



IVP
CLASSICS

Escape
from Reason
Frances A. Schaeffer

Clabon Bogan Jr

609.230.5809

c.bogan2@gmail.com



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There are competing theories which attempt to deal with the conflicting relationship that propositions (*mediums of true values*) bear to their truth conditions.

- And even though their perspectives are contrasting, they both hold that truth is a property of propositions

Comparatively, these two thoughts are:

- I. The **coherence theory** of truth states that the truth of any (true) proposition consists in its coherence with some **specified set of propositions**.
- II. The **correspondence theory** declare that truth conditions of propositions are objective features of the world (metaphysical realism)
 - ❖ Traditional competitors, to this theory are:
 - a) **Pragmatism** – that assesses the truth of meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.
 - b) **Verification** -- **which** maintains that only statements that are empirically verifiable (i.e. through the senses) are cognitively meaningful, or else they are *tautological*

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c) **Epistemic** (*validated knowledge*) **theories** of truth which are associated with **idealism** (noble principles), **anti-realism** (devoid of moral value), or **relativism** (lack of objectivism)

The coherence of the logic must be discussed as we are to drill down to the “**meaning of reason**” [**a cause, explanation, or justification for an action or event**].

Further, reason is the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments by a process of logic.

- The Oxford Dictionary states "there is a **close connection** between **reason and emotion**"
- **Reason** is the cause for something to happen or the power of our brain to think, understand and engage in logical thought.

□ An **example of reason** is when you are late because your car ran out of gas.

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Based on what reason is, the means of accomplishing it can either be:

A. Deductive -- is the process of *reasoning* from one or more premises to reach a logical conclusion

❑ **Example:** The first apple I pulled from my bag is red. All apples in my bag are red. **Therefore, the second apple I pull from my bag will be red**, too.

B. Inductive, where the conclusion is reached by extrapolating from specific cases resulting in a conclusion that moves from specific observations to broad generalizations

❑ **Example:** The first apple I pulled from my bag is red. The second apple I pulled from my bag is red. **Therefore, all the apples in my bag are red.**

C. Abductive is when you take a set of observations and use a theory to explain them.

❑ This is very similar to how doctors work on patients by taking symptoms to make a diagnosis.

D. Backward induction looks at the end result and considers the different decisions that lead to that conclusion.

❑ It's used by artificial intelligence to win games

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E. Critical thinking uses analysis and evidence to make an informed decision.

- ❑ It's used daily to make decisions and to analyze decisions in science, literature, etc.

Caution: If we proceed only with facts and evidence, our deductive or inductive reasoning can quickly turn into an **assumption**.

On the other hand, a **hypothesis** (*a proposition made as a basis for reasoning without any assumption of its truth*) can be molded into factuality following deductive lines of reasoning.

Now this brings us to the impasse of viewing the Protestant position which according to the Bible is the final authority on all matters of faith and practice versus other impetus to reason.

- I.e., the Scripture, not human reason, is the ultimate source on every issue in which it speaks.
- Yet this does this mean there is no place for human reason.
- We can use our minds to think, we are not the ultimate source of the reasoning!

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A number of points need to be made about this issue. They include the following:

1. Our Human Mind Is Limited: This Includes Our Reasoning Powers

- Scripture reinforces the fact that the human mind is limited. In Job 11:7-8, Zophar the Naamathite asked the following question was asked: "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? ⁸ *They are* higher than heaven--what can you do? Deeper than Sheol--what can you know?"
- Paul wrote about the limitations of our own human minds when compared with the mighty ways of God. He put it this way in his letter to the Romans 11:33 "God's ways cannot be understood by humans. They are beyond our understanding.
- Likewise, in Isa. **55:8-9** "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD. ⁹ "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.
- If God's ways and thoughts are past finding out, why study the word?

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❑ The precedent to Isa. 55:8-9 is **Isa. 55:7** “*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*”

❑ The first step is for the sinner to forsake his way. He must come to a solemn pause and resolve to abandon all his transgressions.

❑ His evil course; his vices; his corrupt practices; and his depraved companions, must be forsaken.

2. The Bible Is Not Against All Human Reasoning or Thinking

- Although human reason unaided by Divine enlightenment cannot come up with any final answers on its own, the Bible does not downplay the use of reason or thinking.
- Job wanted to reason with God in **Job 13:3** “But I would speak to the Almighty, And I desire to reason with God.
- **NLT** “As for me, I would speak directly to the Almighty. I want to argue my case with God Himself

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- Therefore, the Lord recognizes the desire of humans to reason or to speak with Him. He understands our desire to have some sort of communication with Him.
- On one occasion, the Lord seemingly encourages reasoning or discussion with Him.
 - **Isaiah 1:18** "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."
 - The backdrop of Isa. 1:18 starts in v 16 -- God saith to the sinner, "Wash *you*," for in finding his inability to "make" himself "clean," may cry to *God*, Wash me, cleanse me (Psl 51:2, 7, 10).
 - **V 16 before mine eyes** is not mere outward reformation before *man's* eyes, who cannot, as God Who peers into the heart (Jer 32:19).
 - **V 17 seeking judgment** (justice) is the alternative to seeking compensation that corrupts behavior (bribes) should be the goal (Jer 22:3, 16).
 - **V 18** God will even condescend to argue the case with us, that we all may see the just loving principle of His dealings with men (Isa. 43:26).

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- The Bible says that the Apostle Paul reasoned with unbelievers from the Scriptures. We read the following in the Book of Acts:
 - **Acts 17:1-3** Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned (dialegomai- discuss)** with them from the Scriptures, ³**explaining (dianoigō—expounding)** and **demonstrating (paratithēmi- present; committing)** that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."
 - **Acts 18:19** And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and **reasoned (dialegomai)** with the Jews.
 - **Acts 24:25** Now as he reasoned (**dialegomai**) about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time, I will call for you."

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It is obvious that the Bible encourages believers to make godly choices; and assuming we are able to choose; we must know Godly principals, patterns, and purpose in our reasoning

For example, Joshua emphasized to the people of Israel that they must make their own choice. He said in **Joshua 24:15** "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

- Consequently, from a study of the Scripture we find that reason has its place.
 - ▶ God reasons with men
 - ▶ Can be applied to Godly living
 - ▶ Can be done with God
 - ▶ Is not a sufficient guide in human affairs
 - ▶ Paul reasons from the scriptures
 - ▶ Can come from human sources (Pharisees)
 - ▶ Can come from natural understanding
 - ▶ The gospel cannot be explained by Reason

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However, Scripture points out that unaided human reason will get us nowhere; we are to reason things out by examining the Scripture. It is the only infallible source of divine truth.

Some skeptics denigrate the efficacy of Scripture to answer the deficiency inherent in human enlightenment due to the arguments raised concerning the Council of Nicea.

Others responded to the demise of Gnostic tradition which was wiped out for fear of 'Christ' giving all humans access to 'God.'

Schaeffer writes that man's desire for autonomous freedom began with Aquinas's theology which argued that though man fell in Eden, his intellect did not.

This created a system in philosophy that argued that man's reason was autonomous--meaning free and independent of any constraint.

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Thus, opening the door to later philosophers to build philosophic arguments independent of God.

But the problem is that man's desire for autonomy cannot be reconciled to the constraining forces in this world.

- **Ephesians 6:12** Your hand-to-hand combat is not with human beings, but with the highest principalities and authorities operating in rebellion under the heavenly realms. For they are a powerful class of demon-gods and evil spirits that hold this dark world in bondage (TPT)

Through reason man has come to understand that nature is a deterministic force that eliminates any hope for autonomy.

This realization leads to the despair of modern man who believes he is but a mere machine in a mechanistic world and any 'meaning' is ultimately absurd.

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Fatalistically, man might come to believe autonomy doesn't exist--it can only be imagined or hoped for--hence man has escaped from reason and is irrational.

Even if you have never been exposed to or have read Aquinas, Camus, Sartre, Kierkegaard, Foucault or Heidegger, Schaeffer's overall synthesis—with his many upper and lower-story diagrams—will help to make sense of life apart from God's grace.

- We cannot remove God's grace from the upper story, and replace it with freedom or other things, and then finally cut it off completely.

The spiritual affront contrived by the serpent in Gen. 3:1-8 is posited as a reduction of freedom

- The effort to change Adam and Eves opinion about God was thru seduction
“If a man goes overseas for any length of time, we expect him to learn the language of the country to which he is going. More than this is needed, however, if he is really to communicate with the people among whom he is living. He must learn another language—that of the thought-forms of the people to whom he speaks. Only so will he have real communication with them

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and to them. So, it is with the Christian church. Its responsibility is not only to hold to the basic, scriptural principles of the Christian faith, but to communicate these unchanging truths “into” the generation in which it is living.

Every generation of Christians has this problem of learning how to speak meaningfully to its own age. It cannot be solved without an understanding of the changing existential situation which it faces. If we are to communicate the Christian faith effectively, therefore, we must know and understand the thought-forms of our own generation. These will differ slightly from place to place, and more so from nation to nation. Nevertheless, there are characteristics of an age such as ours which are the same wherever we happen to be. It is these that I am especially considering in this book. And the object of this is far from being merely to satisfy intellectual curiosity. As we go along it will become clear how far-reaching are the practical consequences of a proper understanding of these movements of thought.

[Schaeffer, Francis A. *Escape from Reason* (IVP Classics) (p. 11-12). InterVarsity Press]

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Summarily Schaeffer's key points in Chapter 1 are:

- All present-day philosophic trends began with Thomas Aquinas' distinction between "Nature" and "Grace," a move which made man's intellect autonomous with no relationship to Scripture.

Most protestants know very little about St. Thomas Aquinas, the 13th Century Italian Dominican friar, philosopher, Catholic priest, and Doctor of the Church.

- Aquinas was an influential philosopher, theologian in the tradition of scholasticism

Shaeffer's assessment of Aquinas writings deduce that he believed that the will was fallen but that the intellect was not.

- I.e., in the wake of the Fall the will was corrupt, but that the intellect remained perfect.

Although Shaeffer may not be classified by some in academia as one who was not an original thinker, yet he was very adept at repackaging the observations of others in a way that appealed to a modern protestant audience.

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A central problem with Shaeffer's conclusion about Aquinas is that he provides no proof for this reasoning by Aquinas.

It appears from the **Summa Theologica** that Aquinas did in fact believe that the Fall applied to the intellect as well as the other powers of the soul:

“As a result of original justice, the reason had perfect hold over the lower parts of the soul, while reason itself was perfected by God, and was subject to Him. Now this same original justice was forfeited through the sin of our first parent, as already stated (81, 2); so that **all the powers of the soul are left**, as it were, **destitute of their proper order**, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue; which destitution is called **a wounding of nature ... [T]hrough sin, *the reason is obscured***, especially in practical matters, the will hardened to evil, good actions become more difficult and concupiscence more impetuous.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Article 85, Question 3)

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And not only did he not think the human intellect was uncorrupted, he clearly attributes its proper function to God:

“Hence we must say that for the knowledge of any truth whatsoever man needs Divine help, that the **intellect may be moved by God to its act** ... We always need God's help for every thought, inasmuch as **He [God] moves the understanding to act.**” (*Summa*, Article 109, Question 1)

Based on his assumptions about Aquinas, Schaeffer attributed the decline of Western arose out of the Aquinian distinction between nature and grace.

- Shaeffer deduced that Aquinas saw *Nature* as the lower part of man: corporeal things, such as the visible, tangible, bodily world in all its diversity.
- He saw Aquinian *Grace*, on the other hand, is the higher: constituted by the heavenly, the spiritual, the abstract, that which can provide unity to the diversity of nature.

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“So prior to Thomas Aquinas there was an overwhelming emphasis on the heavenly things, very far off and very holy, pictured only as symbols, with little interest in nature itself. With the coming of Aquinas we have the real birth of the humanistic Renaissance. Aquinas’s view of nature and grace did not involve a complete discontinuity between the two, for he did have a concept of unity between them.”

[Schaeffer, Francis A. *Escape from Reason* (IVP Classics) (p. 14-15). InterVarsity Press]

What Aquinas said about nature and grace is again in the *Summa Theologica*:

“**Gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit** -- 'Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it', or 'grace does not remove nature but fulfills it' (*Summa Theologiae* (ST), I, I, 8 ad 2).

- He observes, grace does not destroy nature, but fulfills its potential

Schaeffer's contribution to the understanding of the history of ideas was to take these two ideas and present them as what he called the "**upper story**" (Grace: the realm of universals), and the "**lower story**" (Nature: the realm of particulars).

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Schaeffer used this notion to explain in a simple way the modern split between **existentialism** or postmodern on the one hand (those who occupy the upper story), and **materialism** on the other (those who have confined themselves to the lower story).

Therefore, Schaeffer's observation was not original to him; for it had already been articulated by **T. S. Eliot** in his writing the *Metaphysical Poets* where he raised the idea of the "**dissociation of sensibility**" and literary critic **Alan Tate** called the "double retreat from the moral center."

- Schaeffer is lauded for simplifying and popularizing these two critiques

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