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A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO EPISTEMOLOGY

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Introduction

It is the purpose of this paper to look at epistemology from a Christian point of view. This will be done first of all by defining the subject, and then looking at some of the better known schools of epistemology, and seeing if they have any ideas with which a Christian can agree. Areas of obvious disagreement will also be noted.

Epistemology defined

Webster defines epistemology as "The theory or science of the method and grounds of knowledge, especially with reference to its limits and validity."⁽¹⁾ The word epistemology is made up from two Greek words. They are epistemon, which means "endued with knowledge", and logos, which means "word or study". Hence epistemology is a word or study about knowledge. It is concerned with knowledge, and how the human mind acquires it.

Over the years of human history, various schools of thought on the subject of epistemology have arisen. Each of these schools begins with certain basic presuppositions. It may come as a surprise to some that we bring to all our learning and study certain presuppositions. This is done not only by the Christian but also by the non-Christian. Therefore a Christian needs not feel threatened when a non-Christian accuses him or her of starting with certain presuppositions, for the non-Christian does the same. The winner in the game of presuppositions therefore, as someone has said it, ought to be the one who can come up with the best set of presuppositions. This aspect of epistemology will be highlighted again later on in this paper, when some of Immanuel Kant's epistemological ideas are discussed.

The Epistemological School of Skepticism

One of the earliest of epistemological schools is that of skepticism. This school teaches that nothing can be known for certain. All our sensations are inadequate and deceiving, and therefore cannot be trusted or believed. Such things as dreams, illusions, and mirages, may be as real to us as sensory experiences. We have all heard the expression, "I ought to pinch myself to make sure I am not dreaming." A skeptic might reply that you are dreaming that you are pinching yourself!

On the one hand, two real objects such as identical twins, may produce in us the same sensation. On the other hand the same object, seen under different lighting or different

conditions might produce entirely different sensations; for example boating in the sunlight or in the moonlight. Which represents the true subject, or do both do so?

An epistemological skeptic once challenged one of our ministers to prove that he existed. For the extreme skeptic even his or her own existence cannot be known. The minister replied that he ought to put his thumb on a block and hit it with a hammer, and he would soon know that he existed. The skeptic reply to such a suggestion would be that such an action would only produce a sensation, and would not prove anything.

As in most schools of thought, not everyone thinks exactly the same, and so we find among skeptics various degrees of skepticism as the following quotation shows.

"Extreme skeptics deny that the human mind can attain knowledge. Total skeptics extend this denial to all kinds of claims to knowledge, but even the original Greek school of skeptics included few, if any, who were not partial or moderate: the former allowed that certain kinds of claims to knowledge were valid; the latter refrained from dogmatic denials of the possibility of knowledge and merely advised suspense of judgment."⁽²⁾

One of the earliest of epistemological skeptics was the Greek philosopher Pyrrho of Elis c. 365-275 BC.

"He joined the expedition of Alexander the Great and reached India, where he was able to see for himself, in the fakirs, an example of the total indifference to circumstances for which the Greek philosophers often yearned."⁽³⁾
Pyrrho taught that, "The aim of the wise man is to become imperturbable and proof against the changes of fortune; he must utterly abstain from judgment and be prepared to doubt even sense perception, for this is not the infallible test of Truth which others have supposed it to be; however, he must equally not distrust perception on principle, for this would imply that it is known or judged to be false."⁽⁴⁾

The story is told that one day Pyrrho was walking down a narrow street with a group of his students, when a team of run-away horses, drawing a chariot came around the corner, and was about to run over him. Pyrrho quickly jumped out of the way of the danger, and when the horses and chariot had passed, one of his students who had obviously been doing some hard thinking about what he had heard asked the question, "Why did you jump out of the way since you say that nothing makes any difference?" Pyrrho is alleged to have replied, "That is why I stepped out of the way, for it made

no difference."

Some epistemological skeptics speak about propositions as being false, doubtful, or probable. For example, "Cardeades denied the possibility of knowledge," but "admitted that judgments may have different degrees of probability."⁽⁵⁾

Geogias, another early Greek Philosopher said "There is no truth; if there were it could not be known; if known it could not be communicated."⁽⁶⁾

Hence propositions are never regarded as certain or true. But this is all rather meaningless unless there is a truth, or that which is true. One cannot have a false unless there is a true. Unless man knows truth, he cannot pass judgement on anything as being false, doubtful, or probable.

One of the best known modern skeptics in epistemology was the English philosopher Bertrand Russell 1872 - 1970. In discussing the question of the existence of matter, and whether or not we can know anything about such questions he wrote, "In this chapter we have to ask ourselves whether, in any sense at all, there is such a thing as matter. Is there a table which has a certain intrinsic nature, and continues to exist when I am not looking, or is the table merely a product of my imagination, a dream-table in a very prolonged dream? This question is of the greatest importance. For if we cannot be sure of the independent existence of objects, we cannot be sure of the independent existence of other people's bodies, and therefore still less of other people's minds, since we have no grounds for believing in their minds except such as are derived from observing their bodies. Thus if we cannot be sure of the independent existence of objects, we shall be left alone in a desert - it may be that the whole outer world is nothing but a dream, and that we alone exist."⁽⁷⁾

The end result of the skeptical way of thinking is that there can be no meaning to life.

It then follows that there is no reason for acting one way in preference to another. Hence there can be no morality with this school of epistemology, and for that reason alone it must be rejected by Christians. If there is no truth, then all is just as false as it is true. Then the proposition that there is no truth, is itself just as false as it is true. If all is in a state of flux, then even this proposition is in a state of flux, and so then nothing can have any meaning.

The weakness of this way of thinking about knowledge is obvious. Philosophers might think such thoughts while they sit in their ivy towers, but no one can live this way. When it is lunch time they know they are hungry, and they head for the cafeteria!

As has already been stated the Christian cannot accept such a view of knowledge. There would be virtually nothing in this school of epistemology with which a Christian could agree.

The Epistemological School of Relativism

This school teaches that all knowledge is relative to man, and to different states in the same man. Everything then revolves around man, and all must be understood in relationship to man.

This school of epistemology was taught by the Sophists of Greece, and by others in different ages, even down to modern times.

One of the best known names associated with this way of looking at knowledge was Protagoras of Abdera in Thrace. His dates are approximately 490 - 421 BC. While Protagoras was also an empiricist of an early type, he is perhaps better remembered as a relativist.

"His work entitled Truth began with the statement 'Man is the measure of all things,' which was probably intended to express the relativity to the individual of all perceptions and as some hold, of all judgments as well."⁽⁸⁾

An example of the way relativists think is the way they talked about the breeze. It was pointed out that a cool breeze was pleasant to a healthy man, but unpleasant to a man in ill health. Therefore the breeze is both pleasant and unpleasant depending on the man who feels it, or to different states of health in the same man. Another way of expressing the same ideas can be seen in the statements: "Socrates in health is one person, and to him wine tastes sweet, but Socrates in ill health is another person, and to him wine tastes sour."

Let us go back and consider the example of the wind. The wind was said to be pleasant or unpleasant only in relation to the man. Suppose we consider the wind by itself. It would be neither cool nor cold, stimulating nor disagreeable, strong nor gentle. By itself it was argued the wind was nothing, hence truth was impossible to obtain. They further argued that all sensations stand on the same foot

ing. No one is truer than another, nor more false than another, only different. Hence everyone could say:- "My sensations are true because they are mine. I am the sole judge of my sensations. Man is the measure of all things. All men are therefore right. Hence no one can think falsely." This is, of course, nonsense and we would accordingly reject such reasoning. However, it is surprising that there are people in the twentieth century who still think in this way. Perhaps we should say that they do so when it suits them to do so.

An illustration of this way of thinking, that is true to life, comes from New Zealand some years ago. Professor Geering at that time (1966-1967) was the Principal of Knox Theological College in Dunedin which is the theological training school for the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand. In a speech, he made the statement that Jesus was not resurrected, and that His bones were still somewhere in Palestine. This created a real turmoil in the Presbyterian Church, and the end result was that there was a church trial, in which he was accused of heresy. Since some of those who tried him were his former students, and others who were not still shared his views, he was acquitted. The result of this decision was to bring dismay into the ranks of the laity, and many were confused. To try and calm things over, the governing body of the Presbyterian Church issued a statement which was published in the newspapers, which stated that Professor Geering's views were not the only valid ones.⁽⁹⁾

Upon hearing this, many Presbyterians concluded that it meant they could believe whatever they chose. A few days later the General Assembly responded by declaring that Presbyterians were not free to believe whatever they liked.⁽¹⁰⁾

The point of this story is to illustrate that modern-day educated men can publically declare that two totally opposite views are both "valid". Since valid means "true," we have here an example of people in our day, who must be classed as epistemological relativists, at least when it suits them to be so.

The Greek philosopher Plato was an idealist who was concerned with the mind and with what it could do. Much of his teaching was a reaction to the School of Relativity as taught by Protagoras. In trying to show the folly of relativism, Plato said:- "If all men are right in what they think, then Protagoras is right. But if Plato thinks Protagoras is wrong, then Plato must be right and Protagoras must be wrong. Therefore Protagoras must be both right and

wrong, which is nonsense."

As Christians, we would find ourselves in agreement with Plato on this point, though there is, of course, much in Plato's philosophy with which we would disagree.

Though we cannot accept all that this school of epistemology teaches, Christians can admit to the truth that some aspects of reality are relative to man or to different states of the same man. The examples of the wind, and the wine quoted above have some elements of truth, but the relativists go too far. When they make man the sole arbiter of truth, they fail to recognize that there is truth that is far beyond man's sphere. Jesus declared that He was the Way, the Truth and the Life⁽¹¹⁾. Absolute truth therefore from the Christian's point of view resides in God. This is a Christian presupposition which is not negotiable.

The Epistemological School of Empiricism

Perhaps the best known and most popular school of epistemology is that of empiricism. This school teaches that there is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses. That is to say that all knowledge comes to us through the five senses; namely sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. It does not allow for knowledge from any other source.

Perhaps one of the best statements that express the idea of empiricism and the consequences that follow from it is the one we read in Lovell's book.

"We know the truth only by our reason. That reason is enlightened only by our senses. What they cannot tell us we cannot know, and it is mere folly to waste time in conjecturing. Imagination and feeling are blind leaders of the blind. All men who pretend to supernatural revelation are swindlers, and those who believe them are dupes."⁽¹²⁾

Another definition of empiricism worth consideration is that found in the 1959 edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica.

"Empiricism is the attitude of mind that emphasizes the part played by experience in knowledge against that played by reasoning. In its extreme form the empiricist doctrine is (1) that we have no ideas other than those derived from sense-experience, and (2) that statements, other than those of logic, can be known to be true only from experience."⁽¹³⁾

Whenever we think of empiricism three names immediately come to mind for they were its main advocates. They are as follows:

John Locke 1632 - 1704. Locke was an Englishman, and also a Christian. He is regarded as the pioneer of modern empiricism and taught the doctrine known as "Tabula Rasa." This doctrine said that the mind at birth was like a smooth clay tablet, upon which nothing was written. The illustration of course comes from Mesopotamia, where in ancient times men took clay and made it up into smooth tablets, and then while it was still soft they wrote upon it by making impressions in the clay with a stylus, or pointed stick. Thus Locke taught that the mind was a smoothed tablet, with nothing written upon it, but that the senses then began their work of writing upon it the information that came through the senses.

One topic that repeatedly seems to surface in the writings and discussions of many philosophers, is the nature of the real world around us, and of our perception of it. In this regard, Locke was no exception. He sometimes referred to experience as visual or tactual and concluded that we are not aware of material things, and "if he had been a consistent empiricist he would have adopted a skeptical attitude to their existence."⁽¹⁴⁾

George Berkeley 1685 - 1753. Berkeley was an Irish Anglican bishop. He pushed Locke's views further and said that things existed only so far as they were perceived. He drew and embraced "the inevitable conclusion that material things just are collections of perceived ideas, a view which ultimately leads to phenomenalism. Berkeley himself accounted for the continuity and orderliness of the world by calling in the perceptions of an unsleeping God."⁽¹⁵⁾

In other words objects do not cease to exist because no man was around, for they are perceived by God's mind. His views ultimately lead to the denial of matter or idealism.

David Hume 1711 - 1776. In his life time Hume was recognized more as an historian than as a philosopher. He was influenced by Berkeley, and as a result he was led into unbelief. He "showed that a thoroughgoing application of empiricist principles must lead to skepticism."⁽¹⁶⁾

He taught that substance was only a collection of simple ideas united by imagination. As an empiricist he taught that we receive data from our senses, but cannot tell if there is anything beyond. He said that even the self could not be known. He also denied causation saying that the

cause cannot be known by its effect only. On this last point, we as Christians could perhaps agree in part, for although we may know God from a study of His creation, as Paul says in 1 Cor 13:12, we only know in part, for we need revelation to tell us about aspects of God not revealed to us in nature, for example God's nature as a trinity, and such doctrines as the virgin birth, and the whole scope of our Biblical eschatology.

Now as Christians we can agree with the empiricists when they say that we receive knowledge through our senses. Every day we use our senses to perceive the environment around us, and to relate to it. Through our senses we learn about all kinds of things. No one denies the importance of our senses in this regard, but as Christians we do not believe the empiricists have all the truth. We have seen how these beliefs have led into skepticism and unbelief.

Positivism and Logical Empiricism

The empiricism of Locke, Berkeley and Hume was further developed by the French mathematician and philosopher Auguste Comte 1798 - 1857 into what became known as Positivism. The basic teaching of Positivism was that "All knowledge regarding matters of fact is based upon the 'positive' data of experience...."⁽¹⁷⁾

Positivists repudiated metaphysics thus not allowing for any knowledge beyond what could be physically experienced. e.g. Theological Knowledge - hence it was secular in nature. This led to a denial of morality based upon a divine law, and the acceptance instead of an ethical standard based upon "The greatest happiness for the greatest number of people."⁽¹⁸⁾

According to Comte and his followers mankind as well as individuals went through two phases of thought before reaching the "full maturity" of positivism. These two stages were theological - a belief in a God or gods, and metaphysical - which "is in some cases merely a depersonalized theology..."

"Mankind reached full maturity of thought only after abandoning the pseudoexplanations of the theological and metaphysical phases and substituting an unrestricted adherence to scientific method."⁽¹⁹⁾

Logical Positivists revived Berkeley and Hume's ideas in the beginning of the 20th century. This was a reaction to the speculative metaphysics which existed in the previous century. They spoke of "sense-datum" instead of the vague 18th

century word "idea", but the movement later declined partly because of the problem of using language to define sense-datum, and partly because the concept itself was thought by some to be as metaphysical as those being attacked. Empiricism remained as a force in British philosophy for some time, and had an influence on the development of pragmatism in the United States.⁽²⁰⁾

Thus it is clear that positivism was only a more refined form of empiricism, and as such bears much the same fruit, and therefore it not acceptable to Christians.

However, since the days of Locke, Berkeley and Hume, some scholars and philosophers have seriously questioned their concept that all knowledge was first in the senses. One of the most note worthy of these was the German Immanuel Kant, who was a contemporary of both Berkeley and Hume, and thus well aware of their ideas.

Immanuel Kant and the School of Innate Ideas

Immanuel Kant 1724 - 1804 was born into and grew up in a Christian home, but he himself later rejected Christ. He also rejected belief in Satan, miracles and revelation. However, he did not reject belief in God. He was still very much a moralist.

"It is important to emphasize that, far from wanting to undermine belief in God or in the spiritual nature of man, Kant was anxious to strengthen it..." He said, "that he 'inevitably' believed in the existence of God and in a future life and was certain that nothing could shake those beliefs. But he added that this was not logical but moral certainty and rested on the 'subjective' ground of moral sentiment."⁽²¹⁾

As Kant studied the teachings of the empiricists and of the rationalists he began to formulate a philosophy of his own. He rejected the concept that the mind is a source of knowledge on its own account, that is intellectual intuition, as some earlier rationalists believed. He strongly believed the mind's main function was to handle the empirical evidence it received, but that prior to this, it had to know itself - be aware of its own existence, but that this latter knowing "had no content of its own."⁽²²⁾

In his famous written work, The Critique of Pure Reason, Kant tried to reconcile or settle a long running dispute between the empiricists in the British Isles and the rationalists on the Continent. The latter taught that some ideas

did not need experience to generate or verify them. This idea Kant developed into his doctrine of Innate Ideas, or as he called them "categories of the mind." Since these were "rather obviously descendants of the innate ideas of Descartes and Leibniz,"^[23] Kant really only polished and developed the ideas further. However, he did attack the metaphysics of Leibniz and Wolfe, because he believed that their ideas were based on assumptions, "that the human intelligence has powers which a careful examination shows to be non-existent."^[24]

In his work The Critique of Pure Reason Kant argued that the human mind was capable of "knowledge" that had not come through the senses, but was independent of sense experience. This kind of knowledge he called "pure reason", for it had not passed through the senses. Knowledge which came through the senses he regarded as "impure" for it had passed through the distorting channels of the senses. Pure reason or pure knowledge was that which was independent of sense experience, it was knowledge belonging to the mind by nature of the mind itself.

Kant said that Hume assumed that all knowledge comes through separate and distinct sensations, but Kant argued that these obviously could not give an invariable sequence of which you may be forever certain. Knowledge gained from the outside world through sensation holds no promise of regularity of behavior. But he asked, what if we have knowledge that is independent of sense experience? Knowledge whose truth to us is certain even before sense experience - a priori knowledge? Then absolute truth he said would be possible.

The great thesis of Kant is that the mind of man is not passive wax, upon which experience and sensation write their absolute and yet whimsical will. Nor is it a mere abstract name for a series or groups of mental states. It is an active organ which moulds and co-ordinates sensations into ideas. An organ which transforms the chaotic multiplicity of experience into the ordered unity of thought.

The inherent structure of the mind or the innate laws of thought is what Kant called "Transcendental Philosophy." He said that the thousands of sensations that come into the mind, do not by themselves spontaneously and naturally fall into an ordered pattern that equals perception. The empiricists said that they did. Kant argued that there is in the

mind a power that directs and co-ordinates the incoming sensations and moulds them into sense. An illustration of this would be an army general who receives many messages from the field of battle. These messages of themselves do

not fall together and issue a command. The general must do this. The mind also has the power to ignore some messages that come in through the senses. Many examples of this can be given. For example a student can ignore the music on the radio while he is studying his text- book, or reading the newspaper; or a football player may not notice that he has suffered an injury because he is intent on scoring a try for his team, and only notices it afterwards.

The mind therefore is the master of this process. It selects and then moulds into perception that which is suited to its present purpose. Therefore the mind must be separate from the sensations that come into it.

Kant it seems did not use the term innate ideas. At least if he did, it was not his common term for the various abilities of the mind. Instead he referred to the "categories of the mind". Among these categories could be listed such abstract things as the awareness of oneself, consciousness, beauty, the awareness of space and time. Kant "accounts for the synthetic a priori judgments of mathematics by arguing that mathematics has a necessary connection with space and time, which are a priori forms of human sensibility...."⁽²⁵⁾

The empiricists are hard put to explain how these concepts were first in the senses. Kant said that succession does not produce the concept of time, but presupposes it. By the same token it could be argued that external perceptions presuppose the idea of space. It has also been argued that the truths of mathematics are often known to be true innately, or prior to sense experience. For example the common definition of a straight line, "the shortest distance between two points" does not require empirical proof, but is immediately recognized by the mind to be true. (Unless you are a scientist who wants to argue that the definition of a straight line is that it is one that lies evenly between its two extremities!)

This understanding of the human mind and its workings does not mean that we are born with knowledge intact. Codified knowledge does come to us through the senses. What Kant and his followers here are saying is that the mind does have in it capacities or abilities that it did not learn through sense experiences. These abilities enable it to make sense out of the thousands of sensations that come into it every day. If the mind does not have these inbuilt abilities then it could never begin its task of interpreting and making sense of the world around us.

One of the most important of these mental abilities is the

ability to recognize differences of many kinds e.g. numbers, colours, shapes, sizes etc. If the mind does not have this ability innately, then learning could never begin. This introduces the concept of the Law of Contradiction. This law states that "A proposition cannot be true and not true at the same time. The same attribute cannot at the same time be affirmed and denied of the same object." This law is basic to all learning. The mind must be able to see differences or no learning can take place.

A Christian Approach to Epistemology.

A Christian needs to be on guard when-ever he or she looks at the philosophy of men, especially those who do not acknowledge the Lordship of Christ.

While Kant was one such man, I believe that there are aspects of his epistemology that may be helpful to us as Christians. Perhaps we need to look hard at our presuppositions here, for if we approach this topic with the wrong presuppositions, as others have done we will be led astray.

For example Bernard Ramm has written, "The epistemology of Kant is the foundation of much of contemporary metaphysical agnosticism...modernism and Barthianism."⁽²⁶⁾

How can the epistemology of this one man be the basis of such opposite belief systems? While we would not agree with the Neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth, at least he is far removed from agnosticism. The answer to the question, is found in the fact that various people approach the subject of epistemology with different presuppositions.

As Christians, we also have our presuppositions, and we ought not to be afraid to state them. When we state them and then build on them, the unbeliever often accuses us of reasoning in a circle. This charge should not embarrass us, for it is the nature of all human thinking. The unbeliever also reasons in a circle. He states his presuppositions and builds on them too.

What then are the Christian's presuppositions? First of all we would state that we believe in God. Hebrews 11:6 says "He that cometh to God must believe that He is...." Here then is the basic Christian presupposition. Now we can choose to build on this going clockwise and find various supports for our belief including some aspects of Kant's epistemology, while others choose to go anticlockwise and come up with entirely different positions because they began with different presuppositions.

Kant's epistemology can be helpful to us as Christians because we see in his ideas some things that agree with what we read in God's Word.

Romans 1:18-32 tells us that the heathen, who did not have the written Word as did the Jews, still had a knowledge of God. This knowledge he says is clearly discernible from the things that are visible, things that God has made. Further Paul speaks of the knowledge that the heathen have of moral responsibilities, even though they do not have the knowledge of the Scriptures that we have. Romans 1:32 says, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." This indicates to us that the heathen have a knowledge of morality without the prior benefit of empirical knowledge, such as we obtain today from the reading of the written Word.

Perhaps now we can see a link between what Paul is saying and what Kant talked about in his Critique of Pure Reason. Man was created by God with the capacity to be aware of his own moral nature. Kant talked about categories of the human mind. It seems then that as Christians we could add to his list the concept that man has an innate or a priori knowledge of morality or as Francis Schaefer calls it "Moral Motions".⁽²⁷⁾

Some others refer to this aspect of human nature as the "Oughtness" of man. Man is aware that there are some things that are right and some things that are wrong. In other words that there is rightness and wrongness in the world. This is not to say that from birth man has in his mind a list of what is right and what is wrong. For this information comes to him through empirical processes. Because all have this sense of right and wrong all are able to feel shame and guilt if they do not live up to the code as they should. As someone has well said, "Man is the only animal that can blush or that has need to."

C.S. Lewis takes up this theme in a discussion of how people quarrel. Several examples of what people say when they quarrel are given, and Lewis makes the point, that when people quarrel they are appealing to certain laws of right conduct or of fair play that they expect the other fellow to

know. In reply the one accused of unfair play always tries to justify himself or herself, by saying that in the case in point he or she is exempt from the rule, or that special circumstances excuse him or her from following the rule of fair play concerned. As Lewis points out the one accused never replies by saying, "To hell with your standard."⁽²⁸⁾

The bottom line of his argument is that both parties to a quarrel know of a standard of decent behavior. Quarreling is trying to show that the other person is in the wrong. There is no sense in trying to do this unless both are in agreement that a standard of right and wrong does exist.

Lewis points out that even professed atheists will argue or quarrel, and will tell each other to be reasonable. He then goes on to say that differences between nations or different cultural groups in the area of morality is not what he is talking about, for these differences are usually learned through empirical means. For example, different cultures have argued as to whether a man may have one or four or more wives, but all races of people know that a man may not have just any and every woman he might fancy.

Now if moral awareness can be added to Kant's list of categories of the mind, we can now turn our attention to the concept of God Himself. In Kant's epistemology we can see how we can make a strong case for the innate, or a priori knowledge of God. Let me repeat, the codified knowledge about God is not what is here being discussed, but the innate ability to know that there is a God, or that the mind is able to immediately recognize the truth that there is a God, as soon as the concept is thought of or introduced.

This seems to be Paul's argument in Romans 1. However, in that chapter Paul says that the heathen chose not to keep the knowledge of God in their minds. In other words they deliberately turned away from Him, and chose to follow paths of sin, that they knew to be contrary to God's standard of rightness.

It has been argued that if a child was taken soon after birth, and brought up in an environment where he or she never had contact with Christians, or with any people who worshipped God, or any form of god - never saw a church, temple, or any place of worship, and never heard any discussion about God, that child would grow up not knowing anything about God or religion, and would naturally be an atheist. Now it would be almost impossible to conduct such an experiment, and to my knowledge no one has tried to do so. However, we do not have to try to follow this suggestion to see what would happen, for we do have a case in history of a person who grew up without any empirical knowledge of God.

Hellen Keller was born a normal child, but when only 19 months old she contracted a disease that left her both blind and deaf. Having lost these two senses she was not able to learn about God in the empirical way that normal children

do. Years later her teacher, Anne Sullivan, later Mrs Anne Macy, was able to establish communication with her through touch. Being a very bright girl Hellen Keller was able to learn about things she could not see or hear. One day she was told about God. Her reply was most surprising. She is reported to have said, "I always knew that such a Being existed, but I never before knew His name". So while we do not agree with all of Kant's epistemology, we can see how we can use some of his ideas to support our theistic beliefs. By accepting his insights that do agree with Scripture, we can build on our Christian presuppositions an epistemology that will strengthen our belief in God.

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