"Evaluating rival epistemological conceptions of Religion and State as templates of reform."[1]

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to review and evaluate why we are where we are with the categories of Religion and State within the Humanities. It contends they are vague and arbitrary because of naturalistic epistemological assumptions that relativize and reify the concepts, preventing any meaningful reform of either institution. The essay then presents the contrasting thesis that a theological conception of both is to be preferred. It seeks to legitimise an epistemology that is rooted in a theological understanding and argues for a rediscovery of the Reformation Christian social conscience. The final section demonstrates how such a theological understanding can generate a template of reform for both religion and State.

The categories of Church and State and their corollaries, religion and politics[2], are vexed and involved questions. A direct consequence of this is that any derivative programmes for societal change are difficult to formulate in a coherent and authoritative fashion. The purpose of this essay is to explore the concepts and to propose a remedy for their de-obfuscation that permits a far more robust reform programme to be created. It makes no claim to novelty but rather explicates the historical example of the Reformation as supporting evidence for its central thesis

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[1] This paper is the full development of a draft paper I presented to a conference held at Aberdeen University in 2015, the conference was entitled "Rethinking Boundaries in the Study of Religion and Politics". That conference presentation can be found at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325807435_A_holistic_context_for_understanding_the_categories_of_religion_and_state Many of the themes in this essay were developed more fully in my Master's thesis available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325807525_Dominion_Theology_-_Its_origin_development_and_place_in_Christian_thinking

[2] For the sake of brevity, I use the abbreviation CSRP in this essay.

that the Reformation's theological conception of CSRP, allows progress to be made towards positive societal change.

Goldenberg identifies that one of the fundamental problems with the categories of CSRP in scholarship is their fluid and imprecise meaning.

> "…the terms 'religion' and 'State' [are] concepts that do not denote a singular or consistent meaning throughout their linguistic and political history. The significance of both words shifts considerably through time and continues to change."[3]

She proceeds to identify the possible shortcomings in our current conceptions of CSRP counselling us that it is required that we '[productively interrogate] *the evolution of the putative separateness*'[4]. This is wise counsel and the interrogation provides the first part of this paper where it is argued that the present fluidity is a function of the relativism within much Western academic philosophy and the naturalisation of the epistemology that imposes an assumed and absolute separation of the two. We then proceed to explicate a more robust categorical framework and demonstrate how this can be applied to promote positive societal change.

The 20th century was the century of great social and cultural change in which the common thread was the loss of intellectual space for the religious narrative in the academic arena and the wider cultural spheres. It began with the long, slow death of Liberalism, had a middle to late period that saw the progressive bankruptcy of Marxism in both its Red (Communist) and Brown (Nazi) forms and sang a lament in the Arts with the intellectual despair of existentialism. The dominant ideology of the academy and the public intellectuals was overwhelmingly that of secularism that

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[3] Naomi R. Goldenberg, 'The Category of Religion in the Technology of Governance: An argument for understanding religions as vestigial states' in *Religion as a Category of Governance and Sovereignty (Supplements to Method & Theory in the Study of Religion)*, Trevor Stack, Naomi Goldenberg, Timothy Fitzgerald (eds)(BRILL, 2015), p280
[4] Goldenberg (2015), p283

wanted to deny any legitimacy for the religious in the political and wider cultural sphere; religion was to be tolerated on the fringes of society as a mystical adjunct for those unable to cope with the realities of modern life. This spirit is well captured in both the British political left *Tribune* publication in an early editorial in the late 1930s that once labelled anyone with a religious belief as "mentally ill" [5] and the positivist manifesto of the Vienna Circle of philosophers of the same period, *Die Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung'* [6], which juxtaposed the superstitious world of religion against the rationality of the new science. In the second half of the century we saw positivism's close cousin, metaphysical and methodological "naturalism" with a praxis that demonstrated and still demonstrates a deep hostility to the religious temper in any form of serious discourse. Thus, in recent history, Professor Dawkins, formerly a University of Oxford's Professor for Public Understanding of Science and "affectionately" known as one of the Four Horsemen of the (Atheist) Apocalypse[7], would like to charge religious parents with "child abuse"[8] unless they "teach religion" as a vestigial; that is, a primitive state of understanding[9].

From the side of the religious, this retreat of the religious worldview as a serious contender in the public arena was accelerated by a retreat into non-rational

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[5] Tribune 2, v41. This was in fact in answer to an article by a Christian socialist appealing to the Left to leave behind their 19th century materialism. The Christian Socialist Movement and the Workers Education Association, a Christian left response to the Working Men's Club movement, are alive and well today. The WEA, in contrast to the WMC, could be said to be far more classically loyally socialist in their belief in education as the empowering of the worker.

[6] Trans. 'the scientific view of the world'.

[7] The name of the TV-series of 2008 hosted by Richard Dawkins where he was joined by Daniel C Dennett, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens, see https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1223875/

[8] http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2312813/Richard-Dawkins-Forcing-religion-children-child-abuse-claims-atheist-professor.html, accessed 05/09/2015. Dawkins is also (in)famous for describing religion as "similar to the smallpox virus but harder to eradicate and treat".

[9] This is a much stronger and more deliberate use of the term "vestigial" than Goldenberg (2015) who uses it with a descriptive, sociological meaning though I still find her choice of such a word loaded with meaning derived from evolutionary biology provocative. "New Atheism" to which the term applies here, considers religion in culture as a relic of the past with no use in the current context – much like our intestinal appendices are vestigial.

mysticism, by the fracture of religion into Fundamentalist ghettoes and various socialistic "social gospel" movements during the mid-1920s following the Scopes' evolution trial[10]. This meant that the religious frame of reference itself became politically incoherent – what one will understand by these terms as a conservative evangelical or as a "Christian on the Left"[11,12] and the consequent social theory verge on the incommensurate[13]. This incoherence meant that the Church said almost nothing to public culture and specifically political culture, beyond sloganized clichés and moral platitudes until the early 1970s[14]. It should then really be no surprise to us that there is a struggle having a precise analysis of the categories but what we do discern are:

    a. There has been an acceptance of a philosophical justification for an enormous increase in the size and the dimensions of the State; and

    b. The emergence of a set of "atheological"[15] values that are informing whatever conceptions of religion and State, politics or church that are "socially constructed" and maintained.

So much for my analysis of the putative separateness, how does this compare with Goldenberg's analysis as it would seem appropriate to consider and assess her conclusions in lieu of following her counsel. As will be demonstrated, this also

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[10] Barr, J., *Fundamentalism*, 2nd edition 2nd impression (London: SCM Press, 1984(1977)), p349 (endnote chapter 4, number 6); Macneil (2016), sec 2.6.1.
[11] The new name for the Christian Socialist Movement, http://www.christiansontheleft.org.uk/
[12] David Omrod, "The Christian Left and the beginnings of Christian-Marxist dialogue" in *Disciplines of Faith – Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, Jim Obelkevich, Lydal Roper (eds) (Routledge, Oxon: 1987).
[13] Indeed, the Christian-socialist category for many British evangelicals instinctively appears a peculiar oxymoron and for an American conservative evangelical it is an outright logical contradiction, you are deceived and demon-possessed.
[14] See Macneil (2016).
[15] "Atheology" is a term used by philosopher Alvin Plantinga who has provided some of the most rigorous critiques of naturalistic science and atheism, see Plantinga (2011).

enables us to progress to a demonstration as to why an alternative approach is required to the CSRP problem. Right at the start of her argument, she makes the remarkable decision to effectively separate religion from theology *"distancing religion from definitions that use the word to imply any special spiritual essence to psychological or social experiences classified as religious"*[16]. She clearly believes this is possible because she is approaching this analysis *scientifically*, as a sociologist, *"how institutions and aspects of culture come to be classified under the heading of religion"*[17]. Yet, this seems to completely ignore the "fluidity" of the concepts that we both have previously agreed exist that suggest the conceptions of church and state are functions of the religious and political presuppositions of a culture. When I directly challenged this incongruity, the response given was that her view of religion is as a discursive concept and "theism" would be preferred if the starting point were theological[18]. This would seem to mean for her that the discursive analysis is only possible if one refrains from any theological approach to the CSRP problem; that one occupies a "neutral" ground of scientific objectivity.

Now this to me seemed intuitively erroneous – it would be analogous to arguing that only the non-religious can "properly" understand religion and that *only* the "science" of methodological naturalism can be trusted to obtain knowledge. Of course, it might then be countered that only the non-religious can *objectively* assess the religious. This presupposition clearly governs how the argument can be conducted and the conclusions we can draw, so the following section of this essay

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[16] Goldenberg (2015), p281
[17] Goldenberg (2015), p281
[18] In a personal correspondence to myself.

tests this bold premise of objectivity and the wider claims of naturalism as the arbiter of true science[19] in order to prepare the ground for the final arguments of the essay.

The epistemological system of "natural science", according to some of its more dogmatic advocates, self-justifies itself on the basis it has delivered for humanity the technological revolution of the 20th century where within fifty years, rural farms went from horse and cart to 4x4. Consider Scriven's proposition:

> 'the success of this system of [scientific] knowledge shows up every day…the only proper alternative, when there is no evidence, is not a mere suspension of belief…it is disbelief…atheism is obligatory in the absence of any [scientific] evidence...'[20]

His "evidence based" approach to reality becomes synonymous with scientific and the scientific gives birth to scientism[21], the only questions which he thinks are worth asking are those which science with its evidence can answer. This was the clear inspiration behind the Vienna Circle mentioned previously, a group of empiricist philosophers that included Bertrand Russel and Ludwig Wittgenstein who took it upon themselves to clean up philosophy by throwing metaphysics out of philosophy as "nonsense". It was Wittgenstein's early philosophy[22] that gave positivism[23] its

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[19] My first attempt at examining the theory of knowledge (epistemology) was in my BD Thesis 'Are Science and Theology competing views of reality?', May 2011, Bangor University available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325807396_Are_Science_and_Theology_competing_views _of_reality. It approaches the problem very differently than the way I do it here and is probably worth a read on that basis.

[20] Scriven, 'The Presumption of Atheism' in *Philosophy of Religion*, Pojman, L.P. ed. (2003), pp345-346.

[21] McGrath, A. and Collicott J (2007), *The Dawkins Delusion*, London: SPCK, p18

[22] Macneil M, *'Discuss the relationship between Wittgenstein's rejection of the anti-metaphysical stance of logical positivism and his account of religious language in his later philosophy.'*, Bangor University, 2012; available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325828202_'Discuss_the_relationship_between_Wittgenstei n's_rejection_of_the_anti- metaphysical_stance_of_logical_positivism_and_his_account_of_religious_language_in_his_later_phi losophy'

[23] There is an issue of nomenclature here. "Positivist" in most contexts in the modern philosophy of science will be synonymous with "logical positivists", sometimes known as "neopositivists". There was a 19th century philosophical movement known as positivism, associated with Augustus Comte, see https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comte/ but this would now be referred to as "paleo-positivism". Rudolf Carnap, one of the most influential of logical positivists insisted there was a direct line of succession, but it is tenuous. The "logical" part dominated the 20th century positivist view.

framework and its early confidence[24]. Wittgenstein "solved" the problems of

philosophy by simply demonstrating they resulted from a confusion of language:

> "what can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak [clearly] one must be silent, [to speak] the other side of this limit will be simply nonsense…when someone...wished to say something metaphysical [you] demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions…whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent".[25]

Out of this claim to have solved the problems of philosophy came the positivist

manifesto mentioned earlier in this discussion. Its claim to offer clarity and certainty

was a development of Wittgenstein's analysis which rested on a linguistic theory of

strong logical form. Any utterance to be *meaningful* had to have a correspondence

with physical reality and was adopted within positivism as the 'verification principle'.

The perpetual philosophical problems of how we can clarify our ideas were "solved"

by transforming our language, being clear about what we say; and with this simple

principle of Wittgenstein, philosophy could be considered "finished"[26].

This simple principle took the anglophile academic world by storm with the

publication of Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*, the first definitive statement of

logical positivism in the English language. He was to write, "*the propositions of

philosophy are not factual, but linguistic in character*"[27]; that is, that "philosophy"

should be considered a *methodological* part of science, philosophy was not about

finding knowledge but simply in *clarifying* how we express the knowledge we get

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[24] McGuinness (2005), p315n

[25] Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'Preface', *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (trans C.K. Ogden) (New York, Cosimo: 2007), proposition 6.53.

[26] It is part of the mythology of 20th century philosophy that Wittgenstein, consistent with his view that he had completed philosophy by solving its problems (see this Preface to the *Tractatus* (2007) and the propositions of section 6), went to work in a monastery as a gardener as he had nothing else to do. He later decided he was wrong and resumed a philosophical career becoming one of the most revolutionary and influential of the 20th century philosophers. As with apocryphal stories, this is only half-true.

[27] A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2nd edition (New York, Dover: 1952(1936)), p57

from "science"[28]. Thus, for the positivists, this dispensed with all metaphysical propositions that traditionally had formed the major concern of classical philosophy, "*metaphysics [is not] philosophy…because it is not a branch of knowledge*"[29]. Ayer asserted that traditional metaphysical propositions in the philosophy of religion, such as talk of a transcendent Being, vanish from philosophy as literally "*nonsensical ...entirely false*"[30]. The proposition which cannot express an empirically verifiable proposition or be re-posited in such a way that it *could* do[31], cannot be classed as genuine knowledge. Thus, the theologians, social scientists, philosophers, psychologists and sociologists were in near intellectual panic at falling foul of this "verification principle" and the scramble for empirical evidence to save their disciplines.

However, positivism was to unravel completely in the late 1950s after Quine's seminal essay[32]; Wittgenstein had himself already repudiated the principle by the time the *Wissenschaftliche* was published as he asserted that there was a whole class of meaningful propositions which could not be judged true or false by reference to the natural world[33]. Although the verification principle still has atheist apologists that attempt to employ it[34], positivism has almost universally given way into naturalism which though not arguing that religious language is "nonsense" (it may be

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28 Grayling (2001), p68; Ayer makes exactly this point in the close of the introduction to the 2nd edition though he is less dogmatic at this point, accepting there were some problems with the verification principle as the foundation of knowledge.
29 Ayer (1952), pp51-52
30 Ayer (1952), pp56-57
31 This was a concession made by Ayer in the second edition of *LTL* as described in his updated introduction. This was to permit certain types of scientific theory and hypotheses.
32 W.V.O Quine, "Two Dogmas of empiricism" *in "*From A Logical Point of View", 2nd edition, revised (Camb, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp20-46
33 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, Revised 2nd edition, G.H. von Wright (Ed.)(Oxford, Blackwell: 1998), p50e
34 Michael Martin, "The verificationist challenge" in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Religion*, Phillip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro (eds)(Blackwell, Oxford: 2007(1997)), pp204-212

considered *ethically* but not *factually* significant[35]) excludes such language as a

methodological principle, i.e. an explanation of reality (nature, viz. natural-*ism*) is

conceived as lying outside of any God or any supernatural explanation *a priori*[36]. For

the naturalist, the naturalistic explanation is the *scientific* explanation; anything non-

naturalistic is excluded as non-scientific. However, the very fact that naturalism is

imposing a constraint *a priori* suggests that what we actually have here is a

disguised metaphysical position at work that just rejects *conventional* metaphysics

but is as equally dogmatic. After Quine's dismantling of positivism in favour of

naturalised epistemology and a naturalised ontology[37], virtually all philosophers of

science would accept that this was indeed the case. Thus, I would assert that this

establishes that there are some clear epistemological presuppositions at work and

naturalism is not the neutral tool that Goldenberg would like it to be and

consequently she will be imposing an arbitrary understanding on her data one way or

another rather than "discovering" scientific truths; viz her "fluidity" problem with

understanding the categories of religion and State. Thus, the final arguments of this

essay proceed on the assumption that this it is sufficiently proved to be the

erroneous position that we intuited it to be and we will need to look beyond

naturalism to make progress.

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[35] The contours of this debate as positivism weakened are found in John Hick (Ed.), *The Existence of God – A Reader* (Macmillan, London:1964), pp217-274.

[36] This position is subject to book length critique in Plantinga (2011)

[37] Many of his most significant essays of this period of transition from positivism to naturalism are found in Quine (1980 [1953]). Quine was intimately involved with Rudolf Carnap, one of the most influential positivists, first as student, then mentor and then colleague but had clear differences with him despite their close working relationship during the 1950s which he reflected on when translating Carnap's journals from that time that recorded their early discussions. Few would argue with his relentless deconstruction of positivism but would not necessarily accept the naturalism he developed to replace it. Quine pushed the limits of naturalism as far as they would go (see Quine (1995) for the most concise summary of his philosophy in his own words) and some would say he destroys any possibility of "science" because of the ultimate circularity in his argument, "the recognition that it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy, that reality is to be identified and described" (1981, 21). See Plantinga (2011) for the most thorough critique of naturalism as in opposition to science, thus conceived.

So, the question remains as to how or whether the "fluidity" problem is to be resolved. There is plenty room for disagreement whether this can be done objectively but I believe the solution begins with Kant's basic methodology that clarifies the presuppositional variables we suspect are present. Kant's "Copernican revolution" in philosophy was that our mind must impose order on our chaotic mental universe[38], the mind is active in the "knowing process", we are not a blank slate that simply responds to the external stimuli of our senses and then we arrive at true knowledge of the world as we organise this data. Kant's philosophical project was to argue that rationalists and empiricists had made a basic epistemological error, they had failed to understand what the necessary preconditions of human understanding were, the *transcendent* framework of understanding. Kant in offering his framework at once accepted and rebutted aspects of both rationalism and empiricism and "saved 'science'" from Humean scepticism. Yet though his analysis reshaped Western philosophy, naturalism reasserted itself because the problem with his solution was that the only science he was "saving" was the science the mind of humanity was *imposing* on nature whereas the scientific method was intuitively and classically perceived as *discovering* truths about nature. His philosophy was also notoriously ambiguous and raised many more questions, including the basic epistemological one as to why, other than that Kant said we should, accept his view as correct; particularly as Kant's successors were and are so divided on basic positions within his philosophy. However, I now proceed to argue that Kant *had*

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[38] Rohlf, Michael, "Immanuel Kant", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/kant/#LawGivNat, accessed 21/11/2019.

succeeded in clarifying what the correct *questions* and issues regarding science and the possibility of knowledge were, *even* if we did not accept his answers.

For example, the same philosophical questions that Kant was asking were later to be considered within the same German idealist framework but in a radically different sense, by Reformed apologist Cornelius Van Til[39]. Though he acknowledged the cogency of Kant's transcendental method, he was to vividly attack Kant's presumption of an autonomous human intellect capable of understanding nature independent of and having no requirement for any God which became the central principle of naturalism:

> "The [naturalist's] universe is a *Chance* controlled universe. It is a wholly open universe. Yet, at the same time, it is a closed universe…there can be no such God as the Bible reveals. This is the universal negative of the open-minded men of philosophy and science"[40]

Van Til modified Kant's transcendental method by proposing that the preconditions for human knowledge are not of arbitrary human origin (found first in Kant's impressive mind) but are to be found in the propositions of scripture, that the world can only be intelligible if one assumes the view of reality contained within the biblical text. For Van Til, the argument is that the critic of the Christian world view is *necessarily* secretly assuming it in order to criticise it. As Van Til was fond of saying to his students, the naturalist's world is a universe of water and the facts of the world are drops of water held together by [causal] strings made of water. That is, in a chance driven universe, there is no coherent account of rationality, nor could there

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[39] Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987) was born in Holland but who's family emigrated to the US when he was 7 years old. He became a Dutch-Reformed thinker who had advanced philosophical and theological degrees. He developed what became known as *presuppositional apologetics* generally considered to be the most important and controversial innovation in apologetics during the 20th century.

[40] Cornelius Van Til, *The Doctrine of Scripture* (The den Dulk Foundation, 1967), 13. This was reissued as the *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture*, Vol 1 of 'In defense of the faith/Biblical Christianity' (Nutley, New Jersey: 1967) which is the edition available to Kindle.

ever be – it is not that the naturalist cannot count, it is that the naturalist cannot give an *account* of his counting, i.e. why he or she should need to count.

Van Til's conclusion, as Alvin Plantinga the eminent logician and philosopher also writes extensively on, is that naturalism is "self-defeating" because its materialist assumptions can give no coherent account of causation and even more devastatingly for naturalism, the central doctrine of evolutionary causation[41] which is never far from being posited as the driver for human development. Plantinga's EAAN gives a formal logical expression of Van Til's assertion - the very fact that there is science that *can* be done confirms that the intellectual "books are cooked" by the *metaphysical* naturalist who wants to posit a chance-driven universe. Yet we can, without contradiction, recognise that the *methodological* naturalist in the realm of "hard" sciences like physics and chemistry whose subject matter is the natural world has a presumption that is to be preferred if we wish to avoid superstitious explanations for phenomena. However, dogmatic *metaphysical* presumption is severely problematic in the realm of the "soft" social sciences like psychology or sociology in which the "methods of science" were imported to "solve" the problems caused by woolly subjectivist thinking[42]. It proves disastrous by demanding "a meaning" or explanation be assigned as the "scientific one" to a phenomenon with its cognisant theory when any number of possible explanations and implicitly contradictory theories concur with the empirical evidence[43]; one need only consider

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[41] This is Plantinga's EAAN, the Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism, see Beilby, J (Ed), 2002.
[42] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (Routledge, London: 1991(1946)), p773, pp783ff. Russell was famous for believing philosophical problems could be "solved" by correctly defining terms, he was one "set to work to purge their subject of fallacies and slipshod reasoning" (ibid., p783).
[43] This is sometimes called the "underdetermination argument" which is a consequence of the problem of induction, that "the path from data to theory is non-deductive", i.e. there is no logical necessity possible that the theory absolutely proceeds from the data. See Okasha (2016), pp.66-70 for perhaps the simplest statement of one of the most complex problems in the philosophy of science.

what the consequences for psychology and its application in psychiatry would have been if psychoanalysis had stopped at Freud. Such scientific reductionism is deeply unsatisfactory and works against true science.

An example may explicate the rather technical presentation of the epistemological issues here more clearly. Consider the Tyne Bridge in Newcastle that I drive across frequently. It is possible to state when it was built and why, describe its length, its colour, the number of bolts in the girders, the width and quality of the steel, even describe with mathematical calculus its curvature, stresses, strain quotient and even describe some aesthetic generalities; perhaps it was the model for the Sydney Harbour bridge (we like to think so). It is possible to present an in-depth, impressive summary of the Tyne Bridge and then bequeath those results for research as telling future generations what the verbal sign 'Tyne Bridge' "means". It would provide good source material for the naturalist's discursive category of "bridges in British history". However, for Geordies worldwide, there is seldom a dry eye when they return from a time absent from the holy city. The Tyne Bridge does not "mean" anything as rendered by the historical or empirical analysis but represents something that is *felt* rather than expressed. This was the position of the later Wittgenstein – data from the natural world is of no consequence to certain classes of language but they are still *meaningful* and those utterances could be conceived of as true knowledge of the world. For even if all sorts of discursive "scientific" psychological categories may be invoked to re-render these emotional reactions of Geordie's with a naturalistic gloss to comply with Enlightenment presumptions about reason (namely that reason itself is reasonable), it is more elegantly expressed in the words of Pascal, "*the heart has its reasons of which*

reason knows not"[44]. The philosophical issue at stake is the limit of reason. The fundamental problem of rationalism is with the conception of the limits of reason. To Enlightenment thinkers and their heirs, conscious or unconscious, reason (properly exercised) is established as the perfect judge and its conclusions are incorrigible. This is the fundamental epistemological point upon which all scholarship must turn as Russell unequivocally asserts:

> "[we] refuse to believe that there is some 'higher' way of knowing, by which we can discover truths hidden from science and the intellect"[45]

This was also a fundamental realisation of the later Wittgenstein but unlike Russell he felt that it undid the entire edifice of positivism:

> "Why shouldn't I apply words in opposition to their original usage? Where is the difference? In the scientific approach the new use is justified through a theory. And if this theory is false then the new extended use has to be given up too. But in philosophy the new use is not supported by true or false opinions about natural processes. *No fact (experience) justifies it and none can overturn it.*"[46] (emphasis added)

Even in his time with the Vienna circle, Wittgenstein preferred to read them the poetry of Tagore suggesting even then they had not grasped what he was *really* saying about language in his early philosophy[47]. No amount of analysis of the

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[44] "Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point" [1670, ed. L. Brunschvieg, 1909, sec.4, no.277]

[45] Russell (1991), p789. This page perfectly captures the positivist spirit though Russell himself became less dogmatic in later essays as positivism lost its stranglehold on philosophy during the 1960s. He was one of the first members of the empiricist community that founded logical positivism to suggest that logical positivism had some major problems, see Russell (1950), pp.367-381. It is of interest that it was six years before the full text of this essay was released, anticipating some themes in Quine's deconstruction of logical positivism in *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* which Quine first read to the APA in 1950, publishing it in 1951, see Quine (1980), p.169. In reading the final passages of this essay and some seemingly throwaway references to the positivist tendency to "cosmic impiety" in his *History* (p.782), Russell was an empiricist who realised empiricism had "untenable" problems but could find nothing better with which to reconcile himself with reality, a sentiment echoed by his daughter in Tait (1975), p185.

[46] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, Revised edition, G.H. von Wright (Ed.)(Oxford, Blackwell: 1998), p50e

[47] This is explored extensively in Macneil (2012). Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus*, may have been deliberately ring-fencing "faith" as inexpressible in language not to destroy it but to protect it, to effectively immunise it against his own verificationist criterion of meaning. During the time of its composition when he was a soldier during WWI, the only other book he carried with him was Tolstoy's *Gospel in Brief*, Tolstoy's presentation of the message of "true" Christianity based on a text-critical reworking of the gospels.

words, the grammar and the syntax will get us to the place of meaning. It may assist that process but objective description after the manner of "hard science" is impossible. The empirical realm is one source of knowledge, but it is not the *only* one and empirical data is just that, *data* or information, in need of interpretation and that interpretation is provided by our presuppositions. The basic empiricist epistemological fallacy is that facts do not "speak for themselves", they are interpreted.

The force of this argument is that knowledge does not *necessarily* require empirical verification or falsification. Yet, this is not to say that we are then endorsing a mystical, irrational view of knowledge. It is that I am arguing the naturalist criteria is insufficient; I am not rejecting empirical methods generally, just empiricism; similarly, I am not rejecting rationality but rationalism that considers reason the ultimate arbiter and judge. The philosophers of science rightly struggled with these shaky epistemological foundations of science[48] and the inability to satisfactorily solve the induction problem resulted in the post-modern malaise or a pragmatic "problem solving" approach to science and technology. Alongside this was a determination to reject any religious concept of meaning as a phase our immature species had to walk through, but which must now be discarded if we are to progress further as a species. Yet, such a vacuum of the "why" of a culture means nihilism or tyranny were never far behind such pragmatism; as Nietzsche foresaw in his "madman" parable where the "madman" runs into the square looking for God but

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[48] To paraphrase Karl Popper "let us not consider the pillars of science to be deeper than they are." Popper introduced the concept of scientific statements as "falsifiable" (Popper, 2005 (1934)) in an attempt to mitigate the problem of a positive definition as in verificationism. However, despite provoking a lot of excitement at its first publication in English (1959), his general program of how science "worked" was quickly eclipsed by Kuhn's influential critique (2012 (1962)).

finding that he and everyone else had killed him, something must fill the void. Nietzsche was aware of the fragility of man's psyche as he walked across a tightrope stretched above the abyss, how easily man could become beast. For if you believe life is contingent, you will never find truth or meaning and any moral imperative disappears as an arbitrary social construction[49] with Nazism a testimony to his insight[50].

So, what can we now say about how we should formulate the categories of religion and State? Let us summarise what has been argued - any attempt to offer a coherent sociological category has proved arbitrary and 20th century history indeed shows us its arbitrariness. This confirms the intuitive criticism of Goldenburg's choice to reify the religious category by excluding the theological element. It is this inevitable terminus of autonomous reason that must be rejected and a derecognition of this late modern framework in favour of a theological framework for the understanding of religion and State. Thus, it is only by adding this element back in that we will then be able to create an appropriate hermeneutical lens with which to understand world history with appropriate presuppositions. These are to be derived from Van Til's and Plantinga's separate but related critiques of the naturalism of secularism that concludes that the Christian world view assuming causality and purpose is a prerequisite for discursive reasoning. That is, to repeat, the Christian world view is secretly assumed by those who want to destroy it, it is *the* prerequisite

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[49] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882, 1887) para. 125; Walter Kaufmann ed. (New York: Vintage, 1974), pp.181-82.
[50] Many apologists for Nietzsche want to put distance between himself and Nazism asserting correctly that it was his sister who doctored and appropriated some of his work so that it appeared sympathetic to and inspirational for Nazism. However, his influence on Germany and Nazism was much more direct, as Abraham Kuyper (prime minister of the Netherlands between 1901-1905) observed, "everything [in Germany] revolves around Nietzsche", Bratt (1998), p363.

for science and not in opposition to it[51]. Based on that proposition we can then present the solutions of scripture to the CSRP problem. However, we had mentioned in the introduction to this essay that Christianity fractured in its understanding of church and state so what I am also doing here is reasserting what I believe to be the most coherent Christian position because it accepts scripture rather than tradition (a subjective and relative concept) as the final arbiter of Christian truth. It is a formulation first seen in Wycliffe and given permanence in Luther and Calvin with a contemporary expression in the Christian reconstructionist movement. This Reformed understanding sweeps away the categorical confusions and effectively provides a template for reform and the proper limits of both religion and State. Thus, let us proceed.

The modern story is often said to begin with Descartes but for our purposes it begins 200 years earlier with John Wycliffe (d.1384) who is known as the "morning star of the reformation"; his star rose within the politics and intrigue of papal Europe where the monarchs at once opposed papal excesses and connived with them[52]. Papal authority as the "vicar of Christ" was straightforward and absolute, all non-papal authority was illegitimate and the pope had full claim over all the resources of the world and it was the duty of the Christian monarchs of Europe to get it for him[53]. Within the papacy, the Pope was a military leader with his own armies and executive authority over the armies of his monarchs. There was no separation between Church and State, politics and religion, they were one.

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[51] Plantinga (2011), pp. 265-299
[52] K.B. McFarlane, *Wycliffe and English Non-Conformity* (1972), p41
[53] McFarlane (1972), pp48-49

However, Wycliffe gave a sermon which asserted that in the scriptures, Moses assigned himself and Aaron distinct functions, meaning that the executive (State) and religious offices were intentionally separated. This was seen as a providential functional separation and the religious office was subject to the State office in that the authority of the State was ultimately divested upon it to permit a State to act when the Church apostatised[54]. In this sermon Wycliffe asserts that Christ in his kingly role demonstrated his lordship over the apostate clergy and this could be mediated by the head of State, i.e. a monarch in Wycliffe's time. Moses invested the State with divine authority of coercion *when* the State respected the divine law. The record of the prophets indicates the State (or monarch) loses its divine authority and right to exist when it fails to execute justice for the people and misappropriates the priestly authority for itself[55]. The Queen of Sheba's adoration for Solomon was with regard to the apparatus of government, the civil order that she witnessed, the prosperity of the nation and the spirituality of the monarch[56]. However, in the biblical narrative, the State failed a generation later when it became self-serving, assuming an existence and a role outside of its providential appointment. When the authority of the State was derived from the will of the people, it had a legitimate right to exist. When it failed to acquire the will of the people, it lost its right to exist[57].

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[54] John Wycliffe, 'Sermon CLXVI' in *Select English Works on John Wyclif*, Thomas Arnold (ed)(Clarendon, Oxford: 1871), p88ff

[55] This would be confirmed by the narrative of 1Sam 15 regarding King Saul whose dynasty was said to have been lost when he offered sacrifices. As a King, he had no authority to offer sacrifices, that was a priestly role. Similarly, King Uzziah was struck with leprosy when he attempted to offer sacrifices against priestly advice.

[56] 1Kings 10; 2Chr 9

[57] This is why modern democratic systems of government with a wide franchise should be seen as evolving from within Protestantism rather than Ancient Greece. Although many like to argue that Ancient Greece was the roots of democracy, Greek democracy had a franchise that was limited to men of power and privilege.

It *was* a legitimate role for the religious leaders to censure the State when it was failing to deliver justice for the people and for the State to censure the religious leaders when they were failing in their religious duties. The religious authority Moses invested in Aaron with the priesthood and its institutes and its responsibilities included interestingly education, primary healthcare, building inspection and a role in civil governance[58]. The primary role of the State was seen to be in the delivery of justice for the people – Moses divested his authority to civil leaders *chosen by the people* and only became involved in the most difficult cases. There were courts and processes of appeal; people were to rule themselves rather than be governed by a national State. The State was to be responsible for organising the military for defence of the people, securing national borders and for public infrastructure. Even the death penalty was put within the civil, not national governance and executed by the people directly with the role of the State limited to ensure the legal appeal process was followed before it was administered. Treason was with respect to the family and the community, not against the State[59]. Taxation was limited to a simple head-tax payable by each adult male above 20 years old.

The vision and limits of the State as presented in this model are clear – the State is small and exists as a ministry of justice and for managing national level issues. Cope in discussing this[60], posits the contemporary Swiss model is analogous to this. Power in Switzerland is at the Canton (state) level, a national leader only emerges in a time of crisis and is a military figure. This relationship

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[58] Leviticus describes in meticulous detail civil duties of the priests, regulations for "leprosy" (actually any contagious skin disease) and "leprous" buildings (mildew). Where disputes were likely to turn violent, e.g. marital unfaithfulness, the priest was invoking God as judge rather than appropriating the authority of the state.
[59] Rushdoony (1986), p8
[60] Landa Cope, *The Old Testament Template* (New York, YWAM publishing: 2014), II (6)

between State and religion is confirmed in the work of Wycliff's successors to the

Reformation proper, in the work of Martin Luther and especially of John Calvin.

Luther emphasised that the vocations outside the ecclesia were as important,

necessary and valid as those within it[61]. Calvin organised the civil government of

Geneva during a time where its population had been saturated with refugees from

papist persecution, this became the decentralised model for modern Switzerland.

To Calvin, the concept of public education was essential that all individuals

may fulfil their potential. Ignorance was viewed as a great enemy and evil to

Calvin[62]. For him, knowledge of God preceded all human activity and human life

was to be constructed in lieu of God's revealed will. Thus, for Calvin, the concept of

a state-sponsored church was a valid one but *only* because the Church should be

financially free to educate both the people and the State in the temporal and in the

spiritual that social cohesiveness and ethical progress was ensured. Similarly,

education was to be funded as a civil right but not state-run. The State had a moral

duty to ensure the church was free to educate the people and promote the "common

good"[63]. Calvin shared and developed Luther's notion of *Christian service* which

became part of the idiom of "public service" within the State for nationally chosen

leaders in times of crisis.

Thus, the elements of CSRP remained functionally distinct but were

expressions of the divine creation mandate to subdue and rule (in the sense,

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[61] Martin Luther, 'Commentary on Galatians' in *The Martin Luther Collection*, Kindle edition (Waxkeep Publishing: 2012), p356

[62] Calvin left a vast caucus. 'Commentaries on Ethics and the Common Life' are examples of the practical application of what he sees as the Institutes of religion.

[63] Willard, Dallas; Black Jr, Gary, The Divine Conspiracy Continued: Fulfilling God's Kingdom on Earth (HarperCollins Publishers. Kindle Edition), pp63ff.

develop and order) the Earth[64]. There is no biblical warrant for a *secular* State. Cope (2014) emphasises how circumspectly a theological template needs to be applied in reforming nations today but Mangalwadi (2012), an insightful Indian commentator on Western civilisation, reminds us how necessary it is to have such a template. His position was that the success of the West was a consequence of its philosophical determinism that was rooted in its belief in God as the source of immutable laws ("science") that could be discovered by the gift of reason. To understand the world and to shape it, to build and create cultures was considered a fulfilment of this "dominion mandate". The West is in crisis because it has lost its epistemological Christian moorings.

Thus, in final conclusion, it would seem that a theological conception of the categories generates a coherent template enabling reform and progress regarding the CSRP categories. It clearly delineates the proper limits of each. The modern State in seeking to meet every need of its citizens from the "cradle to the grave" has deified itself and clearly occupies much of the space properly reserved for religion. Similarly, the Catholic hegemony is unacceptable because it merges Church and State, not regarding the functional separation present in scripture. However, the author offers this appeal to rethink religion and State, politics and society in terms of a theological template with due caution, a return to religious hegemony or a theocracy is not being advocated. The excesses of some Christian Reconstructionists during the 1980s were notorious in the liberal media[65] but are mild in consequence when compared to the "*autophagic capitalism*" and the bloody

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[64] Genesis 1, vv26-28
[65] Michael J McVicar, *Christian reconstruction – R J Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill: 2015), pp217-219

wreckage of the "*rotting offal of modernity*" [66] of the 20th century humanist order; those moral Marxists killed many more millions than even the admittedly bloodthirsty medieval Catholics. There is a need to distinguish principle from application but accepting the premise there is a God which cares about humanity and the planet, who has provided an objective reference for humanity in his Law[67], is infinitely preferable to me than believing life is contingent and there is no meaning, "we just are", as a consistent naturalist is forced, by his or her own worldview, to conclude.

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[66] McVicar (2015), p230
[67] This is the "theonomic thesis", see Rushdoony (1973) and especially Bahnsen (1977).

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