

University of Wisconsin at Manitowoc
Spring 2012
ENG102
Deets

Jacques Ellul Handout

For this assignment, you will complete the steps on this handout. For the final step, you will write a paragraph according to the prompt and example and you will bring it to class in hard copy form.

Objectives:

As a way of reconsidering our past “black vs. white” thinking, we will read a very brief passage from Jacques Ellul’s book *What I Believe*. In this passage, Ellul offers an alternative definition of “dialectic.” He does a wonderful job of first laying out the origins of the word and how it is usually understood. Then, he frames a new definition of dialectic as he understands it.

I hope that following our class discussion of Huston’s “scientism,” in connection to Brooks’ scientific mysteries, shook up some of your misconceptions, black and white thinking, or those conclusions you have held to be true via poor source material.

To build on our thoughts and discoveries in class, you will read pp. 29-35, beginning with the heading **Dialectic**, and *ending at* the heading **Biblical Dialectic** at the link posted below this assignment on the website: <http://www.jesusradicals.com/wp-content/uploads/what.pdf>.

- 1) Read pp. 29-35 of “Dialectic,” an excerpt from Ellul’s *What I Believe*.
- 2) Define Ellul’s version of “dialectic” below in a few complete sentences, using a paraphrasing or *partial* direct quotation(s.) (In other words, try to describe his version of “dialectic” using mostly your own words. (You will share this in class or show it to the instructor for points, but will not turn it in.)

3) In a typed paragraph, answer the question: “In what way or ways does one of Ellul’s ideas in this excerpt apply to one of the topics or points noted in discussion on Tuesday evening?”

Use a quotation which strikes a chord with our discussion on Tuesday. For example:

As the philosopher and theologian Jacques Ellul states, “Dialectic has often been viewed as a type of reasoning or as the coexistence of contradictory elements.” Ellul’s argument applies to our class’s discussion of the relationship between the science and the divine. In class, we discussed that science and the divine (God) do not need to be viewed in black and white thinking, and that humanity should not feel forced to choose one over the other. Instead, as Ellul states, we can view issues through the lens of “coexistence of contradictory elements. American culture has established religion and science as being at odds, while Ellul would likely argue that these elements can be viewed as a complex interplay of...(continuing your thoughts...)

Just to remind you of a few of the topics discussed which you might approach with this assignment:

- 1) Species are constantly shifting and changing on our planet via extinction as well as hybridization, which implies that _____.
- 2) Scientism, according to Huston, declares that all questions can be addressed and answered via scientific method and that this is the only form of evidence that is relevant to any question.
- 3) Although many scientists subscribe to the theory of the big bang that created the universe, there are many mysteries that have not been solved, and evidence which seems to disprove it.
- 4) Although scientists seem to imply that they have charted the earth’s history, the “eocene hothouse” mystery implies that scientists do not understand and cannot predict when temperatures will rise or what impact another such event will produce, which implies that _____.
- 5) When patients are told that they have only a certain amount of time before they die of their illness, some misdiagnosed patients still die within the allotted time frame, which points to _____ relationship between body and mind (or body and soul.)
- 6) Other topics discussed: The mystery of the relationship between time and space, the unexplained patterns in the universe, etc etc which indicate that our understanding of reality is not accurate or _____.

Please note that the above reminders are to be used as a starting point, and that you will build on these ideas and construct sentences in your own words.