# BEYOND MODERNISM: SCHOLARSHIP
# AND "SERVANTHOOD"

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## *Abstract*

This paper discusses some of the main characteristics of modernism and its influence on science and in particular theology. Descartes' approach to reason, "I think; therefore I am," and the Newtonian mechanism (mathematical principles of Natural Philosophy) prepared the way for deifying reason during the Enlightenment. Modernism became the foundation on which the so-called "scientific paradigm" was built. "Scientists" were regarded as people who could produce exact and unambiguous results. This paradigm framed our intellectual, social, and theological thoughts and influenced scholars to become paternalistic and imperialistic, serving exclusive goals and propagating reductionistic truths. A new paradigm has developed which has adopted a postobjectivistic and postpositivistic position. It is regarded as systemic and is characterized by a functional and a teleological interrelatedness, as well as an interdependence of dynamic entities incorporating a whole. Postmodern scientists regard themselves as "participants" instead of "spectators." A network of relationships is important, engaging all people and the whole person. This paper addresses how scholars, within this new paradigm, can become more like "wise" servants and less like masters of absolute, cognitive, and exclusive knowledge.

## *Introduction: Post-modern or Postmodernism?*

Progressively more scholars believe that we are living in a post-modern age and that our traditional modernistic way of understanding this world is coming to an end.[1] Murphy states that a dramatic change in "thinking

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[1]Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern Science and the Theology of Nature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 254; William E. Doll, *A Post-modern Perspective on Curriculum* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993), 3. Stanley Grenz says that we experience a cultural shift that challenges the change from *premodernity* to *modernity* (*A Primer on Postmodernism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 2). P. Cilliers states that a postmodern condition is not merely the result of willful acts by theorists, but is due to the complexities of the linguistic and social spaces ("Postmodern Knowledge and Complexity," *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Wysbegeerte* 14, no. 3 [1995]: 126).

strategy" has occurred among Anglo-American intellectuals during the last half of the century. This can be described as a "paradigm" shift that has important implications for theology, in particular for conservative theologians that insist on God's special action in the world, as well as for the authority of the Bible.[2] If these statements are regarded as valid, it will challenge us, as scholars, with difficult, but also with creative and even radical, new opportunities.

The title of this paper: "Beyond Modernism: Scholarship and 'Servanthood,'" *indicates a serious effort to move beyond modernism.*[3] By designating the title of this paper "Beyond Modernism," I indicate that I wish to differentiate between modernity and modernism.[4] The concept of modernism represents a positivistic approach that is characterized by, *inter alia*, rationalism, empiricism, reductionism, and mechanism. Modernism means to make modernity into an absolute and final state of affairs. In view of the fact that my own vision is still being tinged by the modern worldview, I have not designated this paper as "beyond modernity" but rather "beyond modernism." By designating my position as "beyond modernism," I actually present a "post-modern" (*with a hyphen to distinguish it*) approach. Post-modernity should not, however, be equated with the concept of the postmodernism which changes post-modernity into an absolute and final notion.[5] My "post-modern" position could rather be placed within constructive post-modern thought than within deconstructive postmodernism.[6] This post-modern vision looks to

²J. Wesley Robbins, "Murphy on Postmodernity, Science and Religion," *Zygon* 33 (Summer 1998): 463-466.

³For a critique on modernism, see R. A. Morrow and C. A. Rorres, *Social Theory and Education: A Critique of Theories of Social and Cultural Reproduction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 409.

⁴I am still bound to use the tools of modernity; I do not, however, wish to accommodate a "late modern" position. For a critique on late modernism see E. van Niekerk, "Postmodern Theology," in *Faith, Theology and Post-modernity: Package 2* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1995), 1-21.

⁵P. M. Rosenau states that post-modernists come in many shapes and sizes—upbeat post-modernists, despairing post-modernists and post-modernists who do not appreciate being called post-modernists. Whereas postmodernism is stimulating and fascinating, it finds itself at the same time on the brink of confusion ("Affirmatives and Sceptics," in *The Truth about the Truth: De-confusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World*, ed. Walter Truett Anderson [New York: Putnam, 1995], 107). Van Niekerk states that although the term "postmodernism" has been used to describe many social tendencies and experiences, there are some recurring themes in the post-modern debate. Some of these are contingency, randomness, lateral networking versus hierarchical oppositions, multifacetedness, and a protest against progress (van Niekerk, 1).

⁶J. Wentzel van Huyssteen states that Rosenau tentatively distinguishes between two streams of thought in the current post-modern debate: *affirmative* and *skeptical*

the past, and it transcends it in such a way that the new is built on the old. It will both accommodate and "stretch" the past and modernity. I have thus chosen to speak of a "post-modern" *vision* rather than of a "model" or even of an "approach."

This paper will emphasize two important issues. First, a post-modern vision wishes to overcome the "conservative-liberal" discourse with its search for absolute and objective truths. Second, it will demonstrate that scholarship and "servanthood' can be more easily accommodated within a post-modern vision than within modernism.

### From Premodernism to Modernism

Premodernity looks at things in an organic way.[7] God was regarded as the center of the world and also of our understanding. Premodernity, however, was progressively replaced, to a large extent, by a positivistic view of science. While Plato and Aristotle separated ideas from objects, they at least still believed that these notions needed each other. Their thoughts nevertheless anticipated the foundation of modern positivistic science.[8] Scientists such as Copernicus (1473-1543), Kepler (1571-1630), and in particular Galileo (1564-1642) closed the door of premodernity and opened the door to a new worldview. They insisted that the world has to be interpreted from a strictly quantitative point of view.[9]

This position was strengthened by the ideas of Descartes (1596-1650). In

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postmodernity. On the one hand, skeptical postmodernism offers a pessimistic, negative, gloomy assessment, with a vagueness or even an absence of moral parameters. Affirmative postmodernists, on the other hand, have a more hopeful and optimistic view of the post-modern age. This affirmative kind of postmodernity is open to responsible normative choices ("Should We Be Trying So Hard to be Post-modern? A Response to Drees, Haught, and Yeager," *Zygon* 32 [December 1997]: 571). See also W. T. Anderson, "Four Different Ways to be Absolutely Right," in *The Truth about the Truth*, ed. Walter Truett Anderson (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1995), 112, 113. Anderson places scholars such as Richard Rorty and Thomas Kuhn within a constructivist worldview. He designates the second group as those who are "post-modern players." Their position is more "an attitude" than an "intellectual position." The third group is that of the nihilists, who believe that since not all the conflicting beliefs can be true, they must all be false.

[7]J. Degenaar maintains that the premodern discourse is characterized by the absence of a so-called critical approach. The premodern discourse is structured by the language of the community to which one belongs ("The Collapse of Unity, in *New Models of Thinking on the Eve of a New Century*, ed. C. W. du Toit [Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1996], 6).

[8]Doll, 23.

[9]Ibid., 20. Quantifying results became the central technique of the emerging positive scientific enterprise. Galileo believed that God used the alphabet of mathematics to write the laws of nature.

his *Discourse on Method* he established the foundations of knowledge by presenting his beliefs *vis-a-vis* radical doubt. The certainty that remains in confronting doubt is that the thinking subject is doubting. Therefore the certainty of knowledge rests in the fact that the thinking self is the "first truth" that doubt cannot deny, namely, *I think; therefore I am* (*Cogito ergo sum*). He argues, "I could receive it without scruple as the first principle of philosophy."[10] This led to a new conception of the human person. Humans are "thinking substances" and "autonomous rational beings."[11] Descartes, "rightly conducting reason for seeking truth," had faith in mental reflection, and an external order that is expressed in a manner that we can understand and accumulate accurate empirical observations. This enclosed a naive idealism in human abilities and in the one-to-one relationship between what we think reality is and reality itself.[12] Descartes' four methodological rules for directing reason searching for truth made it clear that there is no dynamic relationship between fact and theory, practicality, and imagination. Whatever is true or factual is not "created" by the human mind but "discovered."[13] For Descartes there was not only an external reality that was set up by a rational, "geometrical" God, but this reality was unaffected by our personal activities and prejudices. He even went further and separated reality into primary and secondary qualities. The primary qualities are those of position, size, shape, and motion, and they are objective and mathematical in nature.[14] The secondary qualities are "things" such as color, odor, taste, texture, and sound, are less real and inferior to the primary. Personal feelings and intuitions are thus not a source of knowledge. Descartes' subject-object dualism made nature and "things" "objects" to be manipulated by "reason."[15]

For the next three hundred years philosophers and theologians accepted

[10]René Descartes, *Philosophical Works*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (New York: Dover, 1955), 106.

[11]Ignace de la Potterie, "History and Truth," in *Problems and Perspectives of Fundamental Theology*, ed. René Latourelle and Gerald O'Collins, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 89.

[12]René Descartes stated: "[There are] certain laws which God has so established in nature . . . that after sufficient reflection we cannot doubt that they are exactly observed in all which exists or which happens in the world" (*Discourse on Method: Meditations on First Philosophy Principles of Philosophy* [London: Dent, 1950], 27).

[13]Doll, 30-31.

[14]De la Potterie, 89. For Descartes mathematical truth is the model of all truth. He limited the object of metaphysics to distinct and clear ideas. The objects of research must have the proofs of arithmetic and geometry.

[15]Grenz states that the modern person "can appropriately be characterized as Descartes' autonomous, rational substance encountering Newton's mechanistic world" (3).

the primacy of reason advocated by Descartes. His view that the truths of mathematics arise from the nature of reason itself and that they are more certain than knowledge which is derived from empirical observation paved the way for the ideal of "rationality" and "objective knowledge."[16]

Newtonian mechanics led to the rejection of the organic view.[17] Here reality was reduced to basic mechanical elements: Every particle was "what it [was] apart from the other." These particles were regarded as autonomous units that together formed a machine. They were touching each other in a machine-like way, but they did not affect the inner nature of each other.[18] Armed with this "atomistic" model, modern science and technology attained great triumphs. From Newton's *Principia Mathematica* it was clear that the universe had a simple symmetry. Within this symmetry was a set of linear, causative relations accessible to exact mathematical description. The "natural" order of Newton's universe was both simple and observable.[19]

Both Descartes and Newton sought to use the power of reason to *enhance* a theological agenda. People started to speak about this world from a quantitative approach rather than a qualitative approach. Rationalism became the accepted norm and *replaced revelation and the perspective of faith*.[20]

## Modernistic Science

Descartes' reasoning, "I think; therefore I am," Newton's mechanistic worldview *(Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy)*, the further developments during the Enlightenment, and the "success" of scientific research resulted in an unqualified confidence in scientific inquiry and the deification of specifically technical rationality. "Science" became a dogma instead of remaining just another discipline. It mastered the art of

[16]Doll, 113, 140. Pierre Laplace, Henri de Saint-Simon, and Auguste Comte had a vision of a new age—industrial and technocratic. Progress did not only seem possible it was regarded as inevitable. Philosophy and positivistic science had created their own rules in the game of knowledge and allowed only rationalistic knowledge, which consists of definitions.

[17]Newton best constructed his concept of new cosmology in the final edition of his *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1972).

[18]David Bohm, "Postmodern Science and a Postmodern World," in *The Reenchantment of Science: Postmodern Proposals*, ed. David Ray Griffin (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 60-62.

[19]Doll, 27. Philosophers such as Voltaire, who took Newtonian mechanics to France, proclaimed this science to be the "messiah" of the world. Doll maintains that the "dismissal of God as a working hypothesis, which Laplace did so easily, was but the final stop in the march from organicism to mechanism, from inherent essences to mathematical formulae."

[20]Grenz, 57-81.

"control" so well that it was "mushrooming its methods into a metaphysic" and thus creating "scientism."[21] Modern thought very soon adopted a mechanistic, atomistic, and positivistic perspective; this adoration of science led to its deification that reached its heyday in the early 1960s.[22] Scientists were regarded as people who could produce exact and unambiguous knowledge.

These developments were also influential in giving rise to the so-called "exact" sciences. These scientists assumed that they were dealing with "facts" and "objective" data. These so-called "exact" sciences also introduced themselves, to a large extent, as the ultimate solution. In the year that Charles Darwin published his *Origin of Species*, Herbert Spencer asked and answered the question: What kind of knowledge is worth the most? His reply was "science."[23] Science, and in particular positivistic science, became the foundation on which was built the modernist paradigm framed our intellectual, social, and theological thought. Reason was bound by and defined in terms of scientific technology.[24] This modernist paradigm introduced an understanding of a social, psychological, and physical environment in which not only a positivistic science developed but also a generation of scientists who claimed absolute truths from an exclusive stance.[25] This modernistic approach determined our worldview, cognitive, methodology, and the nature of scholarship. Theology developed a methodology that accommodated the criteria of these "exact" sciences.

[21]Doll, 2.

[22]Modern science accepted an epistemology and a methodology that were reductionistic. *Psychology*, and in particular Freud and many of his colleagues, proclaimed that human beings were determined by their biological composition. *Classical Behaviorism* regarded humans as determined by their social context, whereas *Marxism* believed that human beings were merely the product of their labor. *Empiricism* and the *correspondence view of truth* led modern science to believe that truth can be determined in an absolute and comprehensive way. *The theory of evolution* was constructed and empowered by modernism's worldview. Modern science with its "successful" and persuasive technological development, empowered evolution: "Our world is progressively becoming better."

[23]Herbert Spencer states: "for gaining a livelihood . . . Science, for parental functions . . . Science, for good citizenship . . . Science, for the enjoyment of art . . . Science, for the purpose of discipline . . . Science. Science . . . is the best preparation for all these orders of activity" (*Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* [London: Williams & Norgate, 1929], 84-85).

[24]Doll maintains that "science of this Spencerian type—a modernist adaptation of Rene Descartes' rationalism and Isaac Newton's empiricism—has become for the social sciences, and hence for education and curriculum, a paradigm" (1).

[25]Cilliers maintains that positivistic science shifted from verification to falsification, "If one cannot add to the grid, you could at least disqualify unwanted members." He concludes that everything that was too complex or contained unpredictability was disregarded. "Subsequently, large parts of the totality of human knowledge are disregarded as unscientific" (128).

Theology became obsessed with finding exactly the right method and the irrefutable modern rational argument.

David Tracy, however, states that "we are all, willingly or unwillingly, being forced to leave modernity."[26]

## Rationalism

Modernism may, in the *first* instance, be "characterized" by rationalism. Rationalism determined, to a large extent, the "nature" of theology and its reductionistic approach to truth.[27] The enlightenment project was built on the epistemological assumption that the modern "mind" can obtain certain and absolute knowledge. It is believed that the discovery of more knowledge is always good and that progress in science will set us free from bondage.[28]

After Descartes' knowledge was regarded as a separate and isolated notion, removed from the experiences and wisdom of life,[29] truth became more and more defined with *concepts*, and revelation and faith were explained by way of *propositions*.[30]

Whereas truth was at first separated from history,[31] it later became, for

[26]The above mentioned approach is being progressively challenged by scholars, such as Tracy, who states that we are all, willingly or unwillingly, being forced to leave modernity. David Tracy, "The Return of God in Contemporary Theology," in *Why Theology?* ed. Claude Geffré and Werner Jeanrond (London: SCM Press), 37.

[27]Walter Truett Anderson argues that there are at least four distinguishable worldviews, each with its own language of public discourse and epistemology: (1) the postmodern-ironist, who believes that truth is socially constructed; (2) the scientific rational, who finds truth through methodical and disciplined inquiry; (3) the social traditional rationalist, who maintains that truth is found in the heritage of the Western world; and (4) the neoromantic, who finds truth by being in harmony with nature and/or spiritual discovery of the inner self. Anderson maintains that the scientific-rational and the social-traditional approaches are conservative worldviews that are holding on to the values of a modern world that is "beginning to look kind of shaky" ("Four Different Ways to be Absolutely Right," in *The Truth about the Truth*, 110-111).

[28]Grenz, 4.

[29]De la Potterie further states that "Platonic idealism, with its strong metaphysical structure and its keen sense of transcendence of God, could not survive as such in the modern age that is so profoundly rationalistic and positivistic" (89).

[30]Ibid., 90. De la Potterie notes that this was particularly noticeable in the way theologians spoke of truth. "Whereas Scripture and the older tradition always used *aletheia* or *veritas* in the singular and meant by the term the definite revelation Jesus has made, nineteenth-century theology became increasingly accustomed to using the word in the plural and speaking of the truths of faith; such a practice meant a risk of absolutizing in formulas the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The language used becomes abstract: 'Ineffable truths proposed by . . . divine revelation.'"

[31]There is, however, something in common between the views of Plato and the Enlightenment, as they both isolate truth from history. De la Potterie says that "the result

the modern mind, that which "passed the test of *scientific verification* or [was] guaranteed by solid *historical documentation*."[32] According to the presuppositions of this approach, truth is found solely by scientific and historical research, and it cannot be found by faith.[33] Pure rational truth alone started to dominate the "confused and uncertain material of sense experience."[34] Researchers shifted their emphasis from making "good judgments" to making "accurate predictions."[35] The Western world was characterized as a "triumph of the mind," the Cartesian mind. Thomas H. Groome maintains that this was a narrow epistemology in that it "demeaned the function of memory and imagination in knowing, and excluded the corporeal, the affective, the aesthetic, and the relational."[36]

Scholars' desire "to know" became degraded to a rabid quest for rational certainty and institutionalized reason.[37] This quest for certainty was, however, mostly in the *realm of ideas* and not in the sphere of *ethics or behavior*.[38]

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is, that here again, but in a quite different sense than in Platonism, Christ, whose divinity is now denied, ' . . . is radically cut off from history with its contingency and servitudes. He comes on the scene as a superman who brings truth that is valid at all times and outside of time. . . . Time and history are in principle completely neutral and irrelevant and set no conditions truth is universal'" (ibid., 90).

[32]Ibid. Historical truth became the only truth. Only facts that have been documented and controlled by all can be scientific and guarantee the objectivity of history. This understanding paved the way for critical-historical methods to give the real picture of the biblical text. De La Potterie states that these methods can discover only the external aspect of Christ's person; they are unaware of the mystery of his life and thus of his truth.

[33]Ibid., 94-97. De la Potterie states that truth later became an existential experience under the influence of Max Stirner and Søren Kierkegaard.

[34]Ibid., 89. According to de la Potterie, a similar position was held by Leibniz. Knowledge of truth has nothing to do with common experience. Pure reason deals only with truths independent of the senses. Philosophical presuppositions like this prepared the way for Lessing's axiom at the time of the Enlightenment: "Accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason."

[35]Doll, 113, 140.

[36]Thomas H. Groome maintains that the "enlightenment rationality, with its battle cry of 'dare to think' (Kant), has been turned against itself with a vengeance. So much of the critical literature of the post-Enlightenment era has been a devastating critique of its epistemic paradigm—especially of its naive rationalism, exclusivity, individualism, feigned objectivity, and lack of recognition of its own politics and social interest" ("Religious Knowing: Still Looking for That Tree," *Religious Education* 92 [1997]: 207, 208).

[37]John D. Caputo asks the question: "Do we not require both?" referring to rational certainty and an openness to other aspects of life. He concludes that we need an undecidable fluctuation between institutional and noninstitutional reasoning (*Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987], 229).

[38]Ferdinand E. Deist states that "African" thinking does not give "priority to the idea,

"Common-sense" wisdom was dismissed, and the only knowledge regarded as valid was "scientific" knowledge.[39] John D. Caputo states that to a great extent reason soon came to mean a kind of logic that supports systems of power which are currently in place, whereas irrationality becomes that which is without power.[40] Kant's "pure reason" and the "autonomy of reason" thus need to be regarded as a dangerous abstraction, "for reason is always already embedded in systems of power."[41]

According to Ernst M. Conradie, "post-reformed" theology progressively emphasized the cognitive element of faith.[42] With such an emphasis on knowledge in theology, theology becomes knowledge *about* God and not knowledge *of* God. Scripture is regarded as a compilation of eternal and rationalistic truths about God in the Newtonian mechanistic sense of the word. Within this approach theology is assigned the task of formulating truths in an absolutely meticulous and accurate way. This, however, is often done within an ahistorical context. Theology then falls prey to intellectualism, losing its dynamic moment as a contemporary event.

A post-modern vision questions the rationalistic reading of the Bible that assumed that the texts of the Bible were provided by a pure value-free rationalism. Rationalism enables us, for example, to prescribe either a low view or a high view of Scripture. It does not, in a reflexive way, take serious cognizance that our view of Scripture is predetermined by our presuppositions. *Thus our view* of Scripture is, without any interrogation, regarded as *the biblical view* of Scripture. With the assistance of some or other rationalistic and mechanistic tools we eliminate all the "noises." A post-modern vision sees a rationalistic reading of the Bible as a reductionistic reading that deprives the Bible of its dynamic story of God's salvation and liberation.[43] Thus rationalism reduces the Bible to an "object."

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but to action, not to theory but to practice. Thus an idea cannot be right or wrong in principle or *in abstracto*. It can only be judged once the idea has materialized in a deed, and the deed can only be called right if its outcome is beneficial" ("South-Africanising Biblical Studies: An Epistemological and Hermeneutical Inquiry," *Scriptura* 37 [1991] : 38).

[39]See also Petrus Secundus Dreyer, "Die filosofie van Immanuel Kant en Protestants-teologiese Denkstrukture," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 46 (1990): 589, 592. According to Dreyer, Kant stated that miracles have to be explainable in a rational way; otherwise they cannot be accepted as miracles. He says that Kant changed the Christian religion into a rationalistic philosophical system.

[40]Caputo states that "it is of the essence of the power which institutionalised reason exerts that it is able to define what is out of power as 'irrational'" (229).

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ernst M. Conradie, "Modelle van teologie as handling," *Scriptura* 36 (1990): 15.

[43]In the light of van Peursen's statement that "the most important change in recent

Our senses can no longer be divided in an atomistic way. Modernistic scholars often divorce the will from feelings, thinking that Christian people should be "rational" people. Reason alone cannot guide value judgments in an adequate way. Jeff Astley says reason is blind in this area.[44] Reason divorced from emotions is no longer human and thus no longer reasonable.[45] Whereas we need to "reason" about our emotions, reason cannot and must not replace affective and conative modes. Rationality has to be related to cultural, social, and psychological contexts. If it is not, one's own reductionistic context will determine the nature of one's scholarship. Rationality cannot merely consist in intellectual and cognitive consistency, nor be the "fact finding instrument" that David Hume took it to be.

### A Search for Objectivity and Absolute Truth

A *second* important aspect of modernism, and in particular rationalism, is its search for absolute and objective truths.[46] Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* set

philosophy is that 'Rationality' does not function any more as an absolute standard," one may assume that there are no absolute or final rationalistic standards according to which the Bible can be read. See C. A. van Peursen, "Ratio and imaginatio," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 10, no. 3 : 64. It is not, however, suggested that theology can employ an esoteric method. The concept "esoteric" means a method that employs statements of faith that cannot be questioned and further discussed in a theological debate. Thielicke cites: "Die nova oboedentia gibt der Vernuft die Freiheit gegenuber den unwissend von ihr getragenen Diktaturen." See Johan Andre Wolfaardt, *Kerklike konfrontasie oorde* (Groningen: VRB Offsetdrukkerij, 1971), 63.

[44]Jeff Astley argues that sometimes we are at our most Christian "when we do love 'too well,' against all reason and 'despite the evidence.'" Astley concludes that "despite the risk we run of having emotions, including the risk of these emotions being or becoming irrational, we would not be human without them" (*The Philosophy of Christian Religious Education* [Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1994], 228).

[45]Ibid., 232. Astley argues that we should reject the personification of "Reason" as an opponent to "Feeling." They are *both* aspects of our motives.

[46]Van Niekerk argues that "from the medieval period until the 17th century the main experiential ideas of *subiectum* and *obiectum* went through an interesting process. *Subiectum* in that period had to be understood as the topical object of a person's 'thinking and action' and should not be seen as a passive object in the modern sense of the word. . . . Later the notion of an object became the standard designation for *subiectum*." ("Inaugural Lecture," 14). Grenz argues that the Enlightenment project had the assumption that the modern "mind" can determine knowledge in a certain and objective way (4). Tutorial Letter 103/1988 (*Biblical Studies, BSA 302-3*) : 32, 34, states that fundamentalists "maintain that there is such a thing as 'objective truth' and that it is possible to establish it." According to this letter, one of the founders of fundamentalism was Charles H. Hodge, who argued that there is a great distinction between theories and facts. Theories are human constructions and subjective. Facts are of divine origin and thus objective. There is, thus, a clear "distinction between objective and subjective knowledge." The latter is associated with "theories, feelings, experience, practical or superficial knowledge; objective knowledge, on the other hand, rests

a process in motion that created an "objective" world.[47] Richard Rorty maintains that the Western culture has centered itself around this notion of the search for truth and the desire for objectivity. He argues that this tradition ran from the Greek philosophers through the Enlightenment. It has, however, turned away from solidarity to objectivity.[48] With the emerging of the view of the "mind-as-inner-space," science was distracted from the search for wisdom to the quest for knowledge or rationality seen in terms of a correct representation.[49] Tracy describes this modernist view of science as follows: It "found its apex in the positivistic view of science: here, objective, true scientific knowledge is grounded in empirical facts that are uninterpreted, indubitable, and fixed in meaning; theories derived from these facts by induction or deduction are accepted or rejected solely on their ability to survive objective experimentation; finally, science progresses by the gradual accumulation of facts."[50]

Scholars demanding "objectivity" in their research can be associated with a generalized method used in the natural sciences. Van Niekerk states that the British philosopher Alfred Ayer, in *Language, Truth and Logic*, adopted this method: To be scientific meant conforming to the natural sciences. Judged by this criterion, ethics and theology are emotive theories and not scientific. Modernistic scientists saw themselves as researchers who produced exact and unambiguous knowledge, and established absolute truths. The absolute abstraction and reduction of human nature is an example of this kind of reasoning and an important characterization of modernism.[51]

Post-modern scholars maintain that the highest ideal for modernistic academics, namely to be objective, is created by default. Being influenced by the Cartesian understanding of objectivity, they have confused this so-

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on facts, proof, logic and reason." See also A Megill, ed., *Rethinking Objectivity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press). This collection presents two kinds of attacks on the old meaning of objectivity: (1) Objectivity has been used and is being used as a cover by the powerful, who are imposing their interest on others; (2) objectivity needs to be redefined in terms of intersubjectivity.

[47]Van Niekerk, "Inaugural Lecture," 5.

[48]Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity," in *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, ed. Lawrence E. Cahoone (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 573-588.

[49]J. G. Allen, "Rationality, Relativism, and Rorty," *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Wysbegeerte* 11, no. 3 (1992): 53.

[50]David Tracey, cited in Van Huyssteen, 569.

[51]Modernism described the "absolute subject" as one who "thinks therefore he is"; "produces therefore she is"; "I have a certain gender"; or "I have a certain pigmentation," therefore I am. In this regard see van Niekerk, "Postmodern Theology," 5.

called objectivity with relative consensus about matters.[52] This is done not only by supplying so-called proofs from the Bible or from "suitable" empirical research, but also by what Jacques Derrida would designate as "logocentrism."[53] Scholars try to bypass the figurative "nature" of language and are "longing for presence," hoping to find a privileged position outside language. This will ensure them a position of fixed meanings and a view of reason as a universal norm of understanding.[54]

### Conservative and Liberal Presuppositions: An Objective And Absolute Reading of the Biblical Text?

Both "confessional" (conservative) and "liberal" scholars, sailing in the same modernistic boat, are seeking for an objective reading of the biblical text[55] by adhering to the modernistic communication paradigm, which at times makes "religious dialogue . . . often little more than a contest to demonstrate 'We're right.'"[56] Tracy maintains that when there is a problem of correlating *theos* and *logos*, theology becomes obsessed with finding exactly the "right method" and the "irrefutable modern rational argument" for understanding and even perhaps for controlling God.[57]

Confessional scholars, on the one hand, often protest against any information that does not suit their *status quo*; on the other hand, they are in accordance with the basic points of departure of the modernistic paradigm. Fundamentalists, with an irrational rationality and an *ad hoc* incorporation of a metaphysics of understanding, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the verbal

[52]Rorty states that "such institutional backups for beliefs take the form of bureaucrats and policemen, not of 'rules of language' and 'criteria of rationality'" (579).

[53]See J. Degenaar, "Deconstruction—The Celebration of Language," in *The Reader and Beyond*, ed. B. Lategan (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 1992), 196.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Rorty maintains that "we are the heirs of this objectivist tradition, which centers around the assumption that we must step outside our community long enough to examine it in the light of something which transcends it, namely, that which it has in common with every other actual and possible human community" (574-575). Van Niekerk states: "Modern literary criticism, historical criticism and fundamentalist reading of 'sacred' texts like the Bible all sail in the same boat" ("Postmodern Theology," 8). See also Nancey Murphy, "Postmodern Non-relativism: Imre Lakatos, Theo Meyering, and Alasdair MacIntyre," *The Philosophical Forum* 27, no. 1 (1995): 30. However, before the reader objects to this categorizing of modernistic theologians, I hasten to point out that whereas many modernistic scholars can be characterized by these positions, others have reacted against them, but in ways that share many of the presuppositions of their modernistic times.

[56]C. Mechert, "Pluralistic Education in a Postmodern World," *Religious Education* 90 (1995): 346.

[57]Tracy, 37.

inspiration of the Bible, and with such tools as the grammatical-historical method, or the *dicta probantia* method, believe that the Bible *per se* supplies them with "proofs" and absolute "biblical" statements.

"Liberal" scholars, on the other hand, most often accommodate the so-called scientific approach and use "scientific"tools and positivistic methods, such as the historical-critical method, to interpret the Scriptures and to determine what the Bible "really says."[58]

A post-modern vision takes serious cognizance of Jürgen Habermas' point of view that all knowledge is motivated and mediated by "human interests."[59] Even the knowledge of the natural sciences reflects the interests and voices that are controlled by the production of such knowledge.[60] According to Habermas, the statement "Science has proven," which is expected to end all argument, should be answered by the question, "From whose perspective and to serve what interest?"[61] "Scientific explanations and concepts are provisional human constructs organizing the natural world; they are not independent of human intellectual capacities, social interactions, and contingencies of history."[62] Post-modernists believe that many of the problems of communication with people and the biblical text come because of the lack of a reflexive approach in theology and thus a failure to take serious cognizance of the role of our "worldviews" and presuppositions.[63]

[58]Edgar V. McKnight states that "the historical-critical 'reduction' of the text is fully satisfying within a world-view which sees meaning in terms of a temporal origin and historical cause-and-effect" ("Can We Make Sense in the Aftermath of Reception Theory?" in *The Reader and Beyond: Theory and Practice in South African Reception Studies*, ed. Bernard C. Lategan (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1992), 269).

[59]For a discussion of Habermas's views on objectivity, see M. Hesse, "Science and Objectivity," in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. J. B. Thompson and D. Held, 98-115.

[60]Doll, 60. According to Doll the holocasut of two world wars has shattered the sweet dreams of reason for a more just and moral society.

[61]Van Niekerk says that Habermas, in Er*kenntnis und Interresse,* identified three knowledge-producing interests: "(i) An interest in control, associated with a positivist self-understanding of the sciences and with the world of work; (ii) an interest in understanding, associated with the hermeneutical sciences and cultural processes; (iii) and an interest in emancipation, associated with the critical sciences and progressive social evolution" ("Critical Theory in the 20th Century" (1996], 4). See also Groome, 209: "Though there can be an emanicipatory interest to our knowing, and much of Habermas' work is about making such interest intentional and self reflective, yet the technical and social sciences are driven by the interest of production, control, and maintenance of the status quo."

[62]Willem B. Drees, "Naturalisms and Religion," *Zygon* 32 (1996): 526.

[63]Albert Wolters, "Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Worldview, Philosophy and Rationality," in *Rationality in the Calvinian tradition*, ed. Hendrik Hart, Johan van der Hoeven, and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 115. See also Ferdinand Deist, "Bybelinterpretasie en ideologiekritiek: 'n Hermeneutiese oefening,"

Challenging absolute and objective points of view, does not assume that there are no "absolutes," as some postmodernists believe, but does challenge pretentious  scholars maintaining a "God's eye view."[64]  No human or "tool" can abstract the contents of the Bible in pure form.[65] To let the Bible as interpreted by us be a  most important pointer to God's Word, God's Action, or God's Love, scholars need to be servants of this Word, this Action, this Story and this Love, acknowledging that their individual understanding of "reality"and the Bible's message is "pictured" in terms of their own thought categories.[66] Not only by interpreting or reinterpreting the Bible do scholars disturb its "content," but by the mere act of "observing" the Bible and putting it in a specific context, they disturb its content.[67] By assuming that they read the Bible in an absolute objective way, scholars are not uplifting but rather minimizing, to say the least, the message of the Bible.[68] The post-modernist view contends that traditional individualistic "objectivistic" epistemology "ignores the intentionality and expressivity of human action and the entire complex process of intersubjective negotiation of meanings. *In short, it disguises as*

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*Theologia Evangelica* 15, no. 2 (1982): 8, 10. Modernistic scholars need to be confronted with Deist's statement, that this approach of surrendering all presuppositions to the text of the Bible cannot be taken. We cannot make any observation if we do not have a frame of reference. Mannheim's statement is thus important: It is not only my enemies' knowledge that tends to be ideological—but all knowledge is socially (and I may add, also culturally) determined and hence ideologically tinged.

[64]Ibid., 577.

[65]Tutorial Letter 103/1988 : 63, reads that the grammatical-historical exegetical method reflected the influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism (see also Mark Ellingsen, "Common Sense Realism: The Cutting Edge of Evangelical Identity," *Dialog* 24 (1985) :199-200). For Reid, who developed Common Sense Realism, objective, nonperspectival observation of a phenomenon is possible. He states that the Scottish Common Sense Realism can be described in relation to three main emphases: (1) Epistemological Common Sense—this is the idea that our perceptions reveal the world very much as it is, (2) Ethical Common Sense, and (3) Methodological Common Sense. The problem that confronts this method is that the "historical" or doctrinal element often determines the meaning of a word.

[66]Deist, 38.

[67]Ibid., 35. Deist states: "The mere act of reading the Bible thus disturbs the Bible itself. Therefore there cannot be something like the eternal, unchanging and certain message of the Bible. To state the message of the Bible means to have conceptualised it first. Conceptualising implies a process of conception (from the father [the Bible] and a mother [the reader]) which leads to the birth of a third 'personality,' different from the father and the mother."

[68]Martin Weber illustrates something of the predicament of the conservative churches. Modernistic scholars believe that there is only one correct position (*Who's Got the Truth? Making Sense out of Five Different Adventist Gospels* [Silver Spring, MD: Home Study International Press, 1994]).

*given a world which has to be continually interpreted.*"[69]

### Binary Oppositions Dictate the
### "Reading" of the Biblical Text

Whereas opposing distinctions are not modern inventions, modernism reduced the possibility of differentiation by constructing *closed* binary oppositions.[70] Western theological tradition became very much constructed on a polar or dyadic foundation: "Christian theology is repeatedly inscribed in binary terms."[71] Modernism does not regard these opposites as equal. These binary oppositions represent a firmly hierarchical two-tier structure, "with one of them—the surface—securely on top, and its deep counterpart as surely in place as the real foundation of what is expressed on the surface."[72] In this regard the "husk-kernel" or "form-content" opposition does not only demonstrate such a search for an objectivistic and a universalistic content of the Bible, but it may also represent a paternalistic attitude.[73] The danger is that in a very subtle way scholars may become imperialistic dictators.[74] Scholars, particularly those from a position of power, always designate and dictate the "core" of the message, whereas others may decide on the "form" and the "husk."[75] This

[69]G. M. Esland, "Teaching and Learning as the Organization of Knowledge," in *Knowledge and Control*, ed. M.F.D. Young (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1971), 75.

[70]Van Niekerk, "Postmodern Theology," 6.

[71]Mark C. Taylor, "Erring: A Postmodern A/theology," in *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence E. Cahoone (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 516.

[72]Van Niekerk states that this modern "two-tier philosophical scheme also functions as the hyphenated inside-outside of human beings and things (mainly since Descartes)." According to Van Niekerk, postmodernity "seriously questions the modern hierarchical relationship, in which the 'surface' of thought or perception is causally linked with the 'depth, meta-, foundational or basic' dimension. In the postmodern differentiation spectrum the modern binary dialectic of essence (depth) and appearance (surface) becomes two or more adjacent surfaces." He concludes: " Should we not scrutinize in each case the constructed experiential continuum that articulates the oppositional points or limiting values of modern societies and accordingly defer any attempt to master the continuum from either structural term?" ("Postmodern Theology," 2).

[73]Van Niekerk argues that one of modernism's tools is the reduction of things to one basic explanatory "essence" ("Postmodern Theology," 1).

[74]Van Niekerk argues that the modernistic binary oppositions brought forth a reductionistic tendency, which in turn brought forth the "value-smitten prioritisation of two opposing values as the be-all and end-all of any episodic ontology" ("Postmodern Theology," 3-4).

[75]Whereas some conservative scholars want to force even their cultural forms onto other cultures, others speak of the adoption of "biblical absolutes" into culture. They are

approach can be taken to indicate that the "core" represents a "pure gospel," which does not really have any implications for the shape of social or cultural life. Max L. Stackhouse came to the conclusion that this division obscures the fact that "various versions of the 'pure gospel' are more contextually influenced than their advocates recognize." He notes how critics of ethnocentrism, sexism, racism, and colonialism as seen in Christianity have often pointed out that what has been propagated in the name of the "pure gospel" seems to correspond to the prejudices of the time, gender, race, and geographical and social location of those who spoke in such spirited terms about the "pure gospel."[76]

## A New Approach to Science and Theology

In philosophy, literature, natural sciences, quantum physics, and recently in theology, new voices are being heard. A paradigm has developed that has adopted a postobjectivistic and postpositivistic position and which demands a new approach to metaphysics, epistemology, and cosmology.[77] Science, in particular quantum physics, has moved beyond Newtonian mechanics and atomism, Cartesian rationalism, and the subject-object bifurcation.[78] Descartes' subject-object dichotomy has been

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aware of the temptation to proclaim the message in another culture without clothing it in the cultural garb of the people. They still believe, however, that there are biblical absolutes for all cultures and ages and that these must be proclaimed. Essential truths are being demarcated by using the kernel and husk (or content and form) approach. Even some more progressive theologians seem to adopt this approach: The church is being warned to distinguish between form and essence, shadow, and substance. Without denying that there may be such biblical absolutes, I would contend that we have not yet fully determined what these absolutes are. From within a different culture we may question these absolutes. Are they absolutes in Western clothing? Should other cultures also have the right to discuss the absoluteness of these biblical absolutes?

[76]Max L. Stackhouse, "Contextualization and Theological Education," *Theological Education* 23 (1986): 71-72. Stackhouse contends that, since the Enlightenment, many attempts have been made to identify the "essence" of Christianity and to distinguish this from "the 'accidents' of social, cultural, linguistic, and historical context." According to Stackhouse, this kernel and husk, (or content and form) approach suggests that there is an ecumenical, orthodox, and context-invariant core to the Christian faith. This core has the potential to enter "into, refine, affirm, and give normative guidance to all sorts of 'accidental' contexts around the globe." Stackhouse concludes that these distinctions are too sharp.

[77]Doll states that the linear, sequential, and easily quantifiable ordering system that dominates education today is giving way to a more complex system of network that is more pluralistic in nature (3).

[78]J. Mouton, A. G. van Aarde, and W. S. Vorster, *Paradigms and Progress in Theology* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1988), 226. Lines said: "The classical science worldview was mechanistic in analogy, reductionistic in method, disciplinary in research,

replaced by a subject-subject networking approach, and atomism by an interrelatedness of things.[79]

Postmodernism has, in spite of its new forms of reductionism, opened up some important issues that cannot be too easily ignored by theology. Instead of rationality, the importance of language and its deconstruction has been introduced.[80] The seeking of knowledge and the search for so-called truth do not exclude the politics of power. Instead of seeking "objective" truths, post-modernists are challenged to cooperate in constructing, in an episodic way, dynamic intersubjective moments of faith.

## *From Atomism to Wholism and Networking[81]*

Newtonian mechanics introduced an atomistic worldview. Toulmin states, "from the time of the Renaissance on . . . the chief intellectual instrument—and virtue—of scientific work was, precisely, its single-minded preoccupation with the specific, narrowly defined questions proper to particular scientific disciplines."[82] This modernistic reductionism has, particularly, given a privileged position to the mind.

In contrast with modernism, post-modernity has a thirst for a renewal of the sense of the whole.[83] Humans "know" the world to some extent, but

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deterministic in outlook, static in perception, entropic in direction, dualistic in practice, and positivistic in determination of truth." According to the theory of relativity, the Newtonian instruments of measure, such as mass and length, are relative to a particular observer. They may be altered by one's frame of reference and are thus not absolutely quantifiable. Nancey Murphy states that whereas modernism was characterized by a foundationalism in epistemology, referentialism in philosophy, and atomism in metaphysics, postmodern philosophy is characterized by wholism, a use of language instead of reference and antireductionism ("Postmodern Non-relativism: Imre Lakatos, Theo Meyering, and Alasdair MacIntyre," *The Philosophical Forum* 27 no. 1 (1995), 38-40).

[79]Doll, 29. Newton believed that individual atoms form the ultimate "building blocks" of nature. These autonomous units touch each other in a mechanistic way, but each operates independently.

[80]For a differentiated critique on postmodernism see J. D. Caputo, *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligations with Constant Reference to Deconstruction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

[81]Networking aspires to make progress beyond a holistic approach. Although certain properties are not denied by networking, it rather emphasizes the so-called "lines-of-flight," crisscrossing the properties. See in this regard D.P. Goosen, "Inter-disciplinary Studies: An Apology for Nomadism," lecture given at the meeting of the Faculty of Theology and Science of Religion, 30 August, 1995, 1.

[82]Toulmin, 229.

[83]Ted Peters, "David Bohm, Postmodernism, and the Divine," *Zygon* 20 (1985): 193. According to Peters, Bohm's thirst for wholeness is founded upon the reason that in the

they know it through feelings and strivings, as well as through sense impressions and thinking. This would mean that the scholar consists of the whole human being "where the cognitive, volitional and affective interact."[84] The affective, cognitive, aesthetic, the personal and social, the spiritual and the ethical, human corporeality and sexuality, memory, and imagination, yes, every aspect should be valued as a source of knowing and wisdom. Along these lines, P. Cilliers argues that the self needs to be understood from the perspective of a "'fabric' of relations, a node in a network." We are not atomistic units standing for ourselves or by ourselves; neither can we throw away everything that does not fit into our reductionistic scheme.[85]

The network of relationships is important to the post-modernist for at least two reasons: First, scholars should take note, in a reflexive way, of all exclusions and the overabundance of "oppressions at work in the production of knowledge" and should without constraint be committed to real "democracy in the production of knowledge."[86] The "subject" (scholar, researcher) does not manipulate the "object," but the community of knowers and searchers are marked by conversation, dialogue, and reflexive thinking. Instead of an "objective-subjective" position, post-modernists urge a relational position. "The relational aspect is not only among the knowers but also between the knower and the known. Instead of the subject standing 'over against' to 'master' the object by knowing it through non-engaged objectivity, there needs to be a relationship between them that brings both knower and known to question each other."[87] Second, post-modernists contend that scholars cannot be engaged in theological thinking in isolation, analyzing something objectively. Whole people, not only from every nation, tribe, and language, but also from every discipline and status, need to communicate and reflect in a reflexive way.

In this regard, Habermas, with his "ideal speech situation," argues that our community and "life-world" have been overwhelmed by the "steering media" of money and power.[88] Technical rationality (*Zweckrational*) must

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world of Newton and Descartes there is a fragmentation, a void of wholistic thinking. Grenz states that postmodernity's emphasis on holism is related to the rejection of the assumption of the Enlightenment, namely, that truth is certain and purely rational. It refuses to limit truth to its rational dimension (7).

[84]McKnight, 275.

[85]Cilliers, 127.

[86]Groome, 212.

[87]Ibid., 213.

[88]Jürgen Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action*, with its more than 800 pages of serious philosophical reading, has made a significant contribution toward the theory of

be counterposed to practical rationality (reaching understanding) and emancipatory rationality (self-reflection and emancipation from oppression by systems). Communicative action must be differentiated from technological rationality, from the types of social action and nonsocial action that are oriented to "success" and to the achievement of ends and goals. For Habermas, understanding (*Verständigung*) is to bring about an agreement (*Einverständnis*) that leads to a reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, and mutual trust. The ultimate objective of this is to come to an understanding with another person.[89] Scholars can no longer be entangled by a *monological* perspective of the philosophy of the subject. Rather, post-modernists view the speaker and hearer as participating in a *mutual* reciprocal relationship, with communicative action being intrinsically *dialogical.* Habermas thus wanted to overcome the bifurcation between sender and receiver. Rationality is not achieved from a transcendental perspective, but is practically constituted by people engaged in communication free from constraint and coercion. To resolve a breakdown in communication, one moves to a level of discourse and argumentation where they, through the "force of the better argument, reach a consensus."[90] A conversation that can be regarded as "unlimited" is designated by Habermas as an ideal speech situation in which people are, in principle, able to participate

communication (2 vols., trans. Thomas McCarthy [Boston: Beacon, 1984-1987]. Habermas argues that the Enlightenment project, and in particular the idea of universal morality and critical reason, has provided important gains. We cannot abandon them, but need to dedicate ourselves to a "radical enlightenment." The enlightenment is incomplete, but not "dead." Mumby believes that in Habermas the modernist project is once again linked with an emancipatory logic (D. K. Mumby, "Modernism, Postmodernism, and Communication Studies: A Rereading of an Ongoing Debate," *Communication Theory* 7 [1997]: 10). Strauss contends that the freedom of intellectual emancipation needs to be extended to all spheres of life. Modernity has colonized the lifeworld by the system and has thus failed to radicalize the emancipation of the Enlightenment. Through his critique of the Cartesian legacy and the reconstruction of social theory, Habermas developed a linguistic model of communicative understanding. Habermas's philosophy culminates ultimately in his analyses of communicative action (D.F.M. Strauss, "'n Wysgerige perspektief op die twintigste eeu teen die agtergrond van die voorafgaande eeuwendinge," *Tydskrif vir Christelike Wetenskap* 30 [1994]: 12). "Verstehen ist kommunikative Erfahrung" for Habermas (Jürgen Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse* [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970], 227). He believes that his theory of communicative action can win back the control of the "lifeworld." Terrence W. Tilley, "Toward a Theology of the Practice of Communicative Action," in *Postmodern Theologies: The Challenge of Religious Diversity*, ed. Terrence W. Tilley (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 9.

[89]For a critique of consensus see N. Rescher, *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

[90]P. Duvenage, "Die kritiese teorie as 'n filosofiese perspektief op die twintigste eeu," *Tydskrif vir Christelike Wetenskap* 30 (1994) : 49.

without domination.[91] In resolving disputes, even the better argument must be open to a rational debate. One can conclude that Habermas is defending a strong "cognitivist" position. His "ideal speech situation," however, may be, at the most, regarded as a late modern approach still following the "conduit metaphor." This conduit metaphor eliminates all "noises"—and regards them as disturbances that distort communication between person and person or between text and person.[92]

From a neopragmatist perspective, Rorty argues that foundationalism conceptions of rationality destroy conversation.[93] According to him, foundationalism imposes restrictions on reason and forces it to an end.[94] The notion of contingency is important as it sustains and encourages conversation. Conversation is characterized by an *absence* of issues, such as fixed goals, lists of acceptable topics, hierarchies of membership. In our conversation different "universes" of communication meet. The plurality of voices and the practices they represent need to be protected against all attempts of "closure."[95] Foundationalism seriously inhibits such a conversation and thus retards thought, "which is always set in motion by the encounter with strangeness."[96] A serious problem is Rorty's refusal to introduce any external values and criteria within this discourse.

Modern discourse, according to Jean-Francois Lyotard, has made itself legitimate by appealing to a coherent metanarrative that performed a general unifying function. Postmodernism rather wishes to introduce a multiplicity of discourses and many "language games." They are not externally legitimate but rather locally justified. Lyotard argues for smaller and more numerous stories that function well within their own contexts. In this regard Cilliers accuses, by implication, conservative

[91]Tilley, 11.

[92]Van Niekerk states that Habermas's conduit metaphor is a "sealed communicative pipeline from person to person or a multiplicity of individual pipelines between this person and the next one." According to the conduit metaphor of reading, a text must have the "least intrusions, distortions, interferences and misprints to 'prove' that it is the purest and thus the correct interpretation." This conduit metaphor is still based on the Claude Shannon information theory ("Postmodern Theology," 8, 9).

[93]M. Peters, "Techno-science, Rationality, and the University: Lyotard on the 'Postmodern Condition,'" *Educational Theory* 39 (1989): 97, 99. According to Peters, Rorty argues for a position termed "epistemological behaviorism." It explains what society allows us to say, rather than what we say.

[94]Allen, 54.

[95]Ibid., 54.

[96]See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 9; Allen, 54.

theologies, which have developed a nostalgia for grand metanarratives that unify. This is a dream of Western metaphysics that experiences the postmodern condition as fragmented, characterized by anarchy, and thus meaningless. This is not a relativizing of knowledge, not an "anything-goes" situation.[97] Lyotard's "connectionist" model is not based on Newtonian atomism, but the self is understood in terms of a "fabric of relationships," a "node in a network." Everyone is always involved through a network of relations with others, this has importance for and influence on the total discourse.

Modernistic discourses, and even some postmodernistic discourses, focus onesidedly on communication as a rational and logical discourse. A post-modern vision seeks both to communicate (rationally) and to have believing, affecting, and imagining aspects which encounter each other's stories as well as God's Story.

### The Post-modern Scientist: A Participant[98]

R. Sassower claims that modern scientists have viewed themselves as "spectators," whereas post-modern scientists regard themselves as "participants" in the study of this world.[99] From the year 1600 onward science and philosophy pursued "'rational objectivity' of a kind that could be arrived at only by a *detached and reflective* observer."[100] Thus for Pierre Simon, Marquis de Laplace, the scientist must observe, analyze, describe, and comment on phenomena ("objects!") without being drawn into them. The human mind must observe the world, but always from outside. This encouraged a particular psychological attitude, the investigation of specialized science from a detached viewpoint. It has been "natural" for the scientist to work from a psychological distance. In describing the modernistic scientist, Toulmin states, "Too much emotional involvement with his subject matter will not do the investigator's scientific work good:

[97]Cilliers, 127.

[98]Grenz states: "In rejecting the modern assumption of the objectivity of knowledge postmoderns also reject the Enlightenment ideal of the dispassionate, autonomous knower. . . . The postmodern worldview operates with a community-based understanding of truth" (8). Rorty maintains that Plato developed the idea of the intellectual, who is one, and is in touch in an immediate way with the nature of things. This produces the idea that rational inquiry should "make visible a realm to which non-intellectuals have little access" ("Solidarity or Objectivity," 574).

[99]R. Sassower, "Postmodernism and Philosophy of Science. A Critical Engagement," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 23 (1993): 434.

[100]Toulmin, 238.

warm hearts rarely go with cool heads."[101]  This called for a second kind of abstraction. Just as the different disciplines were studied in abstraction from one another, so too, the modernistic scientist needed to approach his or her problem with a "cool" intellectual spirit. If the problem cannot be studied in abstraction from all interests and  personal concerns, modernists fear that research may be clouded and biased by other, nonscientific preoccupations. Toulmin concludes that modernistic disciplinary abstraction within the "sciences has brought in its train, also, a certain personal abstraction within the minds of working scientists."[102] New scientific developments in the twentieth century reject any assumption that scientists have to adopt a fully detached attitude. Scientists can no longer be spectators: The "scientist as spectator is dead. . . . Laplace's ideal of the Omniscient Calculator has failed us, even in the purest and most fundamental parts of physics." Toulmin states that to insist on subordinating "human" disciplines to the methodology of modernism is to make "the rational objectivity of the intellectual spectator into an idol."[103] Within the new paradigm scientists become agents and servants rather than merely critical observers.[104] A post-modern theology cannot separate practical and theoretical issues, so-called facts and values, cognition and action. The distinction between experts and "lay" persons cannot be seen in terms of a hierarchically-structured opposition. It needs to be differentiated on a continuum in terms of more or fewer "readings" of a text. The only difference between a lay and an expert reader of a text is, then, that the expert reader may have more arrangements of different tools and signs of the text than the layperson.[105] A post-modern approach should thus be far more cautious about its "study-room-scientific" theories. C. W. du Toit's statement, that people's wisdom is a far safer guide than our scientific theories, should be a challenge to scholars in the new millennium to be far better "listeners" to and co-searchers of wisdom.[106]

[101]Ibid.,  231, 240-243.

[102]Ibid.,  231.

[103]Ibid.,  252-253.

[104]Toulmin states that "far from being free to sit in the stands and watch the action with official detachment, like the original *theori* at the classical Greek games, scientists today find themselves down in the dust of the arena, deeply involved in the actual proceedings" (252).

[105]Van Niekerk, "Postmodern Theology," 12, 13.

[106]C. W. du Toit, *Navorsing en waarheid? Aanpassings in die sistematiese teologie in die lig van veranderde kontekste* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1995), 4.

## Wisdom as Truth Rather Than
## Cognitive and Objective Truths

Rorty states that Western culture and tradition focus on the notion of the search for truth. This is the clearest example of where one is turning away from solidarity to objectivity in order to make sense of one's existence. The idea of "truth as something to be pursued for its own sake, not because it will be good for oneself, or for one's real or imaginary community, is the central theme of this tradition."[107] In conservative denominations the unshakable belief in truth, even truth as cognitive truth *per se*, stands out. Most often this search for truth is based on a positivistic approach: These truths can be "proved" either by empirical research or by biblical texts.[108] It is also assumed that these "truths" will protect against relativism.[109]

More and more scholars believe that much of our knowledge has not been "for good" but "for evil" and is inclined to be dehumanizing. They regard the dominant epistemology of the West as violent, elitist, and exclusive. It is naive about its own context, and follows a technical rationality without sound ethical norms; it is exclusive and privatized and is "working hand-in-glove with our worst oppressions and most repressive powers."[110] Many scholars have constructed their theologies to a large extent on the possibility of an "absolute truth."[111] This has to a large

[107]Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity," 574.

[108]Fundamentalist absolutism stems from the Philosophy of Scottish Common Sense Realism. The Bible is seen as a reservoir of facts that can afford us with an objective perspective on the world (Tutorial Letter 103/1988, 42).

[109]Astley says that we must distinguish between the debate about relativism and the issues of relativity. The philosophers of the Enlightenment appealed to an abstracted and culture-free notion of rationality (257). Runzo distinguishes between different types of relativistic theses. He defines "relativism" as "any epistemological position which holds or entails that the correctness or incorrectness of judgement about matters of truth or value varies with which individual, or set of individuals . . . is making judgements." Runzo describes this position as cognitive relativism, making a distinction within cognitive relativism between "socially-defined conceptual relativism and an individualistic subjectivism." He also distinguishes between cognitive relativism and epistemological relativism, and between cognitive relativism and value relativism. Astley also discusses the objections to relativism, *inter alia*, the "self-stultifying" argument—relativism destroying itself. The everyday criticism against relativism is that it leads to skepticism and moral anarchy and can result in absurd claims (*Reason, Relativism and God* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986]).

[110]Groome, 205.

[111]Scholars within the modern paradigm cannot help falling prey to the search for objective truths. From my perspective, Ellen G. White does not put the same emphasis on truth as absolute objective truth. She speaks of "God's truth," "eternal truth," "Bible truth," "sacred truth," "the truth as it is in Jesus," "present truth," etc. She does not, however, seem to state that

extent become a search for cognitive and dogmatic truth. This "truth" is not only determined by rationalism, instrumentalism, and mechanism; but it is also often emptied of love, integrity, commitment, and solidarity.

The twentieth century has witnessed the triumph and decline of the notion of truth defined by a mechanistic and reductionistic worldview. Even the natural sciences, the so-called exact disciplines, are now regarded as relative projects, influenced to a large extent by social ideologies and attitudes.[112] According to du Toit, we cannot construct theological pointers without seeking "truth." These cannot, however, be absolute "truths," but only "important truths." Rorty does not argue that there is no such thing as truth, but proposes that we should drop the idea of truth as somewhere out there waiting to be discovered. He states: "It is to say that our purposes would be served best by ceasing to see truth as a deep matter, as a topic of philosophical interest, or 'true' as a term which repays 'analysis.'"[113] E. McKnight urges us to speak of "truthfulness" rather than truth. He points that we no longer arrive at a "truth" over against us, but at "truth which touches us."[114] Truth demands truthfulness.[115] Truth is not a metaphysical phenomenon; it is influenced by time, culture, tradition, language, and society.[116]

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truth is final, absolute, and mechanistic, nor that it cannot further open up its rich and dynamic dimensions to us. Truth, then, is certainly not cognitive knowledge. In the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* she states: "The disciples were put in close connection with eternal, essential truth; for it was laid open to their understanding; but they failed to comprehend it in its fullness, and although the living oracles are in our hands, although we have some understanding of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments, there is much that even in our day we do not see and comprehend" (15 November 1892). White's designation of truth as present truth seems to me a viable option that can help us to move beyond mechanistic and static perceptions of truth. It may also prevent us from falling into the trap of relativism.

[112]See C. W. du Toit, "The End of Truth," in *New Modes of Thinking on the Eve of a New Century: South African Perspectives*, 33.

[113]Richard Rorty maintains that Nietzche has caused confusion by moving from "truth is not a matter of correspondence to reality" to "what we call 'truths' are just lies." He says that the same confusion is sometimes found in Derrida's statement that "there is no reality as the metaphysicians have hoped to find." Such confusions make Nietzsche and Derrida liable to charges of self-referential inconsistency—claiming to know what they themselves claim cannot be known ("From the Contingency of Language," in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. Patricia Waugh [London: Edward Arnold, 1994], 174).

[114]McKnight, 276.

[115]Stanley Hauerwas, "Why the Truth Demands Truthfulness: An Imperious Engagement with Hart," in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 303-310.

[116]Du Toit, *Navorsing en waarheid? Aanpassings in die sistematiese teologie in die lig van veranderde kontekste*, 7.

It may be a fruitful endeavor to experiment with Groome's wisdom metaphor instead of the truth metaphor. Groome maintains that wisdom is more wholistic and historically-grounded concept than cognition and knowledge. Wisdom refers to our identity and "agency" in the world. Therefore, wise people will not only have knowledge of one kind or another, "but far beyond that, such people are wise in their very being, and this includes their thoughts, desires, and choices."[117] The wisdom metaphor seems to be also more in keeping with the biblical tradition.[118] It may help us to transcend the limitations of Western epistemology, because it has included and moved beyond mere knowledge to an epistemology based on care rather than on rational certainty, an epistemology based on solidarity rather than objectivity.[119]

Instead of relying on rationalism and empiricism to supply scholars with absolute and objective certainties, faith ensured the certainty of conviction. Faith, however, was progressively given a rationalistic content, and later reason was divorced from faith, resulting in a divorce of "reasonable" religion from experience. Louis Dupré and Jacqueline Mariña maintain that Kant's philosophy has introduced the end of reasonable deductions about the existence of God.[120] Kant, in *Critique of Pure Reason,* stated that he "found it necessary to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith."[121]

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[117]Groome, 216.

[118]Ibid., 216-218. According to Groome, " wisdom's locus was always the *leb*." Although this term is often translated as "heart," it in fact refers to the very "core" of a person (Eccl 10:3). The *leb* is the intellectual source of thought and reflection (Isa 6:10), the center of affections (Ps 4:7), and the seat of volition and conscience (1 Sam 24:5). Thus, biblical wisdom, which is situated in the *leb,* pertains to one's head, heart, and hands. In the post-Exilic period, the emphasis is on wisdom as an ethical response to God's revelation and law. Wisdom is a gift of God, but it brings responsibility to so live (Job 28). Wise people do God's will, and they especially promote justice, compassion, and peace (Prov 2). Groome says that a focus on wisdom "would encourage our enterprise to be ontic, to be wholistic and wholesome, to be humanizing and life-giving, to be inclusive."

[119]Rorty maintains that "people seeking for solidarity are seeing the gap between truth and justification . . . simply as the gap between the actual good and the possible better. From a pragmatist point of view, to say that what is rational for us now to believe may not be true, is simply to say that somebody may come up with a better idea. It is to say that there is always room for improved belief, since new evidence for new hypotheses, or a whole new vocabulary, may come along. For a pragmatist, the desire for objectivity is not the desire to escape the limitations of one's community, but simply the desire for as much intersubjective agreement as possible, the desire to extend the reference of 'us' as far as we can" ("Solidarity or Objectivity," 575).

[120]Louis Dupré and Jacqueline Mariña, "The Concept of Faith in Philosophy," in *Handbook of Faith*, ed. J. M. Lee (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1990), 65.

[121]Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929), 29.

## Differentiation Instead of a
## Critical Approach

Post-modern scholarship is questioning the modernistic hierarchical oppositions, *inter alia* of the "surface" and "depth" dimensions of "things." Dualisms such as subject/object, thought/emotion, scientific/common are distorted forms of knowledge. Although post-modernity wants to exceed the conceptual binary oppositions of modernism, it wishes to keep the products of these myriad reductions and scrutinize the experiential "continuum" that articulates these opposing points. From a differentiated point of view these modern binary oppositions of "essence" (depth) and "appearance" (surface) become adjacent surfaces. In this regard Jacques Derrida's "*différance*" is helpful.[122] Instead of tolerating these oppositions Derrida focuses on difference, the space between two oppositions. He wishes "to see what indicates that each of the two terms must appear as the *différance* of the other: the one as the difference of the other, deferred or delayed in the economy of the same continuum."[123] This shows the need for differentiation rather than a traditional critical approach.

## A Post-modernism Vision: Pointers
## Instead of Pillars

J. Wentzel van Huyssteen states that both modernism and postmodernism have been unable to come to terms with the issue of rationality. He thus proposes a postfoundationalist position over against the so-called objectivism of foundationalism and the extreme relativism of nonfoundationalism. Postfoundationalism wishes to fully acknowledge the context, the epistemical role of interpreted experience and tradition and its "shaping of epistemic and non-epistemic values that inform our reflection about both God and the world." A postfoundational position, however, also needs to challenge rationalism, foundationalism, and progress beyond the local

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[122]See in this regard John D. Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 96-105. Degenaar maintains that the "word *différance* is derived from the term *différer* which means both to differ and to defer, postpone and delay. . . . It designates three aspects of writing: a 'passive' difference which has already been made and available to the subject; and [an] act of differing which produces differences; and an act of deferring which refers to the provisionality of distinctions and to the fact that the use of language entails the interminable interrelationships in signs." According to Derrida, "'*Différance*' is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing (espacement) by which elements relate to one another" ("Deconstruction—The Celebration of Language," 197-198).

[123]Van Niekerk, "Postmodern Theology," 3.

community and its culture.[124] M. Serres argues that beneath a phenomenon and the information that we have of it, there is an infinite possibility and multiplicity that cause us to conclude that "what is knowable and what is known are born of the unknown."[125] In this regard it is also imperative to take cognizance of Cilliers' statement, that postmodernism is inherently sensitive to complexity. He argues that the price we pay for this sensitivity is high in terms of a conventional approach, because it means abandoning the search for universal criteria of truth and judgment. This may cause a feeling of loss, but the nostalgia for absolute criteria has kept us from being involved with our world in a responsible way.[126] For conservative theology it will be even harder to take cognizance of the "chaos theory."[127] This theory has moved beyond logical positivism and critical rationalism (to verify or to falsify) and Newtonian mechanism, and is in search of a new epistemology and a postcritical philosophy. The chaos theory has demonstrated that things are far more complex than "Scottish Common Sense Realism" pretends them to be.[128] Newtonian science handled chaos in our world by inserting the order

[124]Van Huyssteen, 580-581. Whereas in modernism the stereotypical ways of relating theology and science need to be replaced, Van Huyssteen argues that postmodernist pluralism makes it almost impossible even to speak about theology, religion, and rationality. Charles Scriven maintains that the foundational ideas cannot be fully secured beyond question (Nancey Murphy, "Schooling for the Tournament of Narratives: Postmodernism and the Idea of the Christian College," in *Theology without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey Murphy, and Mark Nation [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994], 281).

[125]M. Serres, "Noise," *Substance* 12 (1983) : 54.

[126]Cilliers states that in dealing with complex systems we cannot use traditional analytical approaches, because the "nature" of such systems as the human brain, language, and society is "determined" by many elements that interact in dynamic and nonlinear ways (124).

[127]James Gleick, *The Making of a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987). Three scientists stand out as the pioneers of chaos theory: Edward Lorenz, Benoit Mandelbrot, and Mitchell Feigenbaum; see also F. LeRon Shults, "A Theology of Chaos: An Experiment in Postmodern Theological Science," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45 (1992): 223-235; A. Gerhard van Wyk, "Methodological Challenges Facing Seventh-day Adventist Theology in the Year 2000: A Practical-theological Perspective," paper read at the *SEDATA Annual Meeting*, Helderberg College, 13 October 1996, 1-14. Many of the proponents of the chaos theory claim that it is the third great scientific revolution of the twentieth century, coming after quantum theory and Einstein's theory of relativity, which dissolved the Newtonian dogma of absolute space and time. The chaos theory has eradicated Laplace's illusion of deterministic predictability. Shults says that while "relativity describes the macroscopic and quantum theory, the microscopic view of nature, the theory of chaos applies to the study of objects on a human scale, to the world we experience with our senses every day." Chaotic behavior has been discovered in systems such as the orbit of planets (Pluto), the rhythm of hearts (healthy hearts show sometimes more variability than sick ones), and the neural activity of the brain.

[128]Shults concludes that although chaos seems to permeate our universe, our theology

and control of God, but where irregularity prevailed led to a "God of the gaps." Modernistic empirical scientists explained these irregularities with their positivistic approach until finally they stated with Laplace, "God was no longer needed." New science has determined, however, that this world cannot be explained by its own intrinsic order—our universe is indeed contingent.[129]

These developments are challenging conservative theologies to replace the modernistic metaphor of "pillars of truth" and to speak rather of an episodic "pointer system."[130] This is not to limit the importance of beliefs, but to move beyond Newtonian mechanics and to provide it with far greater potential.

### A "Toolmaker's" Metaphor?

Van Niekerk maintains that the difference between a modernistic and a post-modern approach can be found in the difference between the conduit metaphor and the "toolmaker's" paradigm.[131] He states that in contrast with the conduit metaphor, in the "toolmaker's" metaphor we have "an immense workplace filled with tools which serve as units of communicative transference both between people and between texts and people."[132] A reading scope is constituted between text and context which provides ample tools, such as cultural signs and pointers, words and concepts, meanings and ideas, products and physical phenomena. This entails a complex relationship between text and reader, but it does not matter, as there can be no success without effort. It does not aspire to "the correct interpretation," but rather to

can still be a theology of hope. Out of this chaos "God's redemptive order will emerge on a higher level and will ultimately be consumed in the eschatological fulfilment of a new heaven and a new earth" (233).

[129]Tracy maintains that postmodernity's attack on the self-confidence of modernity provided a new opportunity for "serious contemporary thought on God. . . . Indeed, postmodernity tends to be suspicious of almost all traditional and modern arguments on the existence of God, all attempts to fit God's reality into a modern horizon of intelligibility, all of the famous 'isms' for God, from deism and theism through panentheism" (42-43).

[130]Van Niekerk, "Postmodern Theology," 3. These pointers may give access to infinite differentiation, but they are "under construction for the 'duration' of a debate, the 'duration' of the composition of an essay, the 'duration' of reading a text."

[131]For a discussion of the conduit metaphor see van Niekerk, "Postmodern Theology," 8-9. Although the conduit metaphor made communication possible between sender/receiver and *vice versa*, the one-way traffic stayed in place. Only *one* correct reading of a text is possible. See also M. J. Reddy, "The Conduit Metaphor—A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language about Language," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 284-324.

[132]Van Niekerk, "Postmodern Theology," 13.

a "good interpretation" for a particular purpose.[133]

## Conclusion: A New Vision of Science and
## Scholarship as "Servanthood"

Modernism opts for a leveling of differences, whereas a post-modern vision prefers a networking negotiation of differences. The "antagonism of identity" needs to be replaced by the "agonism of difference."[134] The principle of the negotiation of differences is imperative. Modernistic discourse privileges a Western rationality, while a post-modern vision wishes to explore the significance of different lifestyles and perspectives and thus warns against imperialism.

The modernistic scholar may be regarded as a "divine overseer" in the sense of the Platonic-divine *Theoros*. He or she knows what everyone is believing, thinking, imagining, and feeling. He or she is the "subject" that knows the "object" in an absolute and objective way. Post-modernists, in contrast, ask: Should we not rather seek for truth and wisdom as solving a crossword puzzle instead of problem-solving in terms of a critical rationalistic approach?[135] The post-modern scholar can be regarded as one who is a participant in seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and doing with others of his or her society while negotiating, confronting, fragmenting, linking, and accommodating other discourses episodically.[136] This seems to indicate that within a post-modern paradigm the role and task of the scholar are going to change radically.

Instead of being informers about objective facts, post-modernists hope that scholars will become more like servants, more like listeners. They will overcome the dichotomy that Kant forged between practical and theoretical reason and consequently between ethics and science. Scholars will become conscious about the political power of knowledge. The binary oppositions such as male/female, mind/body, subject/object, thought/emotion, scientific/common, husk/kernel are hierarchically positioned, favoring the former over the latter. These distorted forms of knowledge can be destructive for all, even for those in power.

Post-modernists envision that the relations between scholars, students, and laypeople will change. Their goal is to have less a knowing

[133]Ibid.

[134]Degenaar, *The Collapse of Unity*, 19. Antagonism forces one to conquer, while agonism wishes to accept, challenge, and accommodate others' differing perspectives.

[135]See Nancey Murphy, "Truth, Relativism, and Crossword Puzzles," *Zygon* 24 (1989): 299-314.

[136]Van Niekerk, "Inaugural Lecture," 38.

scholar informing others, but one who will interact in mutual exploration of relevant issues. Authority will then shift from an external to a communal and dialogue sphere. This movement will focus more on the process and on emerging patterns than on the course run, without splitting this process nor the course in a dichotomous way. Within the machine-orientated paradigm the scholar was the driver and the students the audience, at best. At worst, the passengers are the objects being driven. The students or "priesthood of believers" cannot be removed from a meaningful interaction with the scholar.

Post-modernists envision that scholars will become people who are listening to the experience of the total ecosystem, its wonder, its silence, its voices, its songs, its hopes, its pains, its visions, and missions. The scholar as servant will not in the first instance focus on dualistic and mechanistic rules and regulations to make absolute statements. Scholars will be guided by an epistemology based on an ethic of care and will construct knowledge that is humanizing and able to touch every aspect of people's lives.