.g., Genesis 1 and 2) or certain theological beliefs (e.g., that humans have souls or are made in the image of God).
- 2) Some scientific claims, if correct, demote certain arguments for the existence of God (e.g., if natural, evolutionary processes can explain the origin or development of life, then we do not "need" to postulate a Creator/Designer to explain these things). There may be other reasons for believing in God, but the advances of science have robbed Christians of a number of arguments that used to be effective.
- 3) The progress of science vis a vis other disciplines like philosophy or theology justifies scientism, either the view that science and science alone offers true, justified beliefs (strong scientism) or that while other fields may offer true, justified beliefs, in general, the degree of certainty in science vastly outweighs what these

other fields offer (weak scientism). As evolutionary naturalist George Gaylord Simpson put it:

"There is neither need nor excuse for postulation of nonmaterial intervention in the origin of life, the rise of man, or any other part of the long history of the material cosmos. Yet the origin of that cosmos and the causal principles of its history remain unexplained and inaccessible to science. Here is hidden the First Cause sought by theology and philosophy. The First Cause is not known and I suspect it will never be known to living man. We may, if we are so inclined, worship it in our own ways, but we certainly do not comprehend it."[\[3\]](#)

Now Christians must respond to these three problem areas. One solution is the complementarity view according to which propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may involve two different, complementary, non-interacting approaches to the same reality. On this view, theology and science interact much like the color and shape descriptions of an apple. Theology and science (or, for that matter, any discipline besides theology) interact in an additive way such that the whole truth is the sum of the contributions of both but neither has direct, straightforward implications for the other. In my opinion, the complementarian approach is inadequate as a total integrative model because, among other things, it contributes to the widespread philosophical naturalism that dominates much of the contemporary academy and broader culture. As Philip E. Johnson has pointed out:

"Politically astute scientific naturalists feel no hostility toward those religious leaders who implicitly accept the key naturalistic doctrine that supernatural powers do not actually affect the course of nature....The most sophisticated naturalists realize that it is better just to say that statements about God are 'religious' and hence incapable of being more than expressions of subjective feeling. It would be pretty ridiculous, after all, to make a big deal out of proving that Zeus and Apollo do not really exist."[\[4\]](#)

Elsewhere, Johnson observes:

"[T]he conflict between the naturalistic worldview and the Christian supernaturalistic worldview goes all the way down. It cannot be papered over by superficial compromises...It cannot be mitigated by reading the Bible figuratively rather than literally...There is no satisfactory way to bring two such fundamentally different stories together, although various bogus intellectual systems offer a superficial compromise to those who are willing to overlook a logical contradiction or two. A clear thinker simply has to go one way or another."[\[5\]](#)

Johnson's remarks serve as a reminder that Christian complementarians run the risk of achieving an integration between science and Christian theism at the price of placing the epistemological authority and certain important metaphysical claims of Christianity in some private, upper story. Whether intentional or not, when employed too broadly, the complementarity approach contributes to the scientism that controls contemporary culture. Thereby, it inadvertently fosters a separation of the secular and sacred because careful biblical exegesis does very little intellectual work in the areas of study where complementarity is employed. The effect of this is to marginalize Christian doctrine in the market place of ideas.

In my view, Christian complementarians give up too much intellectual ground too quickly in light of the pressures of philosophical naturalism. I am neither a sociologist nor the son of one, but I still opine that philosophical naturalism is sustained in the academy and broader culture by sociological, and not distinctly rational factors. In my discipline, philosophy, signs indicate that important figures are finally acknowledging this. For example, naturalist Thomas Nagel has recently written:

"In speaking of the fear of religion, ..., I am talking about...the fear of religion itself. I speak from experience, being strongly subject to this fear myself: I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that....My guess is that this cosmic authority problem is not a rare condition and that it is responsible for much of the scientism and reductionism of our time. One of the tendencies it supports is the ludicrous overuse of evolutionary biology to explain everything about life, including everything about the human mind."[\[6\]](#)

Along similar lines, in his 1996 presidential address for the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association, Barry Stroud noted that

"'Naturalism' seems to me in this and other respects rather like 'world Peace.' Almost everyone swears allegiance to it, and is willing to march under its banner. But disputes can still break out about what it is appropriate or acceptable to do in the name of that slogan. And like world peace, once you start specifying concretely exactly what it involves and how to achieve it, it becomes increasingly difficult to reach and to sustain a consistent and exclusive 'naturalism'."[\[7\]](#)

I know these remarks are terse and controversial and I shall try to develop and defend my understanding of the nature and limitations of a complementarity view

of integration in a subsequent paper. For now, I turn to a brief presentation of the epistemic tasks of integration and the models used to carry out those tasks.

The Epistemic Tasks for and Models Employed in Integration

Epistemic Tasks for Integration

The word "integration" means to form or blend into a whole, to unite. The human intellect naturally seeks to find the unity that is behind diversity and, in fact, coherence is an important mark of rationality. In conceptual integration, one's theological beliefs, especially those derived from careful biblical exegesis are blended and unified with propositions judged to be justifiably believed as true from other sources into a coherent, intellectually satisfying world view. One of the goals of integration is to maintain or increase both the conceptual relevance of and epistemological justification for Christian theism. To repeat St Augustine's advice, "We must show our Scriptures not to be in conflict with whatever [our critics] can demonstrate about the nature of things from reliable sources."[8](#) We may distinguish three different aspects of the epistemological side of integration: direct defense, polemics, and Christian explanation.

1. *Direct Defense*. In direct defense, one engages in integration with the primary intent of enhancing or maintaining directly the epistemic justification of Christian theism or some proposition taken to be explicit within or entailed by it, especially those aspects of a Christian world view relevant to one's own discipline. Specific attention should be given to topics that are intrinsically important to mere Christianity or currently under fire in one's field of study. Hereafter, I will simply refer to these issues as "Christian theism". I do so for brevity's sake. "Christian theism" should be taken to include specific views about a particular area of study that one takes to be relevant to the integrative task.

There are two basic forms of direct defense, one negative and one positive.[9](#) The less controversial of the two is a negative direct defense where one attempts to remove defeaters to Christian theism. If you have a justified belief regarding some proposition P, a defeater is something that weakens or removes that justification. Defeaters come in two types.[10](#) A rebutting defeater gives justification for believing $\neg P$, in this case, that Christian theism is false. For example, attempts to show that the Biblical concept of the family is dysfunctional and false or that homosexuality is causally necessitated by genes or brain states and that, therefore,

it is not a proper object for moral appraisal are cases of rebutting defeaters. An undercutting defeater does not give justification for believing $\neg P$, but rather seeks to remove or weaken justification for believing P in the first place. Critiques of the arguments for God's existence are examples of undercutting defeaters. When defeaters are raised against Christian theism, a negative defense seeks either to rebut or undercut those defeaters.

By contrast, a positive direct defense is an attempt to build a positive case for Christian theism. Arguments for the existence of God, objective morality, the existence of the soul, the value and nature of virtue ethics, and the possibility and knowability of miracles are examples. This task for integration is not accepted by all Christian intellectuals. For example, various species of what may be loosely called Reformed epistemology run the gamut from seeing a modest role for a positive direct defense to an outright rejection of this type of activity in certain areas, e.g., justifying belief in God and the authority of Holy Scripture.

2. *Philosophical Polemics*. In philosophical polemics, one seeks to criticize views that rival Christian theism in one way or another. Critiques of scientific naturalism, physicalism, pantheism, and normative ethical relativism are all cases of philosophical polemics.

3. *Theistic explanation*. Suppose we have a set of items x_1 through x_n that stand in need of explanation and we offer some explanans E as an adequate or even best explanation of the explananda. In such a case, E explains x_1 through x_n and this fact provides some degree of confirmation for E . For example, if a certain intrinsic genre statement explains the various data of a biblical text, then this fact offers some confirmation for the belief that the statement is the correct interpretation of that text. Now Christian theists ought to be about the business of exploring the world in light of their world view and, more specifically, of using their theistic beliefs as explanations of various desiderata in the intellectual life. Put differently, we should seek to solve intellectual problems and shed light on areas of puzzlement by utilizing the explanatory power of our worldview. For example, for those who accept the existence of natural moral law, the irreducibly mental nature of consciousness, natural human rights, or the fact that human flourishing follows from certain biblically mandated ethical and religious practices, the truth of Christian theism provides a good explanation of these phenomena. And this fact can provide some degree of confirmation for Christian theism.

Models Employed in Integration

When problem areas surface, there is a need for the Christian scholar to think hard about the issue in light of the need for strengthening the epistemic authority of Christian theism and placing it squarely within the plausibility structure of contemporary culture. Let us use the term "theology" to stand for any Christian idea that seems to be a part of a Christian worldview derived primarily from special revelation. When one addresses problems like these, there will emerge a number of different ways that theology can interact with an issue in a discipline outside theology. Here are some of the different ways that such interaction can take place.

1. *The Two Realms View*. Propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may involve two distinct, non-overlapping areas of investigation. For example, debates about angels or the extent of the atonement have little to do with organic chemistry. Similarly, it is of little interest to theology whether a methane molecule has three or four hydrogen atoms in it.

2. *The Complementarity View*. Propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may involve two different, complementary, non-interacting approaches to the same reality.^{11} Sociological aspects of church growth, certain psychological aspects of conversion may be sociological or psychological descriptions of certain phenomena that are complementary to a theological description of church growth or conversion. I shall elaborate more on this approach in my second paper.

3. *The Direct Interaction View*. Propositions, theories, or methodologies in theology and another discipline may directly interact in such a way that either one area of study offers rational support for the other or one area of study raises rational difficulties for the other. For example, certain theological teachings about the existence of the soul raise rational problems for philosophical or scientific claims that deny the existence of the soul. The general theory of evolution raises various difficulties for certain ways of understanding the book of Genesis. Some have argued that the Big Bang theory tends to support the theological proposition that the universe had a beginning.

4. *The Presuppositions View*. Theology tends to support the presuppositions of another discipline and vice versa. Some have argued that many of the presuppositions of science (e.g. the existence of truth, the rational, orderly nature

of reality, the adequacy of our sensory and cognitive faculties as tools suited for knowing the external world) make sense and are easy to justify given Christian theism, but are odd and without ultimate justification in a naturalistic world view. Similarly, some have argued that philosophical critiques of epistemological skepticism and defenses of the existence of a real, theory independent world and a correspondence theory of truth offer justification for some of the presuppositions of theology.

5. *The Practical Application View.* Theology fills out and adds details to general principles in another discipline and vice versa, and theology helps one practically apply principles in another discipline and vice versa. For example, theology teaches that fathers should not provoke their children to anger and psychology can add important details about what this means by offering information about family systems, the nature and causes of anger, etc. Psychology can devise various tests for assessing whether one is or is not a mature person and theology can offer a normative definition to psychology as to what a mature person is.

These are some of the ways that integration takes place. From the examples and models listed above, it should be clear that philosophy is central to the task of integration. Nevertheless, that task of forming an integrated world view is a very difficult one, and there is no set of easy steps that exhaustively describes how that task is to be conducted or what role philosophy should play in the quest for integration. With this in mind, the following is a list of principles that can aid someone unfamiliar with philosophy to think more clearly about its role in integration.

The Role of Philosophy in Integration

1. *Philosophy can point out that an issue thought to be a part of another, discipline is really a philosophical issue.* It often happens that scholars, untrained in philosophy, will discuss some issue in their field and without knowing it, cross over into philosophy. When this happens, the discussion may still be about the original discipline, but it is a discussion within philosophy.

For example, attempts to put limits on a given discipline and attempts to draw a line of demarcation between one field of study and another, say between science and theology, are largely philosophical matters. This is because such attempts assume a vantage point outside and above the discipline in question where one

asks second-order questions about that discipline. Philosophy focuses on these kinds of second-order questions.

Consider the following six propositions that seek for science to place a limit on theology and vice versa:

(S1) Theological beliefs are reasonable only if science renders them so.

(S2) Theological beliefs are unreasonable if science renders them so.

(S3) Theological beliefs are reasonable only if arrived at by something closely akin to scientific methodology.

(T1) Scientific beliefs are reasonable only if theology renders them so.

(T2) Scientific beliefs are unreasonable if theology renders them so.

(T3) Scientific beliefs are reasonable only if arrived at by theologically appropriate methods.

Contrary to initial appearances, these propositions are not examples of science or theology directly placing limits on the other, for none is a statement of science or theology. Rather, all are philosophical statements about science and theology. Principles about science and theology are not the same as principles of science and theology. These six principles are philosophical attempts to limit science and theology and show their relationship.

Here is a second example of where a discussion crosses over into philosophy almost unnoticed:

Evolutionist: The origin of life from inanimate matter is a well established scientific fact.

Creationist: But if life arose in the oceans (abiogenesis) as you claim, then dilution factors would have kept the concentration of large, macromolecules to levels so small as to have been negligible.

Evolutionist: Well, so what? I do not think abiogenesis took place in the ocean anyway. Rather, it took place in some isolated pool that had some concentrating mechanism in place.

Creationist: But there is no geological evidence for such pools. Further, the probabilities for such a process are incredibly small, and in any case, evidence appears to be coming in that the early earth's atmosphere was a reducing atmosphere, in which case the relevant reactions could not occur.

Evolutionist: Give us more time, and we will solve these problems. The only alternative, creationism, is too fantastic to believe, it involves religious concepts and is not science at all.

Creationist: Well, neither is evolution science. Science requires firsthand observation, and since no one was there to observe the origin of first life, any theory about that origin is not science, strictly speaking.

The discussion starts out as a scientific interaction about chemical reactions, probabilities, geological evidence, and so on. But it slides over into a second-order philosophical discussion (one that represents a misunderstanding of the nature both of creationism and science) about what science is and how one should define it. These issues are surely relevant to the debate, but there is no guarantee that two disputants trained in some first-order scientific discipline have any expertise at all about the second-order questions of what science is and how it should be practiced. If scientists are going to interact on these issues, then philosophy will be an essential part of that interaction.

2. Philosophy undergirds other disciplines at a foundational level by clarifying, defending, or criticizing the essential presuppositions of that discipline. Since philosophy operates as a second-order discipline that investigates other disciplines, and since philosophy examines broad, foundational, axiological, epistemological, logical, and metaphysical issues in those other disciplines, then philosophy is properly suited to investigate the presuppositions of other fields. Thus, philosophy plays a regulative role for Christian intellectual activity, including apologetics, and is critical to our community if we are to articulate and defend our theology to thinking people, especially to those outside the church. Philosophy can provide structure and sharpness to our discourse in the public square.

For example, in linguistic studies, issues are discussed regarding the existence, nature and knowability of meaning. These issues, as well as questions about whether and how language accomplishes reference to things in the world, are the main focus of the philosophy of language and epistemology. Again, science assumes there is an external world that is orderly and knowable, that inductive inferences are legitimate, that the senses and mind are reliable, that truth exists and can be known, and so on. Orthodox theology assumes that religious language is cognitive, that knowledge is possible, that an intelligible sense can be given to the claim that something exists that is not located in space and time, that the correspondence theory of truth is the essential part of an overall theory of truth, and that linguistic meaning is objective and knowable. These presuppositions, and a host of others besides, have all been challenged. The task of clarifying, defending, or criticizing them is essentially a philosophical task.

3. *Philosophy can aid a discipline by helping to clarify concepts, argument forms, and other cognitive issues internal to a field.* Sometimes the concepts in a discipline appear to be contradictory, vague, unclear, or circularly defined. Philosophers who study a particular discipline can aid that discipline by bringing conceptual clarity to it. An example would be the wave/particle nature of electromagnetic radiation and the wave nature of matter. These concepts appear to be self-contradictory or vague, and attempts have been made to clarify them or to show different ways of understanding them.

Another example concerns some conceptions of the mechanisms involved in evolutionary theory. Some scientists have held that evolution promotes the survival of the fittest. But when asked what the "fittest" were, the answer was that the "fittest" were those that survived. This was a problem of circularity within evolutionary theory, and attempts have been made to redefine the notion of fitness and the goal of evolution (e.g., the selection of those organisms that are reproductively favorable) to avoid circularity. Whether or not these responses have been successful is not the point. The point is, rather, that philosophers have raised problems for a scientific theory regarding issues of conceptual clarity. In these and other examples like them, philosophy can help to clarify issues within a discipline. When philosophy is brought to bear on questions of this sort, the result may be that the theory in question is problematic because it involves an internal contradiction or is somehow self-refuting.

For example, the sociological claim that there is no difference between **intellectual history** (roughly, the attempt to trace the development of ideas through history by focusing on the rational factors involved in the ideas themselves, including their own inner logic and relationships to ideas coming after them, e.g., the development of empiricism from John Locke to George Berkeley to David Hume) and the **sociology of knowledge** (the attempt to trace the development of ideas as a result of non-rational factors in a given culture, e.g. social status, economic conditions, and so on) is sometimes justified by an appeal to conceptual relativism. The claim is made that different cultures have different language games, different views of the world, and so forth, and that all of one's views are determined by non-rational factors and thus are not to be trusted. Such a claim is self-refuting, for presumably this theory itself would be untrustworthy on its own terms.

By way of application, Christians need to be involved in political, social, and ethical issues. However, the Christian voice in this regard often sounds tinny and

sloganistic because our proclamations do not express a well developed political, social, or ethical theory. And we do not have the latter because we don't know the philosophical issues necessary to developing these theories.

4. *Philosophy provides a common language or conceptual grid wherein two disciplines can be directly related to one another and integrated.* Sometimes two different disciplines will use a term in a slightly different but not completely unrelated way. When this occurs, philosophy can help to clarify the relationship between the different disciplinary uses of the term in question.

For example, sometimes an **operational definition** of some notion can be related to an ordinary language definition of that notion or a definition from another field. An operational definition is, roughly, a definition of some concept totally in terms of certain laboratory or experimental operations or test scores. Thus, one could operationally define a number of sociological concepts (minority group, traditional family roles, group leadership) or psychological terms (depression, intelligence) completely in terms of some operation or test score. A person could be said to be depressed if and only if that person would score between such and such a range on some standard psychological test.

Now these operational definitions may be related to our ordinary language notions of the relevant concepts in question; but they may not be clearly related, and in any case, they are certainly not identical to them. So philosophical clarity needs to be given before we can specify the relationship between *depression* as it is understood in ordinary language and *depression* as it is operationally defined in some test.

This type of philosophical elucidation is especially important when the term in question appears to be normative in nature. Thus, if one tries to give an operational, psychological definition of a "mature" or "healthy" adult, then all one can give is a descriptive definition, not a prescriptive one, for psychology as it is currently practiced is a descriptive field. Philosophy focuses on moral prescriptions and oughts; psychology focuses on factual descriptions. So philosophy becomes relevant in clarifying the relationship between a "mature" adult, psychologically defined, and a "mature" adult taken as a normative notion (i.e., as something we ought to try to be like).

Philosophy also helps to clarify and relate the different disciplinary descriptions of the same phenomenon. For example, biologists describe a human being as a

member of the classification *Homo sapiens*. Philosophy, theology, law, and political science (to name a few) treat a human being as a living entity called a *human person*. It is a philosophical question as to whether the two notions are identical and, if they are not, how they relate to one another.

5. *Philosophy provides **external conceptual problems** for other disciplines to consider as part of the rational appraisal of theories in those disciplines (and vice versa).* A philosophical external conceptual problem arises for some theory T, in a discipline outside of philosophy, when T conflicts with some doctrine of some philosophical theory P, when P and its doctrines are rationally well-founded. For example, suppose there were a good philosophical argument against the view that history has crossed an actual number of events throughout the past to reach the present moment. If this argument is a reasonable one, then it tends to count against some scientific theory (e.g., an oscillating universe) which postulates that the past was beginningless and actually infinite. If there were a good philosophical argument for the claim that space and time are absolute, then this argument would tend to count against scientific theories to the contrary.

Again, if there are good philosophical arguments for the existence of libertarian freedom and agency or arguments for the existence of real moral responsibility and the necessity of libertarian freedom as a presupposition of moral responsibility, then these would tend to count against sociological, economic, or psychological theories which entail the sufficiency of event causality. In cases like these, a rationally defensible position is present within philosophy, and it runs contrary to a theory surfaced in another field. The philosophical external conceptual problem may not be sufficient to require abandonment or suspension of judgment of the theory in the other discipline; it may merely tend to count against it. Even so, these kinds of conceptual problems show that philosophical considerations are relevant to the rationality of theory-assessment in other disciplines.

In sum, there is much work to be done by Christian scholars in the integrative task. Moreover, as we carry out this task in our own vocations, we should place a priority on the issue surfaced by a convergence of the intrinsic nature of Christianity and the current intellectual environment in its unfavorable aspects, viz., at showing that Christianity is a knowledge tradition and employing it as such. As labor in this endeavor, we will want to keep in mind different epistemic tasks that focus our work, different models of integration available to us, and the role of philosophy in the mission of concern to us all.

Endnotes

{1} Augustine **De genesi ad litteram** 1.21. Cited in Ernan McMullin, "How Should Cosmology Relate to Theology?" in **The Science and Theology in the Twentieth Century**, ed. Arthur R. Peacocke (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 20.

{2} Gresham Machen, address delivered on September 20, 1912 at the opening of the one hundred and first session of Princeton Theological Seminary.

{3} George Gaylord Simpson, **The Meaning of Evolution** (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 252.

{4} Phillip E. Johnson, **Defeating Darwinism** (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), pp. 100-101.

{5} *Ibid.*, p. 111.

{6} Thomas Nagel, **The Last Word** (N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 130-131.

{7} Barry Stroud, "The Charm of Naturalism," **Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association** 70 (1996): 43-44.

{8} Augustine **De genesi ad litteram** 1.21.

{9} See Ronald Nash, **Faith and Reason** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 14-18.

{10} For a useful discussion of various types of defeaters, see John Pollock, **Contemporary Theories of Knowledge** (Totowa, N. J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986), pp. 36-39; Ralph Baergen, **Contemporary Epistemology** (Fort Worth, Texas: Hartcourt Brace and Company, 1995), pp. 119-24.

{11} Richard Bube has complained that my characterization of complementarity is confused and is actually a description of what he calls compartmentalization. See his **Putting it All Together** (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1995), p. 168. Cf. chapters 6 and 10. For Bube, compartmentalization treats science and theology as different descriptions about different kinds of things with no common ground or possibility of conflict. Complementarity views science and theology as

different descriptions of the same reality. Unfortunately, Bube is simply wrong in this complaint towards my position. What he calls compartmentalization is close to what I call the "two realms" view of integration and my description of complementarity is an accurate one. The source of Bube's confusion is revealing. I claim that the complementarity view eschews interaction between science and theology and Bube says that it embraces such interaction. However, Bube equivocates on what "interaction" means in this context. For me, it is "epistemic" interaction, roughly the same description of the same reality that can be in conflict or concord to varying degrees of strength. For Bube, interaction amounts to taking two different (non-interacting in my sense) perspectives and forming them into a whole. For example, a completely scientific description of the origin of life in natural terms could be described in theological terms as God's activity in bringing life into being. It is clear that his notion of interaction is not the one I deny in explicating complementarity.

*Dr. J. P. Moreland, in addition to teaching, directs Talbot Theological Seminary's M.A. program in philosophy and ethics. He has a Th.M. in theology from Dallas Seminary, and a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Southern California. Moreland is the coauthor of nine books including *Scaling the Secular City* (Baker), and *Christianity and the Nature of Science* (Baker). His most recent work is *The Creation Hypothesis* (InterVarsity Press).*