

## CERTAINTY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Apologetics and Counseling  
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### 0. INTRO: WHAT IS CERTAINTY?

- certainty of death?
  - “**Psychological** certainty is an attitude that persons can have towards a proposition, and **propositional** certainty is a measure of the epistemic warrant for a proposition. Thus, it is clear that psychological certainty and propositional certainty are logically independent.”<sup>1</sup>
- songs of certainty/uncertainty

a song of certainty:

Communist International

The original lyrics in French.

Debout! les damnés de la terre  
Debout! les forçats de la faim  
La raison tonne en son cratère,  
C'est l'éruption de la fin.  
Du passé faisons table rase  
Foule esclave, debout! debout!  
Le monde va changer de base  
Nous ne sommes rien, soyons tout!

Refrain  
C'est la lutte finale  
Groupons-nous et demain  
L'Internationale  
Sera le genre humain.

Il n'est pas de sauveurs suprêmes:  
Ni dieu, ni César, ni tribun,  
Producteurs, sauvons-nous nous-mêmes!  
Décrétons le salut commun!  
Pour que le voleur rende gorge,  
Pour tirer l'esprit du cachot  
Soufflons nous-mêmes notre forge,  
Battons le fer quand il est chaud!

L'état opprime et la loi triche,  
L'impôt saigne le malheureux,  
Nul devoir ne s'impose au riche,  
Le droit du pauvre est un mot creux.  
C'est assez languir en tutelle,  
L'égalité veut d'autres lois;

«Pas de droits sans devoirs», dit-elle,  
«Egaux, pas de devoirs sans droits!»

Hideux dans leur apothéose,  
Les rois de la mine et du rail  
Ont-ils jamais fait autre chose  
Que dévaliser le travail?  
Dans les coffres-forts de la bande  
Ce qu'il a créé s'est fondu.  
En décrétant qu'on le lui rende  
Le peuple ne veut que son dû.

Les rois nous saoulaient de fumées.  
Paix entre nous, guerre aux tyrans!  
Appliquons la grève aux armées,  
Crosse en l'air et rompons les rangs!  
S'ils s'obstinent, ces cannibales,  
A faire de nous des héros,  
Ils sauront bientôt que nos balles  
Sont pour nos propres généraux.

Ouvriers, paysans, nous sommes  
Le grand parti des travailleurs;  
La terre n'appartient qu'aux hommes,  
L'oisif ira loger ailleurs.  
Combien de nos chairs se repaissent!  
Mais si les corbeaux, les vautours,  
Un de ces matins disparaissent,  
Le soleil brillera toujours!

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<sup>1</sup> KLEIN, P. D. *Certainty*. In: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Version 1.0, London: Routledge.

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songs of uncertainty:  
With Life In Mind - The Truth In Certainty Lyrics

We're just living in darkness.  
Looking for comfort.  
When almost nothing's there.  
Why do we live this way?  
In search of something that will never exist.  
Even when we've tried our hardest and did our very best to forget all the memories,  
and the struggles we've had.

Feeling so hollow, we're just living in fear.  
Where do we find hope in a world so dead?  
Feeling so hollow, we're all living in fear  
Where do we find hope in a world so dead?

Desperation's setting in, and we're all clinging to nothing.  
All we get it this false sense of completion.  
And these insecurities will get the best of us.  
Even as this stranglehold only grows tighter.  
Were hiding our sorrows behind that front we've built.  
In search of nothing more than the trail of a ghost.

And will any of this even bring you happiness?  
And these insecurities will get the best of us.  
Even as this stranglehold only grows.

We're so afraid of what we might become.  
So scared to let go, be content with what you are.  
And it only gets harder as the days roll on  
And the pain and regret only builds stronger.

Looking for comfort.  
When almost nothing's there.  
Why do we live this way?  
In search of something that will never exist.  
Even when we've tried our hardest and did our very best to forget all the memories.

How do we rise when it feels like the weight of the world  
Is standing on top of your shoulders?  
When it seems like this world is so hopeless.  
We find another reason to fall apart.

Gorky Park - Stop The World I Want To Get Off Lyrics

Hey somebody next door do you remember my name  
Are you out to celebrate Indifference day  
Do you know that live in a cage without a key,  
if feels like that anyway  
And I don't wanna stay there, no I don't

Counting the adds against tomorrow  
Living on a time we have to borrow  
The expectations getting higher and higher  
But I don't wanna wait no more and I don't wanna stay here

Chorus:

Stop the world I want to get off  
And find myself a better ride  
Stop the world I want to get off  
Payed in full and now goodbye  
Stop the world I want to get off  
And find myself a better ride  
Stop the world I want to get off  
Any place we're passing by

Verse 2:

Walking down the path in the Garden of stone  
We walk together and feel alone  
Listen to the Silence of the heart and mate day by day  
I don't wanna stay here, I don't wanna wait no more

Chorus.

Bridge:

Somebody call my name, somebody call my name,  
somebody call my name name

Chorus.

## 1. TYPES OF UNCERTAINTY

- GUINNESS: "Doubt": (1) Doubt from ingratitude, (2) Doubt from a faulty view of God, (3) Doubt from weak foundations, (4) Doubt from lack of commitment, (5) Doubt from lack of growth, (6) Doubt from unruly emotions, (7) Doubt from fearing to believe

### 1.1. MIND

- realizing the limits of knowledge = inevitability of coming to the point of not knowing
- When psychologists maintain that people are unreasonably overconfident and fall prey to the base rate fallacy or to a litany of other reasoning errors, each of these claims is based on an assumption about the nature of *sapiens*—as are entire theories of mind.<sup>2</sup>
- since Descartes – epistemology as the centre of philosophy
- hopes placed in natural science
- [*positive effects of doubt*] “I feel a responsibility to proclaim . . . that doubt is not to be feared, but that it is to be welcomed as the possibility of a new potential for human beings. If you know that you are not sure, you have a chance to improve the situation.” —Richard Feynman (physicist)
- “The fundamental cause of the trouble is that in the modern world the stupid are cocksure while the intelligent are full of doubt.” — Bertrand Russell
- [*doubt painful*] “Doubt . . . is an illness that comes from knowledge and leads to madness.” — Gustave Flaubert, *Memoirs of a Madman*

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<sup>2</sup> GIRGENZER, G. *Rationality for Mortals*. p. 3.

## 1.2. EMOTIONS

- painful relationships, social uncertainty, etc.
  - this source of uncertainty is much more difficult to work with (in our mind we can at least set some limits and then become “satisfied” with the thinking process, whereas it takes much more to experience security in our emotions)
  - childhood: leaves an impression of either a secure or an insecure world
- psychology (19<sup>th</sup> century)

[*Insanity of Doubt*] But, in reality, we have to deal with a morbid condition which is very variable in its manifestations, and which justifies, according to the circumstance of the case, all the denominations successively conferred on it. One patient doubts everything, even his own existence, and is totally unable to arrive at any definite conclusion on any subject. Another manifests, in addition, a genuine dread of coming into contact with external objects, while yet another cannot discuss a subject without indulging in the tiresome process of hair-splitting, and, in doing so, exhausting all the subtleties of scholasticism concerning matters more or less frivolous or hackneyed. One of our own patients, whose case will be found recorded below, seemed to be haunted by the philosophical doubts of Descartes, and can be likened to those Buddhists of the far east, whose fundamental maxim is : All is emptiness.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.3. VOLITION

- vacillation; no stability = problem of character
- “Morbid indecision” (→eccentricity; melancholia)

## 1.4. HOPE

- Hopelessness = unbelief that this life has a meaning... “What for...?”
- welfare
- health
- natural disasters
- war (politics)

## 1.5. MIND

- Remember that one is sometimes convinced of the *correctness* of a view by its *simplicity* or *symmetry*, i.e., these are what induce one to go over to this point of view. One then simply says something like: “*That’s* how it must be.”<sup>4</sup>

To some extent doubt is inevitable but it can reach unhealthy dimensions.

## 2. CHRISTIAN CERTAINTY

Ps 22:10 כִּי־אֵתָהּ גָחִי מִבֶּטֶן מִבְּטִיחִי עַל־שָׂרֵי אֲמִי

- faith
- hope

Never doubting faith = stagnating faith, BUT a Christian knows the Source where certainty comes from.

### 2.1. MORAL DECISION (ETHICS)

- **John 7:17** "If anyone is willing to do His will (θέλη τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιεῖν), he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself.  
= knowing AND doing!
  - if you have a revelation and you don't act upon it you lose it
  - matter of will

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<sup>3</sup> BALL, B. *Insanity of Doubt*. In: TUKE, D. H. *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine I*, Philadelphia : P. Blakiston, Son & Co., 1892, p. 407.

<sup>4</sup> WITTGENSTEIN, L. *On Certainty* 92.

## 2.2. NEW BIRTH (EPISTEMOLOGY)

How do I know? (epistemology = theory of knowing) Metanoia! (change of mind in being born again): **John 3:3**

Logics is not the ultimate tool of knowing.

[CHAMBERS] "In new birth God does three impossible things, impossible, that is, from the rational standpoint. The first is to make a man's past as though it had never been; the second, to make a man all over again, and the third, to make a man as certain of God as God is of Himself."<sup>5</sup>

## 2.3. TRUSTING JESUS (SPIRITUALITY)

- **2 Timothy 1:12** I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.
- **Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

= identification with Jesus

- God's character can only be revealed to us through the cross

## 2.4. CHANGED RELATIONSHIPS

- **Rom 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
- Security is tested by my changed relationship to God and to the church

"I sometimes think that the whole secret of the Christian life is to know how to use the word 'Therefore'. The Christian life is in many ways a matter of logic, a matter of deduction."<sup>6</sup>

### 2.4.1. LOVING GOD

- **Rom 8:16** The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God ... **Gal 4:6** Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

### 2.4.2. LOVING THE CHURCH

- **1 John 3:14** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

- There is no certainty available in this world.
- Certainty comes from outside – not by making us omniscient, but by getting acquainted with Jesus' work and character.
- Certainty does not exclude methodical doubt. It is a spiritual condition of hope in Divine providence.

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<sup>5</sup> CHAMBERS, O. *The Place of Help*.

<sup>6</sup> LLOYD-JONES, D. M. *Romans 5:1*.