

David Schenk, PhD

Curriculum Vitae — December 2021

Scholar in Residence
Classical Academic Press
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Camp Hill, PA 17011

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Areas of Specialization

Philosophy
Logic
Theology
Apologetics (esp. Lewis and Tolkien)
English Composition
Rhetoric

Areas of Competence

English Literature
Algebra and Geometry

Presentations

- “The Problem of Evil,” video lecture course at *ClassicalU*, Classical Academic Press
- “The Origin of Evil,” *Messiah University Honors Program*, Mechanicsburg, PA, March 2021
- “Augustine on Sin and Evil,” video lecture at *ClassicalU*, Classical Academic Press
- “Introduction to Philosophy,” video lecture course at *ClassicalU*, Classical Academic Press
- “Teaching Abstraction in an Age of Distraction,” *Society for Classical Learning Conference*, Austin, TX, June 2019
- “Lessons from the New Sokal Hoax,” *Messiah College Humanities Symposium*, February 2019
- “Manhood and Womanhood Today Talkback Session,” *Messiah College Honors Program*, 2018. [Here I defended Christian orthodoxy about human sexuality before what must be called a generally unreceptive audience.]
- “The Idea of an Academy,” *Society for Classical Learning ALCUIN Retreat*, Richmond, VA, November, 2015

“A New Phenomenological Defense of the Date Theory of Time,” *Central Division American Philosophical Association*. Chicago, IL, April 2007

“The Causal Origins Theory of Times,” *Eastern Division American Philosophical Association*. Washington, DC, December 2003

“A New Referential Version of the Date Theory of Time,” *Mountain Plains Philosophy Conference*. Laramie, WY, September 2003

“How a Tenseless Theory of Time Can Use Heidegger’s *Daseinanalytik*,” *Iowa Philosophical Society*. Pella, IA, November 2002

“On the Egocentric Experience of B-Time,” *Eastern Division American Philosophical Association*. New York, NY, December 1995

Online Materials

Podcast at www.TrueNorth.fm

Website and blog at davidjschenk.com

Service to Students

Fall, 2018 “Sixers Sermons.” I gave six Thursday morning sermons in which I defended the fundamental doctrines of Christian orthodoxy regarding the reality of sin, the nature of repentance, the virtue of hope, the nature of salvation, and solutions to the problem of evil. Attendance at and reception to these sermons was excellent. Even toward the end of the series when chapel attendance normally drops off, my room was full.

Every year since 2004 I’ve spent many hours lending one-on-one spiritual guidance and support to numerous students with unanswered questions and doubts about their Christian faith. The pervasiveness of this issue eventually convinced me orthodoxy faces a mounting credibility crisis on Christian college campuses in America. I’ve also used my role as advisor to both Philosophy Club and Conservatives of Messiah College to help students entertain disputed questions especially in areas where campus culture intimidates freedom of speech.

Publications

“How a Soul Is Damned,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*. [REVISED AND RESUBMIT due December, 2021]

“A New Phenomenological Defense of the Date Theory of Time,” *Chronos: Proceedings of the Philosophy of Time Society*. (2007)

“Heidegger’s B-Theoretic Phenomenology” *International Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 46, no. 182 (2006)

“Sensing Reality Robustly: The Protometaphysical Foundations of Butchvarov’s Epistemology” in *The Philosophy of Panayot Butchvarov: A Collegial Evaluation*, ed. Larry Lee Blackman (Edwin Mellen Press, 2005)

“The Causal Origins Theory of Times” *Chronos: Proceedings of the Philosophy of Time Society*. (2004)

“On the Egocentric Experience of B-Time” *Chronos: Proceedings of the Philosophy of Time Society*. (1995)

“Quentin Smith’s *Felt Meanings of the World: An Internal Critique*” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Vol. 7:1 (1993)

Awards

Messiah College Teacher of the Year, 2009-10

Professional Organizations

Member, Society of Christian Philosophers (expired)

Member, Society for Classical Learning (current)

Education

Ph.D., Philosophy – University of Iowa, 2003

B.A., Philosophy – Antioch College, 1991

High School Teaching

I’ve twice taught logic to high school students at Covenant Christian Academy, a local classical school (once as an independent study and once as a regular class).

SCL and Alcuin

I’ve attended and presented at several SCL conferences and ALCUIN retreats.

College Service

Messiah College – Conservatives of Messiah College Faculty Advisor, 2018-present

Messiah College – Philosophy Club Faculty Advisor, 2016-present

Messiah College – Messiah College Senate, 2017-present

Academic Adviser, Messiah College, 2007-present

Messiah College – Ranked Faculty Affairs Committee, Secretary, 2014-15
Messiah College – Center for the Public Humanities Executive Committee, 2009-2017
Messiah College – Instructor, Hoverter Course in the Humanities, spring 2008 and fall 2008

Teaching Experience

I've taught as a professor since 2003 and as a graduate student from 1993 to 2003. Along with two or three other professors I consistently receive the highest teaching evaluations Messiah sees. A detailed list of my year-to-year teaching is available upon request. Following is a simple reverse chronology of courses taught throughout my career:

Philosophy & Apologetics of C.S. Lewis (honors)	Ancient and Medieval Philosophy
Problems in Philosophy	Phenomenology
Logic	Advanced Logic
Existentialism	Epistemology and Metaphysics
Modal Logic	Heidegger's <i>Being and Time</i>
Philosophy of Science	Philosophy of Dostoevsky
Ethics	Contemporary Philosophy
Philosophy of the Human Person	Introduction to Philosophy
Philosophy and the Just Society	Philosophy and Human Nature

Perceiving God

David Schenk

I

It's December of 1998 in Iowa City. I have no immediate duties and no intention of writing my dissertation, so I'm upstairs in a coffee shop with a sandwich and some reading materials to include in my Introduction to Philosophy course for the spring semester. The readings deal with arguments for and against the existence of God. I am, as I have been since earliest childhood, a solid, avowed and contented atheist; I was raised an atheist. A passage from the *Screwtape Letters* turns my thoughts in a direction for which I am not prepared and, pondering its claims, I stare out the window and slip into a detached, contemplative state that I expect is familiar to any philosopher. My mind grows quiet and still and I become aware of its operations with special clarity.¹ The street outside is wet after a short rain and two undergraduate women walk into a nearby bar. Everything becomes sharp and solid to the point of seeming portentous in its tangibility; objects lose their ordinariness and become deeply alien things. My senses become more acute than usual. I can feel the distances between things; it is as if space itself has become tangible—a substance my mind can touch. The events around me recede into the periphery and an old, visceral, inarticulate inkling about The Structure of Everything comes over me, as it has from time to time ever since I was a small child.

But this time it's different.

This time the direct, intuitive, almost-geometric grasping of this quasi-notion does not throw me back from it in dumb incomprehension as it always has before. It does not prevent me from achieving a full experience of it. It does not leave me in its wake with nothing more than a vague, inarticulate suspicion to which I cannot give a name and a concomitant feeling that I need a drink. This time it stays there. It is “underneath” or “behind” everything of my ordinary experiences but it is so quiet, so unobtrusive and subtle, that I never notice it when my mind is noisy. My mind is not noisy. My mind is still and alert.

It is not a feeling: I have no emotions. It is not a thought: there are no propositions I am considering. It is not a hallucination: I have no sensory images. It has no edges. That is to say, it has no discernible borders delimiting it and this fact contributes to its felt strangeness. It presents itself as the thing that underlies all other things, except strictly speaking it does not present itself as a *thing*. It presents itself as utterly alien, as somehow escaping or transcending all the ordinary categories with which I am intellectually acquainted. It presents itself as the answer to a question I never asked, as the final explanation of things that always sat out just beyond the edges of my awareness and tickled my intellect, thereby enlivening daily experience with an inexplicable living poetry. More importantly, it presents itself as a Mind. I realize (don't ask me how) that as I am observing it, “it” is observing me. While I sit here holding this sandwich and contemplating the earth under the wet street a Mind underneath everything contemplates me. “It,” or rather He, has watched me and waited for me for my entire life and I only became aware of Him just now when I am nearly thirty.

Now I am getting freaked out—I mean really freaked out.

II

From this account note two essential points. First, consider the difficulty people have in giving wild hypotheses their due. Second, consider what might underlie this.

¹ I trained in this way of focusing and observing the mind as an undergraduate at a Buddhist monastery in India.

At bottom human nature is less impressive than it is fashionable to suppose. This is as true of us in our ordinary reasoning as in our personal conduct and in both cases the consequences are easily ignored. One common failing is the temperamental inability to take seriously a hypothesis that seems too crazy to be serious. If we insist upon dismissing certain suspicions or inklings as *mere* suspicions or wish-fulfillments, then we never find an answer to the essential question: we succeed only in avoiding it. In general, when one is unwilling honestly to entertain a wild hypothesis, one closes oneself off to the evidence by which it might be confirmed. I want to emphasize this: had I chosen my sandwich, the affair would've ended there and I'd have continued my ordinary life with my ordinary selfish indifference. That single moment was crucial. If I'd dismissed my tickling suspicion as a mere suspicion, I'd be an atheist today and I am not only because I did not. But why should this failing afflict us? Why is each of us subject to it regardless of intellectual training and imagination?

Now, I don't call this a spiritual difficulty if only because too often speakers use that term without really knowing what it means. Instead, I call it a predicament of our character, a flaw inscribed in the most basic elements of human nature. We can call it vanity, pride, or, following the tender jargon of the day, a "healthy self-image," but our desire to be nobler and worthier than the facts permit leads our actions while our rational faculties trail behind and try to clean up the mess, as it were. Consequently, we favor flattering ideas over unflattering ones. Is it any wonder, then, that Christianity gets a cold reception today? *Inter alia*, theism tells us we are not our own creatures, human nature and right conduct are not ours to define, and our fancied independence is a lie. Christianity gives an account wherein each human being is petty and corrupt and each of us thereby brings about his or her own deepest failures. Furthermore, against this our gritted teeth and balled fists accomplish nothing; our only hope is an outside aid no human effort can produce. Well, the American ego balks at the suggestion of an absolute authority with which we cannot argue, and the idea of being too weak to accomplish what's needed just sets our teeth on edge. We do not reject the Christian hypothesis for its oddness; we reject it because it *offends* us. It bruises our pride. But that pride is a lie and its self-congratulation a delusion. This is our cultural curse.

Even so there is hope. Anyone who honestly repudiates their pride will start to see themselves truly. Furthermore, they'll become aware of a higher form of life for which they are created and from which they are fallen. Regarding this form of life Christianity alone makes a brazen promise (John 5:24, Romans 3:21-24): anyone who entrusts their redemption to Jesus Christ will be redeemed. God will rescue any who honestly let Him. Our real problem today is how few people want such rescue: they resent the suggestion they need it. The root problem, then, is not intellectual: it's moral. So if we're going to reach them, I think we'll have to start there.