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INSIDE OUT APOLOGETICS: ENGAGING CHRISTIAN AND POSTMODERN
APPROACHES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The current decline in performance and effectiveness of higher education makes it necessary to re-evaluate the teaching foundation on the theology of human nature that college professors hold. Since their foundation determines the approach that defines them as teachers, their pedagogy, and their curriculum, it is essential to consider two approaches. One of them is the transcendent approach of the Christian faith that defines *human beings* as lovers, believers, and thinkers. The other approach is the autonomist postmodern approach which defines *human beings* as social constructs. Since the college professor's approach to human nature affects students' learning outcomes, this thesis seeks to analyze how the transcendent Christian approach to human beings will lead to better learning than the postmodern autonomous approach and open the door to sharing the Gospel in secular universities. This thesis argues that since the transcendent Christian approach helps to shape and encourage students' hearts, minds, and beliefs towards God, students' desire to learn increases. Opposite to this result, this thesis also argues that the autonomist postmodern approach limits the professor's scope of teaching by analyzing issues from a relativist pluralistic perspective. Because the transcendent Christian approach provides better learning, this thesis also seeks to encourage orthodox Christian academics to draft and teach classes in secular universities that can be used to expose students to the truth of the gospel in various disciplines through elective courses without being silenced by universities' academic requirements and goals on how a class will contribute to the greater economy and social development.

Key Words: Christian faith, higher education, transcendent approach, postmodernism, autonomist approach.

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Education is at the core of civilization and family. Most families and individuals today work hard to accomplish their goals of going or sending their sons and daughters to universities to achieve a “good life.”¹ An average of 17.1 million students are projected to enroll in secular universities between 2020 and 2030.² The contemporary universities have focused on teaching students “knowledge production, dissemination and application through the means of research, learning, and public service.”³

Many secularist scholars and professors have encouraged students to learn about their careers by separating “religion from other aspects of life and thought.”⁴ However, their lack of a transcendent understanding of a human being has developed dualistic individuals and cultures. This instability is not only seen in society but also in the outcomes of secular universities. According to the scholar Thorn Bower, “Universities have failed to fulfill their original hope, are marginal to American society, their public contribution of academics and other intellectuals to our social debates is becoming less distinctive, less interesting, and less important, and are in decline due to American post-secularism.”⁵ Universities are not only in decline, but many have abandoned their original purposes. Harry Lewis, former Dean of Harvard College, wrote that “Universities

¹ James Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 62-63.

² “Fast Facts.” National Center for Education Statistics. Last Accessed June 14, 2023, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>

³ HR Ahmad. “What is a University Education?” *National Library of Medicine* 34, n. 4 (Jul-Aug 2018), 1033. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6115577/>

⁴ John Sommerville, *The Decline of the Secular University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 87.

⁵ Thorn Bower, *Critical Pedagogy in Christian Education: Philosophy, Theory, and Practice* (Koln, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009), 141.

have lost the sense that their educational mission is to transform teenagers . . . into adults with the learning and wisdom to take responsibility for their own lives and for civil society.”⁶ College graduates’ lack of learning and wisdom to take responsibility affects their understanding of the meaning and purpose of life. Anthony Kronman, former Dean of Yale Law School, laments that colleges and universities “have given up on the meaning of life.”⁷ Since many college graduates become leaders in a private and professional society, the lack of purpose has not only affected them as individuals but also those they lead and influence. William Egginton, a humanities professor at John Hopkins University, “regrets the displacement of the humane core of mid-twentieth century education, not only for its edifying content but more essentially because of its now-lost purpose of providing common ground for building civic society.”⁸ Since the lack of intentional building of civic society affects the greater economy, most universities have been encouraged to holistically analyze human beings and help them find their purpose or meaning in life.⁹

The holistic analysis of human beings includes religion or spirituality.¹⁰ Religion or spirituality is defined in this paper as “a belief that there is a reality beyond that perceived by the five senses and that this reality is of great significance for human life.”¹¹ Since religion is a reality,

⁶ George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited: From Protestant to Postsecular* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 351.

⁷ Ibid, 351.

⁸ Ibid, 353.

⁹ Tyler J. VanderWeele, et al., “Positive Epidemiology?” *Epidemiology* 31, no. 2 (2020): 189.

¹⁰ Neal Krause, Peter C Hill, and Gail Ironson. “Evaluating the Relationships Among Religion, Social Virtues, and Meaning in Life.” *Archiv für Religionspsychologie = Archive for the psychology of religion*. 41, no. 1 (2019): 53.

¹¹ Peter L. Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*. (Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 17.

one must consider why it is important for human life. According to Fahru Karakas' research on the relationship between spirituality and organizational performance, "Spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life; provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work; and, provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community."¹² Due to the extensive findings of the benefits of spirituality on professional development, most universities claim to offer pluralistic religion courses and experiences through academics and campus life.¹³ Yet, these claims seem to be upheld in principle, more than in practice. According to George Marsden,

"While religion clearly retains a visible presence on American university campuses, its relationship to the value and practice of 'diversity' in mainstream higher education remains problematic. In principle, religion is recognized as a kind of diversity that ought to be accepted and honored on campuses. In practice, however, it is often neglected in diversity training and in related new general education requirements on many campuses that concentrate on diversity in race, gender, and sexuality."¹⁴

The lack of commitment to the principle and practice of religion at secular universities prevents students from learning about various religions (especially the Christian faith), as well as understanding and developing character and interpersonal skills that enable them to live in harmony in a diverse religious civil culture. An example of pluralism incoherence in higher education occurred at Vanderbilt University. In 2011, at Vanderbilt "14 campus religious communities--comprising about 1,400 Catholic, evangelical, and Mormon students--lost their

¹² Fahri Karakas, "Spirituality and Performance in Organizations: A Literature Review: JBE." *Journal of Business Ethics* 94, no. 1 (06, 2010): 89.

¹³ Liesa Stamm, "Can We Bring Spirituality Back to Campus? Higher Education's Re-Engagement with Values and Spirituality," *Journal of College and Character*, 4, no. 5 (2003): 2.

¹⁴ Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 361.

organizational status.”¹⁵ These groups were closed because the university established a new policy that,

“...privileged certain belief groups and forbade all others. Religious organizations were welcomed as long as they were malleable: as long as their leaders didn’t need to profess anything in particular; as long as they could be governed by sheer democracy and adjust to popular mores or trends; as long as they didn’t prioritize theological stability. Creedal statements were allowed, but as an accessory, a historic document, or suggested guideline. They could not have binding authority to shape or govern the teaching and practices of a campus religious community.”¹⁶

This policy was developed after a “Christian fraternity had expelled several students for violating their behavior policy. One student said he was ousted because he is gay. Vanderbilt responded by forbidding any beliefs standards for those wanting to join or lead any campus group.”¹⁷ Vanderbilt University’s case evidences the lack of acceptance of religious pluralism in principle and practice, often manifested against Christianity in secular universities. By excluding orthodox Christian groups from university campuses, college students are prevented from having the opportunity to learn, understand, and interact with the Christian faith as they can do with other beliefs on campus. Essentially, the kind of “religious pluralism or diversity” that is promoted at most institutions of higher education is the kind that lacks traditional or orthodox absolutes.¹⁸ As a result, “most college graduates (57%) believe in a god (not necessarily the God of the Bible); the majority (63%) consider that right and wrong depend on the situation, and a minority (41%) seek guidance for right and wrong in common sense.”¹⁹ Sadly, these results are manifested in a culture

¹⁵ Tish Harrison Warren, “The wrong kind of Christian.” *Christianity Today*, 58, no. 7, (2014), pp. 58.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 56-57.

¹⁷ Tish Harrison Warren, “The wrong kind of Christian.” *Christianity Today*, 58, no. 7, (2014), pp. 55.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 55.

¹⁹ “College Graduates.” Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/educational-distribution/college/>

full of college graduates who are unable to discern or practice biblical morality. This lack of exposure to fundamental Christian values prevents students from finding meaning and purpose in life, in relationships, and in their work. Above all, they are prevented from exposure to the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ on college campuses, except through individual personal encounters with believers. Although God's sovereignty can reach college students outside college campuses, Jesus also commands believers to preach the Gospel to all the world (Mark 16:15) which includes higher education institutions. God's sovereignty can reach college students on and off the grounds of a college campus, Jesus commands believers to preach the Gospel to all the world (Mark 16:15), which includes institutions of higher education.

Statement of Purpose

To address the above issue, this thesis seeks to analyze how the transcendent approach of the Christian faith on human beings can open the door to sharing the Gospel at secular universities and lead to learning which integrates the mind, the heart, and the body while the postmodern autonomist approach limits human beings to treatment as social constructs that exalt autonomy and difference.

Statement of the Importance of the Problem

The average age of college students in the United States is between seventeen and twenty-four years old. As individuals, this period is a critical stage of their development.²⁰ According to “several developmental theorists, they are grappling with issues of personal identity (gender, race, cultural background, etc.), defining themselves in relation to others, and experimenting with

²⁰ Manuel London, *The Oxford Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. Edited by Manuel London. Second edition, (New York: OUP, 2021), 149.

different social roles, groups, and relationships.”²¹ It is crucial to consider that most college students face complete independence for the first time when they begin living on a campus. This independence requires them to make simple and complex decisions on their own. This creates a crisis for some students, while others can make decisions through trial and error or the experiences of others. Besides learning independence, students acquire knowledge, skills, and strategies to pursue the profession of their dreams. Most college students are eager to learn what they believe will benefit them. This eagerness leads some of them to be highly influenced by the personality and ideas of their college professors --- especially highly renowned professors. In most cases, students revere the advice and knowledge of their professors regarding academic issues and personal decisions. Many of these professors become students’ lifetime mentors and friends. According to scholars Emmanuel and Delaney, a professor’s degree of power in the classroom affects students both in class and beyond.²² To support this argument and present how students are affected, the scholars presented McCrosky and Richmond’s findings of the Raven and French theory on the five bases of power presented in the classroom:

“(1) Coercive power: professors make it clear that students who do not conform to the information they present will be punished for not conforming. (2) Reward power: Professors use reward power to require students to conform to the information they present but instead of noncompliance being punished, conformity is rewarded. (3) Legitimate power: Student’s perception that the professor, as the authority figure in the classroom, has the power to make certain demands and requests. (4) Referent power: When the professor leverages the relationship with a student by appealing to the student’s desires to identify with and please the professor as the higher authority. The professor is given power by the student due to the admiration the student has for him or her. (5) Expert power: When the professor expects to be regarded as a knowledgeable, proficient professional in his or her field and students believe what the professor has deemed to be accurate. This power typology has informed a body of research on how professor power relates to student behavior. Research has found that referent, expert, and reward power are regarded as prosocial forms of power and positively associated with cognitive learning, affective learning, and student motivation. The other two powers, legitimate and coercive, are

²¹ Ibid, 149.

²² Glory Emmanuel, and Harold Delaney. "Professors' Influence on Students' Beliefs Values and Attitudes in the Classroom." *Journal of College and Character* 15, no. 4 (2014): 249.

viewed by students as antisocial forms of power because they attribute too much responsibility to the professor; they have been found to be negatively associated with these same learning outcomes.”²³

Professors influence students in the classroom and professors also influence students outside of their classrooms. Some professors even become lifetime mentors. Mentors not only influence the academic path or experience of a student, but they are “concerned for the student beyond the immediacies of a course.”²⁴ Veronia, a senior undergraduate student commented on her experience with her mentor, “We talk about everything. When it must be academic . . . registration period . . . a deadline coming up; but other than that, it would just be, like, catching up! “So how have you been? How are things?” . . . “So what things are going on in your life?” So, it’s been really helpful.”²⁵ Since the nature of a mentor goes beyond academics, a mentor’s nature of becoming personal with the student allows the professor to highly influence the student’s personal life including relationships and beliefs. The influence of a mentor is so profound that in a case study on college campuses, Chambliss and Takacs stated that, “Mentors, we found, can be invaluable and even life changing.”²⁶ Even though not all professors are mentors, many mentors are professors. By being and holding the position of a professor, the professor immediately enters a hierarchical relationship with his students. As with any relationship, professors can positively or negatively influence their students. Meera Komarraju, Sergey Musulkin, and Gargi Bhattacharya summarized the importance of this relationship in their case study research on the role of faculty-student relations by stating,

²³ Ibid, 250.

²⁴ Daniel F. Chambliss, and Christopher G. Takacs. *How College Works* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 56.

²⁵ Ibid, 56.

²⁶ Ibid, 155.

“While in college, students may see their faculty members as the experts in their field of study and may value their opinion, knowledge, and expertise. Whereas previously they may have relied on parents or other family members for professional guidance, they now have another resource they can draw on, their faculty members. This would be of particular relevance in the case of students who might be from first-generation, minority, or underprivileged backgrounds. Hence, students who perceive their faculty members as being approachable and are able to engage them in conversation outside the immediate classroom could likely benefit career-wise. Students could possibly come away feeling more confident, motivated, and interested in performing well. Some faculty members may not realize the extent to which their informal interactions with students could potentially be associated with students’ self-confidence, motivation, and performance.”²⁷

From these observations, it is possible to summarize that the reverence a student may once have had for the opinions and advice of parents or other adult influences could gradually shift to the professor, with or without the professor’s acknowledgement. Further, in their research on professors’ perception of their influence, Emmanuel and Delaney wrote,

“Undergraduates spend a substantial amount of their academic career in a classroom setting, both physical and online. Taking the influence of a power differential and the changing nature of [beliefs, values, and attitudes] BVAs in undergraduates into consideration, professors may directly nurture BVA change, regardless of the goals and values of the department and institution.”²⁸

As a result of students’ interaction with faculty, staff, and other students, college graduates leave universities with vocational knowledge and skills, and, perhaps more importantly, an “identity” formed by beliefs, ideas, habits, and practices that they have adopted during their college experience. This identity is directly related to how they view and relate to God, self, and others. Many of them make life decisions --- such as moving to another state or country for a job opportunity or to marry. Since this season of life seems to define the life and future of an individual,

²⁷ Meera Komarraju, Sergey Musulkin, and Gargi Bhattacharya. "Role of Student–Faculty Interactions in Developing College Students’ Academic Self-Concept, Motivation, and Achievement." *Journal of College Student Development* 51, no. 3 (2010): 340.

²⁸ Emmanuel and Delaney, "Professors' Influence on Students' Beliefs Values and Attitudes in the Classroom," 252.

family, and community, teaching the truths of the Christian faith in secular universities is of eternal value.

Besides being a crucial season in a person's life, the teaching of the fundamentals of the Christian faith in a secular university is also essential in developing healthy beings that accomplish universities' goals of promoting social development, greater economic productivity, and committing fewer crimes. According to Joseph Henrich, "the belief in a contingent afterlife is associated with greater economic productivity and less crime."²⁹ Since many of the Ivy League Schools have recognized the importance of spirituality to produce healthy beings that meet their goals, they have incorporated religious diversity programs, courses, and practices to encourage spirituality awareness on students. Harvard University developed a program called *Human Flourishing*. This program "aims to bring together knowledge across disciplines and attempt to integrate such knowledge into a coherent whole, with the goal of a better understanding of and capacity to promote human well-being."³⁰ Some of their courses include: "Religion, Well-Being, and Public Health; The Flourishing Life: Perspectives from Christian Theology and the Social Sciences; Wisdom of Work; Conflict, Justice, and Healing."³¹ These courses are offered to all undergraduate and graduate students of all disciplines.³² Even though the *Human Flourishing Program* seems to be a separate department at Harvard University, other universities seem to offer a limited number of courses as part of their religious department. For example, Yale Divinity School offers various religious courses such as "Christ and Being Human; Jews, Christians, and

²⁹ Joseph Patrick Henrich, *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous*. First edition, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020), 137.

³⁰ "Program Overview." The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science, Harvard University, last modified 2023. <https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/about>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Muslims in Medieval Spain; Religion and Politics in the World.”³³ Another example is at the University of Virginia (UVA). UVA offers courses such as “The Art and Science and Human Flourishing; Theism and Humanism; Jesus in History and Interpretation; God, Politics, and War; Augustine of Hippo.”³⁴ The presence of Christianity as an option to encourage human flourishing in the course catalog of these and many other secular universities reflects the importance of Christianity to develop healthy individuals and societies. Since these courses on Christianity may be the first or only intellectual exposure of students to Christianity, it is crucial that orthodox Christian academics that know, love, and seek the Lord Jesus teach these courses.

One way that courses on Christianity in secular universities promotes healthy individuals and societies that lead to greater social developments and economies is through its teaching on work ethic. According to the Christian faith, individuals that have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are filled with the love and the fear of the Lord through the Holy Spirit (1 John 4; Proverbs 16:6). As a result, the Holy Spirit encourages and helps individuals to live and do everything for the Lord (Colossians 3:23-24). Therefore, individuals’ work and efforts result in outstanding performance that improve communities’ living conditions and benefit the greater economy. Rodney Stark, an American Sociologist and former agnostic, wrote the following statement during his years as an agnostic:

“Christianity created Western Civilization. Had the followers of Jesus remained an obscure Jewish sect, most of you would not have learned to read and the rest of you would be reading from hand-copied scrolls. Without a theology committed to reason, progress, and moral equality, today the entire world would be about where non-European societies were in, say, 1800: A world with many astrologers and alchemists but no scientists. A world of despots, lacking universities, banks, factories, eyeglasses, chimneys, and pianos. A world

³³ “Search Courses,” Yale University, last modified 2023.
<https://courses.yale.edu/?keyword=theology&srcdb=202303>

³⁴ “Catalog Search,” University Registrar, University of Virginia, last modified 2023.
http://records.ureg.virginia.edu/search_advanced.php?cur_cat_oid=54&ecpage=1&cpage=1&ppage=1&pcpage=1&spage=1&tpage=1&search_database=Search&filter%5Bkeyword%5D=Augustine&filter%5B3%5D=1&filter%5B31%5D=1&filter%5B1%5D=1&filter%5B28%5D=1&filter%5B30%5D=1

where most infants do not live to the age of five and many women die in childbirth—a world truly living in ‘dark ages.’ The modern world arose only in Christian societies. Not in Islam. Not in Asia. Not in a ‘secular’ society—there having been none. And all the modernization that has occurred outside Christendom was imported from the West.”³⁵

Like Stark’s studies, the positive social development and economic effects of Christianity have been studied by many scholars for more than a hundred years. One of those scholars is Marx Weber (1864-1920). He is known as one of the “greatest German intellectuals that founded social science—the discipline utilized by many such experts—in part on the idea that religion can have profound socio-economic ramifications.”³⁶ After analyzing and comparing the economic effects of multiple religions in different countries, Weber concluded that “the religion of greatest socio-economic consequence was Christianity, especially in its Protestant form.”³⁷

To understand, prove, and expand on Weber’s conclusion on today’s world, Peter Heslam – a contemporary scholar- conducted research on the interface between religion, business, and development. In his research, Heslam wrote that “The ‘Protestant ethic’ that lies at the heart of Weber’s thesis is that the Reformation helped spawn wealth-enhancing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, including hard work, honesty, diligence, discipline, frugality, a sense of calling and the rational and productive stewardship of resources.”³⁸ Heslam presents the case of China as evidence of the positive economic effects of Christianity in society. Zhuo Xinpeng, president of the Chinese Religious Studies Association and Member of the 11th Standing Committee of National People’s Congress,³⁹ wrote that a “major spiritual enlightenment, ideological motive power and guarantee

³⁵ Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*. 1st ed (New York: Random House, 2005), 233.

³⁶ Peter S. Heslam, "Faith, Fortune and the Future: Christianity and Enterprise in Human Development." *Religions* 12, no. 12 (2021): 1039.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 1039.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 1039.

³⁹ “Zhuo Xinpeng,” China Vitae, https://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Zhuo_Xinpeng

of value was provided by Christianity to the rise of the European modern society.”⁴⁰ To understand X Jinping’s conclusion on the benefit of Christianity for the modern society, Heslam also included the words of another distinguished Chinese scholar that “led a research team tasked by the Chinese government to discover why the West had been so successful.”⁴¹ This scholar wrote:

“One of the things that we were asked to look into was what accounted for the success, in fact, the pre-eminence of the West all over the world. We studied everything we could from the historical, political, economic, and cultural perspective. At first, we thought it was because you had more powerful guns than we had. Then we thought it was because you had the best political system. Next, we focused on your economic system. But in the past twenty years, we have realized that the heart of your culture is your religion: Christianity. That is why the West is so powerful. The Christian moral foundation of social and cultural life was what made possible the emergence of capitalism and then the successful transition to democratic politics. We don’t have any doubt about this.”⁴²

These words make one reflect on the positive social and economic effects that Christianity has in a nation-wide spectrum. Nonetheless, Christianity also has positive effects on a local and small spectrum of a business or a nonprofit organization. Dotsey and Kumi’s conducted case-study research on the role that religious beliefs play in the development of Northern Ghana by the nonprofit organization World Vision Ghana (WVG).⁴³ One of the driving forces WVG’s beliefs is that:

“Development implies a thoughtful attempt to assist a community of persons to achieve an existence in which the economic, social and spiritual domains are brought together at a level befitting dignity of an individual [...] Christian development will be carried out by Christians, who are spiritually mandated, motivated and oriented, and who act with God’s love towards all people.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ibid, 1039.

⁴¹ Ibid, 1039.

⁴² Ibid, 1039.

⁴³ Senyo Dotsey, and Emmanuel Kumi. "Does Religious Faith Matter in Development Practice? Perspectives from the Savelugu-Nanton District in Northern Ghana." *Forum for Development Studies* 47, no. 2 (2020): 351.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 370.

Due to WVG's biblical view and value of humanity, "holistic development," and service, WVG has had a positive effect on Northern Africa. WVG promotes "interfaith dialogues, peace projects, sanitation, hygiene programs, Bible clubs, and spiritual nurturing for the children."⁴⁵ As the teaching of Christianity has positively affected the work of a small chapter of the World Vision Organization, the development of Ghana, and the economy of the West, it seems that Christianity teaches valuable lessons that have benefited local and global communities throughout history. This positive effect makes necessary the study of the Christian faith by college students. Through the teaching of the Christian faith and work ethic, secular universities will promote healthy individuals that positively affect the social development and economy of a nation.

Another way that courses on Christianity in secular universities promote healthy individuals and communities that lead to greater social developments and economies are through its teaching on well-being. According to the *Handbook of Psychology and Religion*, "the science of well-being, or 'hedonic psychology' seeks to elucidate 'what makes experiences and life pleasant or unpleasant'."⁴⁶ Since this science approaches human beings as holistic beings, this science also explores the relationship between the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of individuals.⁴⁷ According to the research done on this relationship,

"Overall, the preponderance of empirical research and clinical wisdom suggests that religion has a positive influence on mental health and functioning (e.g., Levin & Chatters, 1998). This goes beyond the mere absence of psychopathology or suffering to include such positive traits as general happiness, satisfaction with life, constructing meaning and life goals, and other, more objective outcomes such as longevity, education, and income (Chamberlain & Zika, 1992; Ferriss, 2002)."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁶ Raymond F. Paloutzian, and Crystal L. Park. *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 464.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 464.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 464.

These positive effects make religion necessary to develop physically and psychologically stable human beings that benefit their local and global communities. The *Handbook* also reports a study conducted by Argyle on happiness. Argyle concluded that “Happiness is greater for those who are more religious.” Upon this finding, the *Handbook* comments that,

“Argyle concludes that social support accounts for most of the impact of religiosity on well-being and hypothesizes that the atmosphere of love and the ideology of brotherhood, along with the interpretive power of religion to frame rites of passage in a communal way, accounts for that social potency. Furthermore, a subjective feeling of closeness to God is pointed to (what the present authors and other researchers conceptualize as personal devotion) as a primary mechanism, as is “existential certainty.”⁴⁹

Since religion affects individuals’ beliefs and actions through personal and quiet time, individuals are also affected by the communal time and fellowship of other people that practice their religion.

To support this claim, the *Handbook of Religious and Mental Health* reported that,

“(1) **Religious commitment** (e.g., subjective religious attitudes) may influence mental health through encouraging health-related behavior; that is, “lifestyle” or protective behaviors such as avoidance of smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use, poor diet, and physical health risks in general. Health-related behavior is important for well-being because it serves to lower disease risk and enhance physical health (Hamburg, Elliott, & Parron, 1982). (2) **Religious faith** (as reflected in the presence and intensity of particular beliefs or experiences) may influence mental health through generating optimism and hopeful expectations that God will reward expressions of piety or devotion with better health and well-being. Optimism is believed to be important for mental health because of the health-promoting qualities of positive mental attitudes (as in learned optimism or the placebo effect) (Taylor, 1989); (3) **Religious involvement and fellowship** (e.g., church or synagogue attendance or other forms of organizational religiosity) may influence well-being by providing social support, such as involvement in meaningful social relationships (in terms of quantity and quality) and integration into supportive networks (providing both tangible and emotional support). Social support is believed to be important for mental health because it serves to buffer the deleterious impact of stress, provide coping resources, help hosts adapt to stressful environments and pathogenic agents, and protect against morbidity and mortality (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988). (4) **Religious worship** (e.g., prayer or other ritual activities) may influence mental health psychodynamically through the effects of positive emotions (such as hope, forgiveness, empowerment, self-esteem, contentment, and love). Positive emotions may be important for mental health due to their impact on health and physiology through possible psychoneuroimmunologic and psychophysiological mechanisms (Rossi, 1993).”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid, 464.

⁵⁰ Harold G. Koenig, and Harold G. (Harold George) Koenig. *Handbook of Religion and Mental Health* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998), 40-41.

Even though some of these studies incorporated all the forms of religion, this *Handbook of Religious and Mental Health* specifically reports the positive effect of the Christian faith by presenting a study conducted by Wilson on “born-again” Christians. He “studied a sample of Protestants from North Carolina who had undergone a “born-again” salvation experience.”⁵¹ Upon completion of his study, Wilson reported that “Born-again respondents subsequently reported less depression, fear, confusion, anger, and pain.”⁵² It is interesting that these are five of the main mental issues that college students struggle with.⁵³ According to an article published by the American Psychological Association,

“By nearly every metric, students’ mental health is worsening. During the 2020–2021 school year, more than 60% of college students met the criteria for at least one mental health problem, according to the Healthy Minds Study, which collects data from 373 campuses nationwide (Lipson, S. K., et al., *Journal of Affective Disorders*, Vol. 306, 2022). In another national survey, almost three-quarters of students reported moderate or severe psychological distress (National College Health Assessment, American College Health Association, 2021).”⁵⁴

The rise in mental issues among college students and the benefits of the Christian faith to address these issues makes necessary the teaching of courses on the Christian faith in secular universities. Through this class, students will be exposed to another option that could help them to cope and overcome their mental issues upon their decision.

Besides helping students to stay psychologically healthy, students will also become physically healthy. According to a study conducted in Germany on the effects of religion on health by Heady and Wagner, scholars reported that “it was also clear that religious belief and church

⁵¹ Ibid, 37.

⁵² Ibid, 37.

⁵³ Dana L. Farnsworth, *Mental Health in College and University*. Reprint 2014. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957), 18.

⁵⁴ Zara Abrams, “Students mental health is in Crisis. Campuses and rethinking their approach.” *American Psychological Association* 53, n. 7 (2022): 60.

attendance are associated with health-protective behaviors and attitudes, including taking more exercise, not smoking and higher life satisfaction.”⁵⁵ Even though Germany is a highly secular country with 41.9% of people having no religion,⁵⁶ research has confirmed that religious people are experiencing better life and long-term gains in life than non-religious people.⁵⁷ To expand on one of the long-term physical gains, researchers conducted a study to analyze the “relationship between religion and cardiovascular outcomes and all-cause mortality in women's health”⁵⁸ in the United States. Upon completion of this research, scholars reported, “Although self-report measures of religiosity were not associated with reduced risk of CHD [coronary heart disease] morbidity and mortality, these measures were associated with reduced risk of all-cause mortality.”⁵⁹ It is interesting to see how religion can help a person to improve his physical health which will result in longevity and better living conditions.

Although these are studies that present the positive effects of religion on all people regardless of their stage in life, it is important to also consider the effects that religion specifically has in college students. According to research conducted by Astin and Astin on 14,5000 university students,⁶⁰ scholars found that “those who experienced spiritual growth from their freshman to

⁵⁵ Bruce Headey, Gerhard Hoehne, and Gert G. Wagner. "Does Religion make You Healthier and Longer Lived? Evidence for Germany." *Social Indicators Research* 119, no. 3 (2014): 1336.

⁵⁶ “Germany,” The World Fact Book, CIA, last modified June 05, 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/germany/>

⁵⁷ Bruce Headey, Juergen Schupp, Ingrid Tucci, and Gert G. Wagner. "Authentic Happiness Theory Supported by Impact of Religion on Life Satisfaction: A Longitudinal Analysis with Data for Germany." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 5, no. 1 (2010): 73.

⁵⁸ Eliezer Schnall, et al., "The Relationship between Religion and Cardiovascular Outcomes and all-Cause Mortality in the Women's Health Initiative Observational Study." *Psychology & Health* 25, no. 2 (2010): 249.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 249.

⁶⁰ Emmanuel and Delaney, "Professors' Influence on Students' Beliefs Values and Attitudes in the Classroom," 251-252.

their junior year also had higher levels of academic performance and college satisfaction.”⁶¹ Higher academic performance could lead to better professional careers and social projects that improve the economy of a country and promote higher social development. Since colleges are crucial to the improvement and sustainability of a community’s living conditions, college graduates must be well-equipped and prepared to face and overcome personal, professional, and societal challenges. According to the scholars Neil Gross and Solon Simmons, “Evidence that college plays a strong role in driving economic and social developments has also led scholars to examine many of the characteristics associated with higher education.”⁶² As previous studies have shown, one of the main characteristics of social development and economic growth is religion. Religion helps to develop healthy individuals that can cope, overcome, and transform challenges and obstacles into opportunities. The religion of the Christian faith helps to develop individuals and communities that benefit society. Therefore, it is crucial to teach the truth of the Christian faith in secular universities.

Besides developing healthy individuals and communities, it is also essential to teach the truth of the Christian faith in secular universities to develop individuals that can interact and understand the beliefs and practices followed by most people in the World to achieve the desired social development and economic growth. According to the United States Census Bureau, Christianity is “the most popular religion of the World, followed by 2.38 billion people.”⁶³ This

⁶¹ Ibid, 251-252.

⁶² Neil Gross, and Solon Simmons. *Professors and Their Politics*. Edited by Neil Gross and Solon Simmons. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 135.

⁶³ “Religion by Country 2023,” World Population Review. United States Census Bureau. Last accessed June 14, 2023. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/religion-by-country>.

amount of people represents 32% of the world population.⁶⁴ Besides being the largest religion, Christianity is also estimated to increase to 2.9 billion in 2050.⁶⁵ Even though other religions may increase by 2050, Christianity will continue to be the most popular religion in the world by 2050.⁶⁶ The continuous growth of the Christian population around the world, and its effect on countries' economies and cultures, make necessary the teaching of the Christian faith history, beliefs, and practices. This teaching will help students to have a better understanding of each other. This understanding will help students to become more tolerant and to engage in respectful dialogues and projects that will lead universities to achieve their goals of greater social development and economic growth. Horst Köhler, former German president, summarized the importance of engaging in this kind of learning by saying, "Responsibility and respect of others and their religious beliefs are also part of freedom."⁶⁷ As humans, students have the responsibility of learning and respecting other views and beliefs. Since the fulfillment of this responsibility leads to harmonious and peaceful societies, it is crucial to teach courses on the Christian faith in secular universities.

Besides developing college students that lead to harmonious societies, it is also essential to teach the truth of the Christian faith amid universities' religious pluralism environments. Since most universities have moved from a secular approach to a post-secular (post-modern) approach,

⁶⁴ Conrad Hackett and David McClendon, "Christians remains world's largest religious group, but they are declining in Europe." Pew Research Center. Last modified April 5, 2017. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>

⁶⁵ "Christians," Pew Research Center, last modified April 2, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/christians/#fn-22754-39>

⁶⁶ "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050," Pew Research Center, last modified April 2, 2015. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>.

⁶⁷ "Religious Discrimination," State College of Florida Libraries, last modified May 12, 2023, <https://libguides.scf.edu/non-disc/religion>

“religion has returned to the intellectual life.”⁶⁸ Due to this return in the postmodern era, “scholars are challenging the boundaries between faith and knowledge, acknowledging the importance of religion as a human phenomenon and as a way of knowing.”⁶⁹ Two renowned scholars that challenged the exclusion of religion from universities are Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff.⁷⁰ Even though their academic contributions pushed the return of religion in the university, other issues also pushed the religious return. Other issues include the “emergence of multiculturalism, the advent of postmodernism, the rise of the new Christian right, and the role of the sacred in international affairs.”⁷¹ As a result, some schools have decided to offer religious studies. Nonetheless, universities have not limited their religious education to the study of religion but have integrated courses on faith and learning in other disciplines such as art, English, philosophy, music, political science, social work, medicine, history, and sociology.⁷²

Even though the return of religious education in academia seems reasonable, the Christian religious approach is being taught by most postmodern professors that do not have a personal relationship with Christ. The lack of love and submission to Christ distorts Scripture's purpose, meaning, and interpretation. God warned believers of this kind of teaching in the Bible. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 states, “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their desires, they will gather many teachers around them to say what their itch. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” This verse reflects most of the “Christian”

⁶⁸ Philip S. Gorski, *The Post-Secular in Question Religion in Contemporary Society*. Edited by Philip S. Gorski. (Brooklyn, N.Y: Social Science Research Council, 2012), 216.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 151.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 216.

⁷¹ Ibid, 216.

⁷² Ibid, 218.

professors at secular universities. According to Philip Gorski, “The teaching staff of the religious studies department turns out to be just another subtribe of secular humanists.”⁷³ Some of them are non-Christians, and others are considered “Christians” that uphold a liberal and liberation theology.⁷⁴ Consequently, the Bible is not taught as God's inerrant and infallible Word; the meaning of Scripture is the result of cultural consensus and how they decide to apply it; Jesus' person and work are devalued; and the Christian faith is taught from the unbiblical perception of origins that seek to relate Darwin evolutionary theory with Biblical teaching, and from a Marxist's view revolution of the oppressed through the social Gospel.⁷⁵ Sadly, the return of religious education in academia seems to create more confusion against the true God.

However, God encouraged believers' hearts to use this opportunity to bring the truth of Jesus to remove all confusion through His Word. Romans 10:13-15 states,

“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

God is the source of all knowledge and wisdom, and He has trained believers to reach out the academia with His truth by equipping their hearts and minds. Jesus also taught the highest intellectuals of His time- even though some did not want to believe in His teachings (Matthew 16; 22; etc.). Following Jesus' example, Paul also taught in an intellectual setting known as the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 14:15-17). Therefore, God has equipped intellectual believers with knowledge, wisdom, and experience in a specific discipline – such as arts, science, politics,

⁷³ Ibid, 189.

⁷⁴ Thorn Bower, *Critical Pedagogy in Christian Education*, 65-66.

⁷⁵ Ronald G. Musto, *Liberation Theologies a Research Guide*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 133.

philosophy, religion, etc.- to reach others with the Gospel of Christ through the academy. Just as Isaiah 28:26 states, “The farmer knows just what to do, for God has given him understanding.” Since God has given the understanding of the divine and the material, Jesus is the believer’s Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit is at work, an intellectual believer must share the Gospel at a secular university through the teaching of the relation between Christian faith and specific discipline. By reaching college campuses, intellectual believers also obey Christ’s Great Commission (Matthew 28: 18-20). God could use a believer’s course to save students and/or to create wonder in staff and students that will later result in their salvation. Since a course on the Christian faith in secular campuses helps universities to achieve their main goals of social development and economic growth through developing physically and psychologically healthy college graduates, encouraging academic dialogue on the largest religion in the world, and promoting religious pluralism, it is possible to teach a course of the Christian faith without being canceled or silenced. Therefore, let’s take this opportunity and let God work.

Statement of the Position on the Problem

It is the position of this thesis that the Christian faith leads to better learning through its transcendent approach to human nature that addresses and points students’ hearts, beliefs, and minds toward Christ compared to the postmodern autonomist approach that addresses human nature as social constructs that exalt autonomy and difference. I will compare how the approach to human beings influenced individuals as teachers. Furthermore, I will discuss how each approach shapes a professor’s pedagogy and curriculum development. Lastly, I will propose a class curriculum for an orthodox Christian scholar to teach at a secular postmodern university on the Christian and postmodern perspectives on the role of government.

Limitations/Delimitations

To accomplish the purpose of this thesis, one must consider the following limitations. First, the terms “believer” and “Christian” will be used interchangeably and is defined as a person that has been forgiven of his sins through the belief in the Lord Jesus (Acts 16:31) – including his life, personhood (deity and humanity), death, and resurrection. A distinction between traditional orthodox Christians and postmodern liberal Christians is also necessary for the understanding of this thesis. A traditional orthodox Christian considers that scripture is the only, infallibly, inerrant, and sufficient source of faith,⁷⁶ and places the sacrifice of Christ as death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins.⁷⁷ Opposite to the traditional Christian, a liberal postmodern Christian seeks to abandon the claims made by orthodox Christianity and exaltation of self.⁷⁸

Like the concept of “believer” and “Christian,” this paper will also use the term “religion” and “spirituality” interchangeably which is defined as “a belief that there is a reality beyond the reality of ordinary experience and that this reality is of great significance for human life.”⁷⁹

Besides defining religion or spirituality, this paper defines a postmodern individual as a person that is committed to the following beliefs: First, humans are ever-changing beings “constructed by both their choices and the constant environmental influences around them; and are not able to look objectively to their world/reality due to their *situatedness* limitation.”⁸⁰ Second,

⁷⁶ Eugen J. Pentiu, *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Orthodox Christianity*. Edited by Eugen J. Pentiu. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022), 164.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 535.

⁷⁸ Mark D. Chapman, *The Future of Liberal Theology*. Edited by Mark D. Chapman. (London: Routledge, 2018), 27.

⁷⁹ Peter L. Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*. (Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 17.

⁸⁰ Stewart E. Kelly, (Stewart Emmett). *Understanding Postmodernism: A Christian Perspective* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 5-7.

truth, language morality, the meaning of life, and spirituality are relative and the result of individuals' unique and subjective social constructs of a situation of life.⁸¹ Third, metanarratives are “inherently oppressive and generally beyond humans' ability to grasp them, and must be deconstructed.”⁸² Unlike a postmodernist, a secularist is an individual who “aims to eliminate religion altogether. The important feature of secularism for my argument is that it is characterized by determinedly rational argument and led by elites.”⁸³

After considering the three core beliefs of postmodernism, it is crucial to consider that postmodernism “assigns an interpersonal place for religion. The given tendency testifies to both pluralistic religious consciousness and individualization of religion, which, according to the statement of many researchers, are characteristic features of modern society.”⁸⁴ Therefore, religious pluralism is “the energetic engagement with diversity. Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettos with little traffic between or among them. Today, religious diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement.”⁸⁵ Therefore, pluralism seeks the incorporation of all beliefs.

Now that the three core beliefs of postmodernism have been presented, it is essential to describe the autonomist postmodern approach (APA). This approach perceives human beings as social constructs that are constantly changing as an attempt to define themselves, the other, the

⁸¹ Ibid, 141.

⁸² Ibid, 5-7.

⁸³ Sommerville, *The Decline of the Secular University*, 11.

⁸⁴ Roida Rızayeva Oktay, *The Challenges of Contemporaneity Postmodernity and Multiculturalism* (Switzerland: Springer, 2016), 68.

⁸⁵ Chris Seiple, Chris Seiple, and Dennis Hoover. *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement*. Edited by Chris Seiple and Dennis Hoover. (London, England: Taylor & Francis, 2022), 9.

world around them, and truth and knowledge.⁸⁶ Their definitions are only set for a specific time, moment, and person. Therefore, they are subject to change as culture changes, and as the “self” decides to change.⁸⁷ In this approach, the “self” is the ultimate authority to determine: (1) what, when, and how a change of identity or definition of “self” is necessary; (2) what is true and false; (3) who is the other; (3) what is knowledge.⁸⁸ In short, since the “self” and all the categories presented above are in constant construction and change, these definitions are not “destinations,”⁸⁹ but “resting places”⁹⁰ that will sooner or later be changed.

Opposite to the autonomist postmodern approach, the transcendent Christian approach (TCA) perceives human beings as God-created creatures in His image (Genesis 1:27). Since God created human beings, this approach considers that God is the ultimate authority that defines: (1) the “self” and his purpose; (2) the other; (3) the world; (4) truth and knowledge.⁹¹ Each of these definitions is not created but discovered by knowing the triune Creator God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) through faith in Christ and the reading of Scripture (Psalms 119:105). Therefore, this approach aims to point individuals’ hearts, minds, and bodies to know and please God.⁹² As a result, the definition of self, the other, the world, truth and knowledge remain

⁸⁶ Grozdanka Gojkov, “Postmodern Pedagogy.” *Educația-plus*. 8, no. 2 (2012): 33.

⁸⁷ Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning*, 139.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 139.

⁸⁹ Steven Bouma-Prediger, and Brian Walsh. "Education for Homelessness or Homemaking? the Christian College in a Postmodern Culture," *Christian Scholar's Review* 32, no. 3 (Spring, 2003): 291.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 291.

⁹¹ Josh Chatraw, Mark D. Allen, and Mark Dwayne. *Apologetics at the Cross an Introduction for Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 216.

⁹² *Ibid*, 216.

constant through time and culture.⁹³ In short, the definition of a human being and all the above categories for the TCA approach is a destination,⁹⁴ not a “resting place”⁹⁵ like the APA approach.

Method

Research Methods

The proposed thesis is descriptive research that compares and analyzes how the transcendent Christian approach and the autonomist postmodern approach to God and humanity shape an individual as a teacher and the effects on his pedagogy and curriculum development in secular universities. After presenting this analysis, the thesis will present a syllabus for a class that integrates the transcendent approach of the Christian faith to be taught at a secular university.

Data Collection

To gather the existing data on the Christian and postmodern approaches in education, this research will use the databases provided for religion at the online portal of Liberty University. Some of those databases include Cambridge Core, eBook Central (ProQuest), EBSCO Quick Search, Twenty Century Religious Thought: Christianity, and World Christian Database. This research will also consider the writings and interviews on renowned Christian professors at secular universities that incorporate the Christian faith and their disciplines- as Alvin Plantinga.

⁹³ Duncan S. Ferguson, *The Radical Teaching of Jesus: A Teacher Full of Grace and Truth: An Inquiry for Thoughtful Seekers* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 62.

⁹⁴ Bouma-Prediger, and Walsh. "Education for Homelessness or Homemaking?", 291

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 291.

Data Analysis

This research will use the descriptive ad hoc reporting category of data analytics to analyze the data gathered from online databases. Additionally, the literature matrix will be used to correlate, evaluate, and synthesize databases from relevant sources based on the main topics of this thesis.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter one presents how college learning relates to a professor's teaching approach. To analyze two teaching approaches, this chapter will present the distinction between the meaning of being a teacher from the Christian faith and postmodernism. One essential element that will be considered to analyze the shaping of a teacher is how each approach defines a human being. The transcendent approach of the Christian faith defines God and human beings as lovers, believers, and thinkers. Opposite from this approach, the autonomist approach defines human beings as social constructs. Since a teacher's identity from the transcendent Christian approach is more consistent and closer to humanity's experience, learning will be increased more from a Christian faith professor than from a postmodernist.

Chapter two explores how the meaning of being a teacher shapes a professor's philosophy of education to learning. This chapter will start by presenting and comparing how the Christian faith's transcendent and postmodern autonomist approach shapes a professor's pedagogy from their definition of education, the purpose of education, and the relationship between faith and learning. From this information, the chapter will conclude by analyzing why the Christian faith approach increases learning more than the postmodern.

Chapter three considers their effects on curriculum development. This chapter will compare and explain the difference between a transcendent Christian and an autonomist

postmodern approach in a class curriculum. Consequently, this chapter will present a Christian transcendent approach based on Philippians 2: 5-11 that follows an inside-out method. Then, this writer will explain how this class curriculum leads to sharing the Gospel and to better learning than a postmodern autonomist approach in higher education institutions.

The conclusion will highlight how the transcendent Christian faith approach to humanity promotes better learning than the autonomist postmodern approach through its definition and application on the meaning of being a teacher, pedagogy, and curriculum development at secular universities. Moreover, this chapter will also highlight how a class that incorporates the Christian transcendent approach will open the door to sharing the Gospel at these institutions.

CHAPTER 1

HOW DOES BEING A CHRISTIAN SHAPE A TEACHER?

To understand the meaning of a teacher, one must understand the substance of being a human being. This understanding defines a person's identity, relationships with God, self, and others, and how he interacts in the world. One way that a person interacts in the world is through his occupation. According to Ross Hastings, "Human doing is important for a human being, that doing cannot be separated from being, and that being is not sufficient on its own."⁹⁶ Since understanding humanity is vital for living, scholars have historically attempted to define humanity. As a result, various approaches have been developed. Two of those approaches are the transcendent Christian approach and the autonomist postmodern approach. This chapter will present how each approach defines a human being and how its definition influences the meaning of being a teacher and his interaction in the academy.

Transcendent Christian Approach to Humanity

The transcendent Christian faith approach defines humans as lovers, believers, and thinkers. To understand how the Christian faith supports this approach, one must consider God – the creator and source of the meaning of humanity. Genesis 1:26-27 records, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.'" Since God created humans in His image,

⁹⁶ Ross Hastings, *Theological Ethics*, 2021.

God defines humanity. Therefore, one must consider how God's love and thoughts define human beings.

Humans are Lovers

To start, one must consider the definition of love. God is love. 1 John 4:16 states, "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." From this truth, Augustine, one of the most influential Christian thinkers, wrote that "love is central for the understanding of God and humanity."⁹⁷ Since God is the definition of love, one must consider that "God's love may be thought of as his eternal giving or sharing of himself. As such, love has always been present among the members of the Trinity, even before there were any created beings."⁹⁸ According to Augustine, the members of the Trinity reflect their love in that,

"The Father, Son, and Spirit exist according to the way they give themselves in love completely to the other persons of the Trinity, revealing a love of absolute giving in which identity is gained and not lost in the giving to the other, and where such self-giving love consummates rather than consumes both the self and the other. The self-giving nature of Trinitarian love, reflected through the divine image in the soul, gifts the self to us. This, of course, does not happen in the absolute and transparent way that occurs within the life of the Trinitarian persons, but rather is conditioned according to the way in which we image God from within the mutable origins of our created natures."⁹⁹

The greatest expression and relation of the trinitarian God's love to humanity "is seen in what God has done. God's love in sending his Son to die for us was not motivated by our prior love for him."¹⁰⁰ As it is stated in 1 John 4:10, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he

⁹⁷ Matthew Drever, "Loving God in and through the Self: Trinitarian Love in St. Augustine." *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 78, no. 1-2 (2017): 18.

⁹⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*. Third edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013.

⁹⁹ Drever, "Loving God in and through the Self," 18.

¹⁰⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 262.

loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” This Scripture also states, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not die but have eternal life.” God had a great plan of Salvation for humanity from the start. His plan was and is salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Knowing God’s will and being part of this redeeming plan, Christ was obedient to God unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8). Before and after His death and resurrection, Jesus announced the promise of the Holy Spirit after His ascension. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, people can believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and enter a relationship with God. Humans experience, know and understand True Love through this relationship with the triune God.

Since the Trinity is the clear expression of love, Drever summarizes Augustine’s function of divine love by stating that it can:

“... function as the constituting root of our personhood because genuine love is not an impersonal force or abstract metaphysical principle – it is not rooted in an emanation from the One – but rather is the free and personal act of the Trinitarian God. Divine love is a personal, and in the case of humans a person-forming, force. This returns us to the Trinitarian nature of God’s own self-love.”¹⁰¹

Knowing that the Creator of humanity is love and has created humanity in his own image, human beings bear God’s nature of love. However, it is essential to consider how this image has been corrupted through the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) and how it has also been redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7).

To understand humanity’s corruption and redemption of love, one must start by reflecting on the characteristics of God’s love. Through 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, Paul describes God’s love as: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does

¹⁰¹ Drever, "Loving God in and through the Self: Trinitarian Love in St. Augustine," 12.

not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.”

Now that the standard has been established, it is essential to consider how love defines humans. James Smith provides a philosophical anthropological definition of human beings by stating,

“Human persons are intentional creatures whose fundamental way of “intending” the world is love or desire. This love or desire— which is unconscious or noncognitive— is always aimed at some vision of the good life, some particular articulation of the kingdom. What primes us to be so oriented— and act accordingly— is a set of habits or dispositions that are formed in us through affective, bodily means, especially bodily practices, routines, or rituals that grab hold of our hearts through our imagination, which is closely linked to our bodily senses.”¹⁰²

In short, Smith argues that “I [human] am what I love or desire: The human person as a lover.”¹⁰³ To support his definition, Smith presents a “desiring” model of human nature. This model constitutes four main parts. First, human intentionality is love’s aim. From Heidegger’s approach, Smith argued that humans’ intentionality is evident in the sense that before intending the world cognitively (think my way to the world), humans intended it non-cognitively (feel my way to the world).¹⁰⁴ Therefore, as Augustine stated, love is the most fundamental way to intend the world.¹⁰⁵ Since humans are primordially and essentially agents of love, their desires and longing define their identity, commitment, and worship – which is the ultimate love.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² James Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 62-63.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 46.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 50.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 50.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 52.

After considering humans as lovers, it is essential to consider how this nature reflects God as a lover. When God created humanity, He enabled humans to love, and their love can only be fully satisfied when they love God and enter a relationship. As Augustine stated, “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”¹⁰⁷ Therefore, whether we choose to love God or not, He chose to make us loving beings like Him. However, we love and desire things besides Him due to our fallen nature. Nonetheless, our loves and desires can be redeemed through Christ. When a person believes in the Lord Jesus, he will be saved and enter a relationship with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:31). Consequently, redeemed human beings’ love aim of nature intentionally shifts from loving idols (including self) to loving God. Smith summarizes humans’ nature of intentionality as love’s aim by stating,

“What distinguishes us (as individuals, but also as “peoples”) is not whether we love, but what we love. At the heart of our being is a kind of “love pump” that can never be turned off— not even by sin or the Fall; rather, the effect of sin on our love pump is to knock it off kilter, misdirecting it and getting it aimed at the wrong things.[25] Our love can be aimed at different ends or pointed in different directions, and these differences are what define us as individuals and as communities.”¹⁰⁸

The second part of Smith’s philosophical and anthropological “desiring” model of human nature is Teleology as love’s end. To understand this part of the model, Smith starts by defining humans as teleological creatures “whose love is aimed at different ends or goals (Greek: *teloi*). As intentional, love always has a target, something that it intends or aims at. So, as we inhabit the world primarily in a noncognitive, affective mode of intentionality, implicit in that love is an end or *telos*.”¹⁰⁹ The end or *telos* of humanity is what they think is a “good life” or what human flourishing

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 77.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 52.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 52.

looks like.”¹¹⁰ These ideas capture humans’ hearts through the imagination of the meaning of living well.¹¹¹ Therefore, human’s ultimate love is their imagery of a good life. This step in Smith’s desiring model is supported by the philosopher Michael Oakeshott. He defines human beings as,

“Creatures of want, but their wants are not biological impulses of genetic urges; they are imagined satisfactions, and are eligible to be wished-for, chosen, pursued, procured, approved, or disapproved. To be human is to imagine possibilities in response to one's understanding, to desire some of the possibilities imagined, and then to act on some of the desires. It is to choose "to say or to do this rather than that in relation to imagined and wished for outcome," each such performance being a disclosure of a man's belief about himself and the world and an exploit in self-enactment.”¹¹²

Like Smith, Oakeshott argued that human’s love for their imagination of good life determines their identity, actions, and relations with the people around them. In other words, their imagination determined their love, and their love determine their life.

After considering humanity’s nature of loving “a good life,” it is interesting how the trinitarian God understands humanity’s perception of a good life and is willing to offer it through Christ. John 6:35 states, “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’” Humanity’s perception of a good life includes the satisfaction of our needs. God knows that our most significant need is a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. This relationship satisfies our deepest need and offers us a good eternal life in heaven with Him – where there is no evil, pain, and suffering. Revelation 21: 3 states, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them; they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,

¹¹⁰Ibid, 52.

¹¹¹Ibid, 52.

¹¹² Nicholas Wolterstorff, et al., *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004),12.

and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Even though this “good life” is God's promise that will be fulfilled in the afterlife for those that have believed in Christ on earth, the earthly life that God offers contradicts society’s standard of good. Socially, a good life is pictured based on relationships, financial security, well-being, satisfaction, avoidance of pain and suffering, and an unmet satisfaction of a need (material or emotional) growing up. Some pictured a loving family of a husband and a wife and an average of two to four kids, a dog or cat, a beautiful big house with a pool, a good job for the husband and the wife, or just for the husband and the wife to stay at home. Their children will be in homeschool or in a private school. All of them are united, gathering for meals and games, enjoying vacations at a nice hotel by the beach or the mountains, traveling, spending time with friends, meeting and exercising at the sports club with friends, and having good and strong social relations. Even though the reflection of this “good life” may look different from person to person, a “good life” is founded on the same principles of financial security and well-being.

Although these are the social standards and principles that move communities, Jesus came to picture a different image of a “good life” for humanity. To analyze this kind of life, one must make a distinction between the earthly life and the eternal life. The earthly life is the life spent on the earth from the moment of conception to death. The eternal life starts after a person dies on Earth. The key to having a “good life” in both lives is Jesus. A “good earthly life” is a life that believes in Jesus and obeys His commandments – such as loving God with all the soul, mind, heart, and strength, and loving others as self (Matthew 22:26-40). However, believing and obeying Jesus is not always reflected in financial security or well-being. The book of Matthew records a rich young man asking Jesus what else should he do besides obey the commands to have eternal life

(19: 16; 20). Jesus answered the young rich man, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Not only Jesus encourages this kind of life, but he also lived this kind of life. Jesus, God the Son, had all the possession of the universe and beyond- way more riches than the rich man (Psalm 24:1). Nonetheless, Philippians 2:5-8 records how Jesus’s “good life” is a humble life that serves others even to the point of His death – the worst death any human could have imagined was a “good life” because He accomplished God’s will. However, the “good eternal life” is pictured as the resurrected Christ that is glorified as God, King, and Lord.

Like Jesus, a “good earthly life” is a life of humility in obedience to Christ. Since the world is corrupted by the sin of the fall, the world rejects and opposes God. Therefore, a person that lives a Christ-like “good earthly life” will suffer tribulation in the world (v. 33). Since suffering and tribulation are part of life, “a good earthly life” is not determined by circumstances or outcomes such as financial security and well-being (no sickness, and good relationships), but by following and obeying Jesus – which incorporates suffering (Romans 8:17), Nonetheless, the resurrected Jesus is the evidence and hope for the “good eternal life.” Those that have believed, followed, and obeyed Jesus will enjoy “a good eternal life.” This is pictured as a glorified life through Jesus Christ. This life is in full communion with the trinitarian God, in heaven, and free from any need, death, pain, and suffering. Consequently, a “good life” is a life that loves the trinitarian God. The desire of this kind of life reflects Smith’s philosophical and anthropological “desiring” model of human nature – that is Teleology as love’s end.

Smith’s third part of his model is habits as love’s fulcrum. Smith defines habits as “a desire for and orientation to a particular vision of the good life (the kingdom) becomes operative in us (motivating actions, decisions, etc.) by becoming an integral part of the fabric of our dispositions—

our precognitive tendencies to act in certain ways and toward certain ends.”¹¹³ The importance of habits of the good life in human nature is that important that Paul wrote, “Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Romans 10:24). From this verse, one could apply Smith’s definition to this verse by considering Paul’s human nature in terms of habits. Paul’s vision of good life is the kingdom of Christ. This vision became operative in him by motivating us to meet and encourage one another. Paul precognitive tendency of the imagery of the good life as the kingdom of Christ in the unity of the brethren made him act in a way that will put him in horrific situations as a victim of torture and violence for the goal of glorifying Christ (Galatians 2:20) through the teaching of the Gospel unbelievers will believe on Christ (Romans 1:16).

Paul’s acknowledgment and actions of the importance of habits in human nature evidence Smith’s argument that,

“Our habits incline us to act in certain ways without having to kick into a mode of reflection; for the most part we are driven by an engine that purrs under the hood with little attention from us. This precognitive engine is the product of long development and formation— it’s made, not some kind of “hard wiring”—but it functions in a way that doesn’t require our reflection or cognition. Our habits thus constitute the fulcrum of our desire: they are the hinge that “turns” our heart, our love, such that it is predisposed to be aimed in certain directions.”¹¹⁴

Paul’s fulcrum of his desire for Christ, turned his heart, love, and predisposed him to certain directions such as praying, reading Scripture, preaching the Gospel to Jews and Gentile, healing the sick, and making decisions that will put him as the victim of horrific torturous situations. This imagery of Paul also reflects Thomas Aquinas thought on habits in the *Summa Theologiae*.

¹¹³ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 53.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 53.

Aquinas stated that “habits are principles of free human actions. It is through habits that man is prepared to reach his objective supreme final end, which is God himself, and his subjective supreme final end, which is beatitude.”¹¹⁵ Even though Paul developed some of these habits after his love change from his religion to Christ, these habits became second nature to him.

Since habits become the driving force of a person’s actions, habits define a person and shape their identity. According to the French philosopher Felix Ravaisson, “Habit, in the widest sense, is a general and permanent way of being, the state of an existence considered either as the unity of its elements or as the succession of its different phases.”¹¹⁶ As a result, a habit is also the “power that underlies the operation of these faculties [sensibility, imagination, understanding, reason or the Will].”¹¹⁷ After an action has been done multiple times, it becomes a habit. It becomes that natural to a person that he just does the habit without even thinking about it. As Aristoteles presented, a “Habit is a second nature.”¹¹⁸ When an individual “has an almost automatic disposition to do the right thing “without thinking about it,”¹¹⁹ Smith considers that individual a “virtuous person.”¹²⁰

A definition and the characteristic of virtue has been studied throughout history for Christian and non-Christian thinkers. According to Peterson, “virtue is a state of character that

¹¹⁵ Sullivan Ezra, and Wojciech Giertych. *Habits and Holiness Ethics, Theology, and Biopsychology*. Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 14.

¹¹⁶ Felix Ravaisson, Clare Carlisle, and Mark Sinclaire. *Of Habit*. 46.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 78.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 46.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 53.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 53.

makes possible the enactment of that which is morally good.”¹²¹ To acquire this state, Aristotle consider that “virtue is tied closely to that of habit, and in this regard a person’s character is determined by personal disciplines.”¹²² Even though that virtue seems to be similar between some classical Christian and non-Christian thinkers, two of the main differences is that for Christian thinkers the love of God shapes human actions. As a result, humans act in virtue. Opposite to Christian thinkers, non-Christin thinkers consider that “the fear of negative consequences for violation of rules or failure to discern our duties properly.”¹²³ Another difference is that while most non-Christian thinkers attribute virtue as a matter of the mind or reasoning,¹²⁴ Christians argue that virtue is not only a human act, but also a divine act. Like the Reformation thinkers, Philosopher and historian Dennis Bielefeld argues that “virtue is not in the head.”¹²⁵ To present the validity of this argument, he quotes the semantic externalism from a contemporary study of Semantic associated with Hilary Putman that “meaning is not simply in the head, but in a real sense out there in the world.”¹²⁶ As an imagery of his conclusion, “Bielefeld argues that two individuals may have identical neural states but different moral ones.”¹²⁷ The difference of morals states evidences individuals’ different perception of the “good life.” Since each perception shapes individuals’ outward behavior through habits, habits are love’s fulcrum.

¹²¹ Ibid, 216.

¹²² Gregory R Peterson, *Habits in Mind: Integrating Theology, Philosophy, and the Cognitive Science of Virtue, Emotion, and Character Formation*. Edited by Gregory R. Peterson (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 79.

¹²³ Ibid, 217.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 217.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 10.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 10.

¹²⁷ Ibid,10.

After Smith's third step of love's fulcrum on the desiring model of humans as lovers, Smith presents the last step of his model as practices for love's formation. According to Smith, "Our worldview is more a matter of the imagination than the intellect, and the imagination runs off the fuel of images that are channeled by the senses."¹²⁸ Since the human nature under which an individual perceives and defines God, self, and others is also influenced by our senses, one must consider their definition and effects. According to Joseph Catalano, "The exploration of the senses is not merely about bodily experience. It is not about sensory organs and the mechanics of bodily stimuli. It is rather an enquiry on the essence of being, on life, on the nature of the subject-object and mind-body dichotomies."¹²⁹ Senses shaped our view and perspective on the material and immaterial objects.

One of the most important thinkers on human senses is Aristotle. He argued that human beings have five senses that "are linked to the primary elements: water (sight), air (hearing), fire (smell), and earth (touch); taste was seen as a form of touch."¹³⁰ Senses were so important to Aristotle that he argued for a connection between "sensation with emotions and affective engagements, a crucial element of sensorial experience: 'where sensation is, there is also pain and pleasure, and where these are there must also be desire'."¹³¹ Opposite to Aristotle that argues for a hierarchy of the senses and gives primacy to one sense over the other, Aquinas gives equal

¹²⁸ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 58.

¹²⁹ Joseph S. Catalano, *The Saint and the Atheist Thomas Aquinas and Jean-Paul Sartre*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021.

¹³⁰ Hamilakis, Yannis. *Archaeology and the Senses Human Experience, Memory, and Affect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

¹³¹ Ibid.

attribute to the sense of sight and touch.¹³² However, Aquinas argues that “the primary relation of things is to the mind of God, but he would also agree that, given this truth, things still have a relation to the human body with its senses.”¹³³ Through our senses, God also allows the human beings to perceive Him and His attributes. In Matthew 5:44, Jesus commands his disciples to love his enemies. To give them a reason on why they should do it, Jesus talked about the love of God by saying, “For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (v. 45). Through our senses, a human being can experience the love of God by sensing the sun and the rain. However, a human being could not relate the sun and the rain as a reflection of the love of God unless he had heard and believed Jesus’s words. Even though people could sense things different, it is important to consider that objective truth can still be found. To explain how the sensible world can provide universality and singularity at the same time, Joseph Catalano wrote through the consideration of Aquinas,

“Moreover, in this world of ours, the universal is in the singular, and thus abstraction must be able to account both for knowing the universal and for knowing it in the singular. For Aquinas this is accomplished by the way our intellect works through the external senses and the internal senses, particularly the imagination, which produce a “phantasm” that is similar to the concrete thing being perceived in the world and in which, nevertheless, there resides a latent likeness (species) of a universal that can be abstracted by the intellect. We must presuppose an engagement on our part with something existing in the world that we are attempting to understand, for example, what it means for an apple tree to be such a being.”¹³⁴

From sensing, teachings, and practices, human beings developed an imaginary picture of a good life. This image reflects the love that leads their lives- since humans are lovers by nature.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Catalano, *The Saint and the Atheist Thomas Aquinas and Jean-Paul Sartre*, 89.

¹³⁴ Catalano, *The Saint and the Atheist Thomas Aquinas and Jean-Paul Sartre*, 105.

However, this imagery is also shaped by the human senses. Smith wrote, “The senses are portals to the heart, and thus the body is a channel to our core dispositions and identity. Over time, rituals and practices— often in tandem with aesthetic phenomena like pictures and stories— mold and shape our precognitive disposition to the world by training our desires.”¹³⁵ Since human beings are naturally loving beings, human beings can adjust their imagery of a good life or the steps to reach their desired goal through their senses. If human beings love because of their senses, human beings’ imagery of a good life will change as well.

For example, the country of Colombia has suffered a terrorist problem for more than fifty-two years. It will be possible to say that most of the Colombia people love to have a peaceful life free from violence. Their image of the good life is a country free from *guerrillas* (terrorist group). In the country, some have experienced the violence more than others. To solve this problem, former president Alvaro Uribe Velez told the people that the desire for peace could be achieved through war between the Colombia’s army and the terrorist group.¹³⁶ One could argue that president’ ideal to achieve the desired peace was due to the death of his father. The *guerrillas* killed President Uribe’s father. As a result, one could argue that he was very sensitive and radical against this group. The people that suffered or encountered the guerrillas at some point described a sense of fear, terror, and anguish. Universally and singularity the guerrillas produce intimidation through the senses. By seeing them in their military attire with their big guns hanging on their chest, people sense fear. By hearing their harsh and cruel words and threats, people are intimidated. By sensing their smell of sweat and forest, people suffer. By sensing their touch, people panic.

¹³⁵ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 59.

¹³⁶ “Álvaro Uribe, sobre el regreso de las FARC a las armas: "Aquí no hubo paz, sino el indulto para responsables de delitos atroces." INFOBAE, <https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2019/08/29/alvaro-uribe-sobre-el-regreso-de-las-farc-a-las-armas-aqui-no-hubo-paz-sino-el-indulto-para-responsables-de-delitos-atroces/>

Even though some Colombians have not personally experienced or encountered people from the *guerrillas*, the title *guerrillas* produce fear, agony, and lament. They are perceived as the interrupters of peace. Therefore, many Colombians consider that the loved and desired peace will only be achieved with the disappearance of this group.

Although many Colombians agree with fighting guerrillas in military war, many Colombians changed their perception when former president Juan Manuel Santos got into power. President Santos' approach to achieve the desire peace in the country was through a diplomatic peace agreement. To accomplish this purpose, President Santos uses various mottos to change the perception of the Colombian people on how to fight against the guerrillas. One of his mottos was "Together for Peace;"¹³⁷ another was "It is time to Forgive."¹³⁸ There were multiple campaigns such as war of white pillows. White pillows were given to "fight" as a symbol of peaceful war. From these campaigns, some Colombian people changed their perspective on the peace agreement and began to perceive it as the right solution, and the moral duty through their senses. Through their eyes, the news and television framed the peace agreement as the solution to achieve the desired peace – people smiling and hugging each other in the cities and in the villages. Through listening to the radio, people constantly receive messages such as "No more war." Even though the loved and desired good life of peace did not change, some Colombians' perception on the means to achieve this goal changed through their senses.

¹³⁷ Armando Neira, "The Time for Santos' Political Campaign Motto." *Semana*. Last modified February 13, 2014. Last Accessed March 19, 2022. <https://www.semana.com/el-lema-de-la-campana-de-santos/377204-3/>

¹³⁸ Segguptya, Somini. "According to Colombian President, forgiveness is crucial to achieve peace." *New York Times*. Last Modified September 20, 2016. Last accessed September 19, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2016/09/20/espanol/america-latina/segun-el-presidente-de-colombia-el-perdon-es-fundamental-para-lograr-la-paz.html>

From this example, one can learn that human beings' loves and desires can be adjusted and changed through practices. Practices include experiences through images, sounds, tastes, smells, and touching interactions. One of the main disciplines that seeks to affect behavior through senses is marketing. Marketing is "the process via which a firm creates value for its chosen customers. Value is created by meeting customer needs. Thus, a firm must define itself not by the product it sells, but by the customer benefit provided."¹³⁹ Marketing approaches people's desires of the "good life" through images comparing their "real" lives with their desired lives. At the end, the message is that the desired life is achievable with their service or product. This kind of practice is posted in videos on the internet and TV and at the mall or at the store that people see repeatedly. Without realizing it, these practices of marketing set a desired image in individuals' mind of what a good life is. Smith wrote,

"Habits are inscribed in our heart through bodily practices and rituals that train the heart, as it were, to desire certain ends. This is a noncognitive sort of training, a kind of education that is shaping us often without our realization. Different kinds of material practices infuse noncognitive dispositions and skills in us through ritual and repetition precisely because our hearts (site of habits) are so closely tethered to our bodies."¹⁴⁰

Although people are not aware of how their desires and love is being shaped through the practices of their surroundings, people will experience these adjustments in their daily decisions on investing time, effort, and money.

After analyzing Smith's "desiring" model of human nature, it is possible to conclude that human beings are lovers by nature. Smith considers that human beings are primarily desiring beings "rather than merely thinking things, I [the author] also thinks that what constitutes our ultimate identities – what makes us who we are, the kind of people we are- is what we love."¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Alvin J. Silk, *What Is Marketing?* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 2006), 3.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 58.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 26.

Their identity and purpose are defined by what they love. This purpose is shaped by their perception of a good life (teleology). This end is achieved through a set of habits that serve as the love's fulcrum through practices that form their love. Therefore, human beings are lovers.

Human as Believer

Besides considering human beings as lovers, the transcendent Christian approach also considers human beings as believers. Augustine highlights the importance and interrelationship of loving and believing in human nature by writing, "When we ask whether somebody is a good person, we are not asking what he believes or hopes for, but what he loves. For one who rightly loves without doubt rightly believes and hopes."¹⁴² The believing aspect of a human being is that essential that God requires human beings to believe in Jesus to be saved (Acts 15:31). For a human being to believe in Christ, he must love the triune God. This love will move a person to believe in Christ and hope for eternity – life after death in heaven with the triune God and other believers (2 Corinthians 5:1). This interrelationship is also evident in the following words of Augustine, "Faith is the beginning of the Christian life; it works through love and concludes with the vision of God, which represents the highest possible human happiness."¹⁴³ To achieve this happiness, one must please and approach God. Therefore, one must believe that God exists and rewards those who seek Him (Hebrews 11). Nonetheless, one must love God, to believe in Him.

Believing is not only at the core of the Christian faith but it is also linked to the core of human nature - loving. Augustine argued that "one must first believe in order to understand, and that understanding comes not through the intellect alone, but from a mind directed and counseled

¹⁴² Augustine, *The Augustine Catechism*, 130.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 13.

by the heart.”¹⁴⁴ A person's love for God will lead him to believe in God even if he cannot fully understand the triune God. A person's belief in Christ results in a change of nature. Without believing in Christ, his human nature is corrupted. This means that his love is distorted. Since his love is distorted, his beliefs, thinking, and actions are also distorted. Augustine reflected that “it is impossible, after all, to love what you do not believe exists,”¹⁴⁵ and that “there is faith in good things and bad, for both good and bad things are believed, and both in good faith, not bad.”¹⁴⁶ Since a person can believe in distorted things due to his distorted love, a person can also believe in ultimate things, if the person loves God. When a person believes in Christ, his human nature is redeemed through the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). This means that a person's love, beliefs, thoughts, and actions are also redeemed, and in a continuous work of sanctification through the work of the Holy Spirit. The central role of religious and non-religious beliefs in a person's life is that,

“They lie at the heart of what makes us human, they shape the organization and functioning of our minds, they define the boundaries of our culture, and they guide our motivation and behavior. Given their central importance, researchers across a number of disciplines have studied beliefs, leading to results and literatures that do not always interact.”¹⁴⁷

Since the concept of belief is important for the salvation and redemption of human nature, and formation of culture, one must study its definition. According to anthropologists, “belief is necessarily part of a system of related ideas, and this system forms the context where ritual action

¹⁴⁴ James R. Peters, *The Logic of the Heart: Augustine, Pascal, and the Rationality of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 25.

¹⁴⁵ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity: De Doctrina Christiana*, ed., John E. Rotelle, O.S.A. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 125.

¹⁴⁶ Augustine, *The Augustine Catechism*, 37.

¹⁴⁷ Nicholas J. Pappas, *Belief and Integrity Philosophical Dialogues*. (New York: Algora Publishing, 2011), 110.

acquires its meaning.”¹⁴⁸ As it was presented by Alvin Plantinga, “beliefs are propositions.”¹⁴⁹ However, those propositions are more than basic ideas.¹⁵⁰ Since beliefs determine how a person perceives God, self, and others (worldview), one must consider human nature's process to accept or reject a belief in his system. According to Plantinga, a basic belief is characterized by its ground of justification based on sufficient and acceptable evidence— no groundless beliefs.¹⁵¹ For example, Calvin argues that since God “has implanted in us [human] a natural tendency to see his hand in the world around us,”¹⁵² it is possible to justify our belief in God in the fact that He “reveals and daily discloses himself to the whole workmanship of the universe,” and the divine art “reveals itself in the innumerable and yet distinct and well-ordered variety of the heavenly host.” God has so created us that we have a tendency or disposition to see his hand in the world about us.”¹⁵³ Therefore, human beings are believers by nature. Some beliefs have been infused in our hearts and minds even before individuals develop a thought process. Smith rightly summarizes this concept by stating,

“We need to recognize the degree to which thinking operates on the basis of faith, that thought is not a neutral, objective activity but rather a particular way of seeing the world that is itself based on prior faith or trust. So, before we are thinkers, we are believers; before we can offer our rational explanations of the world, we have already assumed a whole constellation of beliefs— a worldview— that governs and conditions our perception of the world.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ David Berliner, and Ramon Sarra. *Learning Religion Anthropological Approaches* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 58.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 43.

¹⁵¹ Plantinga, Alvin. “Is Belief in God Properly Basic?” *Noûs* 15, no. 1 (1981): 46.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 51.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 46.

¹⁵⁴ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 43.

Since beliefs determine how a person perceives and analyzes his surroundings, a person's love determines their beliefs, and individuals' beliefs determine their love. In a sense, what defines a human being is what he believes, his commitments, and his trusts that orient what kind of being he is or wants to be in the world.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, those beliefs surpass any religious disciplines and practices. To understand the importance of these beliefs in humanity, Smith reflects on Augustine's through by arguing: "People believe in multiple "truths" that form their worldviews: existential perspectives, evaluations of interpersonal relations ("Does she love me? I believe so..."), political opinions, and so forth. All these beliefs play an important role in everyday life, and many decisions are taken based on them."¹⁵⁶ As a result, a person's beliefs become part of his being that determines how he interacts with his surroundings.

Even though beliefs are part of who human beings are, beliefs can also be formed, adjusted, and transformed. To analyze how individuals' beliefs can be transformed or strengthened, Plantinga argues,

"One's beliefs, for the most part, are not directly under one's control. Most of those who believe in God could not divest themselves of that belief just by trying to do so, just as they could not in that way rid themselves of the belief that the world has existed for a very long time. So perhaps the relevant obligation is not that of divesting myself of theistic belief if I have no evidence, (that is beyond my power) but to try to cultivate the sorts of intellectual habits that will tend (we hope) to issue in my accepting as basic only propositions that are properly basic."¹⁵⁷

Like love, beliefs are also formed by practices. These practices are also influenced by an individual's constant exposure to books, social gatherings, and communication channels – any

¹⁵⁵ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 43.

¹⁵⁶ Jacobsen, Anders-Christian, and Fabio Dalpra. *Explorations in Augustine's Anthropology*. Edited by Anders-Christian Jacobsen and Fabio Dalpra. Berlin: Peter Lang Publishing, 2021, 75.

¹⁵⁷ Plantinga, Alvin. "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?" *Noûs* 15, no. 1 (1981): 43.

channel that affects our senses. One of the most common practices that reflect beliefs are rituals. Even though not all rituals are religious, there is a relationship between beliefs and ritual practices. According to Furseth, “Belief reinforces ritual practice, which again reinforces the belief, and so forth.”¹⁵⁸ Rituals are not limited to religious gatherings or practices, it also includes social and individual practices. A ritual can be as simple as a routine before bed and as complex as going through a close relative or friend’s death. Nonetheless, these rituals are determined by the individual’s beliefs that are interrelated to love. Ultimately, a person’s belief and love provide an imaginary picture of “the good life” that is affected by a person’s habits and practices. Since beliefs cannot be separated from individuals, human beings are believers by nature.

Human as a Thinker

Besides considering human beings as lovers and believers, the Christian transcendent approach also considers human beings as thinkers. Due to humans' natural capacity to think, the Bible describes what kind of things a human should think about. Philippians 4:8 records, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” According to Anders-Christian Jacobsen and Fabio Dalpra, “human beings were created as rational agents, equipped with a will that, at the dawn of creation, was turned freely towards God in a bond of love.”¹⁵⁹ God created human beings with the capacity to think and reason about the divine and the material. Even though most of the material is perceived

¹⁵⁸ Inger Furseth, and Pal. Repstad. *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2016), 26.

¹⁵⁹ Jacobsen, Anders-Christian, and Fabio Dalpra. *Explorations in Augustine’s Anthropology*. Edited by Anders-Christian Jacobsen and Fabio Dalpra. Berlin: Peter Lang Publishing, 2021, 137.

through our senses, many consider that “only the mind can apprehend incorporeal realities.”¹⁶⁰ Therefore, “human beings were created as rational agents, equipped with a will that, at the dawn of creation, was turned freely towards God in a bond of love.”¹⁶¹

Since humans were created in the image of God, it is important to consider how God is a God who thinks and reasons. Isaiah 1: 18 -20 states, “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. “If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” Since God is perfect and the creator of reason, one cannot rightly think apart from Him, His character, and truth. Augustine wrote, “Whereas the image of God is located in the most eminent part of the soul—i.e., the mind—our primary task is to comprehend the mind’s self-knowledge. First, within the mind, humans perceive their existence as autonomous; irreducible to either the world or the creatures around them. “¹⁶²

To analyze how human beings are thinkers by nature, one must consider philosopher Rene Descartes. He considered that “human beings are fundamentally thinking beings by thought and rational operations.”¹⁶³ As a result, he developed the famous method “I think, therefore I am.”¹⁶⁴ Since “humans are defined primarily by the ability to think, by their mind,”¹⁶⁵ Michael Oakeshott

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 158.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 137.

¹⁶² Ibid, 158.

¹⁶³ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 41.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 41.

¹⁶⁵ Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses Human Experience, Memory, and Affect*, 70.

defined human as “to understand the world and oneself, to construct the world and oneself in one way or another.”¹⁶⁶ Therefore, a person’s thought not only determines his identity of self, but also his relationship with God, self, and others, and a person’s meaning and perception of reality.¹⁶⁷ Philosopher John Locke describes how this thought process works by stating, “Reason is a faculty. It is, for one thing, that faculty whereby we see that such-and-such a conclusion follows from such-and-such premises.”¹⁶⁸ Locke considered that one must be guided by reason before believing.¹⁶⁹ Most philosophers that follow Descartes’s mind-body dualism thought on the preeminence of the mind to define human nature based their theories on the assumption that “even if humans were to deprive themselves of all their senses, they would still maintain the ability to think.”¹⁷⁰ However, Yannis Hamilakis critiques Descartes’ assumption by stating, “He overlooked, however, the fact that the thoughts that humans generate with their eyes and ears closed and all their senses withdrawn (assuming, for a moment, that such complete and absolute withdrawal was possible) are thoughts that are based on prior bodily, sensuous experience, which is mnemonically recalled; if such experience did not exist in the first place, there would have been no thoughts.”¹⁷¹ Even though these philosophers framed the importance of thinking in human nature, their theories fall short by excluding a placing human’s ability to think above beliefs and love. To present how this

¹⁶⁶ Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom*, 13.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom*, 112.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 110.

¹⁷⁰ Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses Human Experience, Memory, and Affect*, 70.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 70.

dualistic theory of the mind and body as two separate things framed the idea of humanity as only thinker beings, Smith wrote,

“We might call this a broadly “rationalist” or “intellectualist” picture of the human person, and it has both a long pedigree (back to Plato) and a large progeny (through Kant and into the present). It entails a sense that persons are defined by thinking and is often allied with a sense of functional disembodiment (that is, the person as thinking thing is only contingently related to a body). As such, what nourishes or fuels the “I” is a steady diet of ideas, fed somewhat intravenously into the mind through the lines of propositions and information.”¹⁷²

Since ideas and information is possible due to the beliefs and love of human nature. Like beliefs, thinking partners and processes must be universal and singular at the same time. To explain the subjectivity of defining humans as thinker beings, Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair analyzed how Felix Ravaisson attempted to explain the subjectivity of humans as thinkers by stating,

"The condition of intelligence, declares Ravaisson, is unity: not immediate unity, but the unity of the idea as unity of heterogeneity, power of synthesis – ‘the intelligible unity of a certain diversity’. The most original form of unity is the ‘self’, which accomplishes the synthesis of conscious states, representations and acts of the will. Here Ravaisson begins his analysis of subjectivity as a certain synthesis – the reference to Kant is explicit – of power and resistance. The subject is differentiated from itself in the interval that at once unites and separates its tendency to act and its tendency to receive or to obey. The identity of the self is born from its resistance to itself, and not from resistance to something external.”¹⁷³

To determine the subjective from the objective, it is crucial to consider that there is a distinction between a reason that has been redeemed and renewed by Christ and one that has not. A mind and reason that has Christ are redeemed. As a result, a person will attempt to resist any thought partner that is against the standard of God’s truth because that is a good life- to please his Lord. However, an unredeemed reason will subjectively define the person opposite to God’s design but align with the love of self.

¹⁷² Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 42.

¹⁷³ Felix Ravaisson, Clare Carlisle, and Mark Sinclair. *Of Habit*. Edited by Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair (London: Continuum, 2008), 13.

Since human nature cannot be fully defined and understood without seeing human beings as God's creatures that love, think, and believe, the transcendent Christian approach to human nature will lead to better learning by addressing and pointing students' hearts, beliefs, minds towards Christ. Augustine wrote, "only in interiority can one find the primordial source of all knowledge, that is, the inner Teacher. The inner Teacher, the one who genuinely teaches the truth, is truth itself."¹⁷⁴ Although a college professor is not the inner teacher, but the Holy Spirit. The college professor can point students to know the triune God, who is truth, through His lessons. As a Christian teacher, the individual can define himself as a lover of God whose Christian beliefs have shaped his thoughts and actions to bring glory to God by pointing students to Christ through teaching. As a result, the Christian professors will plan engaging and strategic lessons that capture students' interests by identifying and addressing their love, beliefs, and thoughts that lead them to achieve students' image of a good life. Students will leave the classroom feeling loved, reconsidering, or wondering about their beliefs and thoughts against God's truth and with intellectual knowledge that can be shared in academic and non-academic settings for a lifetime.

Autonomist Postmodern Approach to Humanity

Opposite to the transcendent approach to the human nature of the Christian faith, the postmodern approach decreases learning by limiting human beings to social constructs through language. Before analyzing the postmodern' view on human nature, it is crucial to define postmodernism, its claims, and how it came to be. Ray Linn considers that "postmodernism can best be described as a widespread of cultural development which has been taking shape during the

¹⁷⁴ Jacobsen and Dalpra. *Explorations in Augustine's Anthropology*, 73.

last few decades and which is important because of its treatment of several interrelated themes.”¹⁷⁵ To analyze how postmodernism became a “cultural development,” it is crucial to follow Francis Schaeffer’s advice on analyzing history. Schaeffer’s recorded, “If we are to understand present-day trends in thought, we must see how the situation has come about historically and also look in some detail at the development of philosophic thought-forms.”¹⁷⁶ Even though there is no consensus on the definition of the postmodernism, a historical thesis described postmodernism as, “a kind of post - (after-) modern condition and is sometimes even linked to particular historical events such as student riots in 1968, the abandonment of the gold standard, the fall of the Berlin Wall.”¹⁷⁷ To understand the meaning of this historical concept, three of the main postmodern philosophers defined postmodernism as “claim that postmodernism is that “everyone comes to his or her experience of the world with a set of ultimate presuppositions”¹⁷⁸ [Jacques Derrida]; “as incredulity toward metanarratives”¹⁷⁹ [Jean-Francois Lyotard]; “as the understanding that power is knowledge”¹⁸⁰ [Michel Foucault]. After considering these definitions, it is possible to conclude that postmodernism is an abandonment of its previous movement known as modernism. Modernism was a period where secularism – “the ideology that seeks to complete and enforce secularization...purification of religion, separating its essence from things we think are

¹⁷⁵ Ray Linn, *A Teacher Introduction to Postmodernism*, (Urbanam IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996), xiii.

¹⁷⁶ Smith, James K. A. *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? The Church and Postmodern Culture: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Baker Academic, 2006), 24.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 23.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 72.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 72.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 72.

superstition”¹⁸¹ – is the norm of thought. It is also a period where God is replaced as the source of knowledge and wisdom for human reason through scientific knowledge.¹⁸² As a result, the postmodern period seeks to abandon any source of objective truth and place the perception of relative truth. Jim Leffel wrote regarding postmodern relativism, “says that truth is not fixed by outside reality but is decided by a group or individual for themselves. Truth is not discovered but manufactured. Truth is ever changing not only insignificant matters of taste or fashion, but in crucial matters of spirituality, morality, and reality itself.”¹⁸³ To understand some of the main differences between postmodernism and modernism, Philip Barnes compared both periods in the following table:¹⁸⁴

Modernity	Postmodernity
Universal rationality	Contextual wisdom and historical truths
Impartiality	Partiality
Foundationalism	Anti-foundationalism
Truth as correspondence	Truth as used in socially contexts
Determinate reference	Indeterminate reference
Grand narrative (Lyotard)	Local narratives
Scientific judgment	Subjective knowledge (Foucault)
Uniformity	Difference/ pluralism/ fragmentation
Universalism	Particularism
Knowledge	Power

After considering some of the main differences between the modern and postmodern period, it is crucial to analyze the presuppositions of this period to analyze its concepts of human nature. First, postmodernism presupposes that “culture controls or determines individual’s beliefs

¹⁸¹ Sommerville, John. *The Decline of the Secular University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 87.

¹⁸² Ibid, 7.

¹⁸³ Robert Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning: A Worldwide Approach* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2004) 136.

¹⁸⁴ Philip Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 161.

through language, and his thinking is a social construct.”¹⁸⁵ Second, “personal experience influences the way an individual perceive things.”¹⁸⁶ Third, “Some passages in some texts can be interpreted in more than one way. All interpretations are subject to later possible correction or revision.”¹⁸⁷ Fourth “What the author says he or she intended should not always be the last work in interpretation.”¹⁸⁸ Fifth, “A word can refer to more than one thing; a thing can be referred to be more than one word.”¹⁸⁹ Sixth, “authority is not the final word in analysis, and should be questioned.”¹⁹⁰ Seventh, “It’s impossible to be completely objective.”¹⁹¹ These main presuppositions will shape the postmodern understanding and perception of human nature.

Even though there are many prominent philosophers of the postmodern period, this paper will consider the writings on human nature from five major proponents of postmodernism. These proponents include American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, American philosopher Richard Rorty, German sociologist Marx Weber, French Philosopher Jacques Derrida, and French historian Michel Foucault. Nonetheless, the writings on human nature and social structure from Karl Marx will also be explored to analyze its effects on postmodern thought.

To start defining and analyzing human nature from a postmodern perspective, one could start with the definition and description provided by postmodern anthropologists. As it was stated previously, one of the presuppositions of postmodernity is that since knowledge of human nature

¹⁸⁵ Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning*, 139.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 140.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 140.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 141.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 141.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 142.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 142.

has no foundations, human beings have no “‘essential nature’ to be true to.”¹⁹² As a result, Clifford Geertz argues against the “concept of a creature who has a full and substantial human nature, a fixed nature that, by itself and unmodified by culture, gives determinate shape to how he thinks, feels, and lives in the world.”¹⁹³ Geertz rejects a universal idea of a man or that there are certain universal beliefs in humanity. “The lack of universals supports the postmodern claim that nature does not give a determinate shape to what particular *homo sapiens* came to think, feel, and do in the world.”¹⁹⁴ Since there is not a universal idea of human nature, Geertz provide a way to understand humans through the symbol of language by stating,

“Humans cannot rely in nature to give specific instruction. Rather, heavier needs to be guided by the particular symbolic descriptions that we have internalized. This is considered anti-essentialism position, Geertz goes so as far to say that “given our lack of specific behavioral tendencies, are “the animal most desperately dependent upon such extra-genetic, outside the skin control mechanism, such as cultural programs, for ordering our behavior. Unlike other animals, we lack an immense information gap, a gap between what our body tells us to do and what we need to do in order to survive. And if this gap isn’t filled by symbols, and especially by linguistic descriptions of the world we will be unworkable monstrosities.”¹⁹⁵

To understand Geertz view on humans as the result of symbols, one must understand his distinction between lower animals and the *Homo Sapiens*. Following a modernist view, Geertz supports the theory of human creation and development through evolution. This theory presupposes a change in the body and in the cognitive and non-cognitive abilities in the process of developing modern human beings. Besides considering human beings as animals, he also considers that human beings are incomplete due to their inheritance of extremely general response

¹⁹² Linn, *A Teacher Introduction to Postmodernism*, 2.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 113.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 116.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 115.

capacities.¹⁹⁶ Unlike Homo Sapiens, the lower animals inherit many specific behavior tendencies.¹⁹⁷ Due to the lack of these inherited behaviors, humans (Homo Sapiens) cannot rely on nature to define God, themselves, others, and their world; but, can rely on their cultural traditions that came between the natural world and evolving body type to select and shape their world.¹⁹⁸ In short, Geertz perceived human nature as the result of the culture that has been shaped by language.

Nonetheless, Geertz considers that humanity's emotional life is also organized by particular community language.¹⁹⁹ Geertz wrote, "our ideas, our values, our acts and even our emotions, are, like our nervous system itself, cultural products – products manufactured, indeed, out of tendencies, capacities, and dispositions with which we were born, but manufactured nonetheless."²⁰⁰ Emotions are shaped through various symbols such as communication channels, church, art, film, and stories.²⁰¹ Since postmodernism rejects universalism, emotions are not considered universal, and the use of one symbol could cause different kind of emotions in different places, and in different generations. Following Geertz's idea, postmodernist Richard Rorty states that "we human beings are unique, but only because of a linguistic ability that enables us to create worlds through redescriptions."²⁰² To understand the role of language in human nature, Harris wrote,

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 115.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 115.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 116.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 117.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 118.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 118.

²⁰² Ibid, 3.

“Postmodernism claims that “we [human beings] are imprisoned by the language we use, that our language controls our thoughts, and that therefore reason itself is unreliable, just as a language game. Further, because language controls the way we think, our view of reality is individually or culturally constructed by those around us who use the same language. As a result, there is no such thing as a “correct” or “authoritative” viewpoint. There is no objective authority, and there is no standard other than culturally relative ones. One culture cannot understand another because their different languages create different realities.”²⁰³

Since most postmodern thinkers have been influenced by Karl Marx’s theory of historical development founded on the basic species survival,²⁰⁴ one must consider how Marx presents the seductive logic. This logic considers that “human beings first must get their dinner, and only after do they have time to think, and since thought seems to follow behavior, how human beings act in getting their dinner will determine how they think.”²⁰⁵ This logic greatly affects the perspective of the German Philosopher Marx Webber. According to Webber a human is “an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, [and] I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not experimental science but an interpretative one in search of meaning.”²⁰⁶ Even though Marx considers that human beings are defined by actions and Webber considers that human beings are defined by language, Webber justifies his conception with Marx by stating that “Language should not be ignore because language itself set up hierarchical social divisions in our mind, and in doing so it creates a symbolic desire for social position.”²⁰⁷ Since language is also a reflection of hierarchical social divisions and oppressions, Webber considers Marx’s analysis of oppression. According to Marx,

²⁰³ Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning*, 136.

²⁰⁴ Linn, *A Teacher Introduction to Postmodernism*, 132.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 132.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 132.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 132.

“Human beings oppress one another because there is an economic payoff; under market-based capitalism this means that bourgeois bosses keep down the proletariat through low pay because they must do so in order to compete, make a profit, and stay in business. Economic conditions are seen as all-determining, and the role of language in human life is ignored.”²⁰⁸

For Webber, language is also an expression of the cultural oppressed practices as human beings. It seems that language determines and defines who is the oppressed and oppressor. Human fluid definition and perception of God, self, and others will remain alterable since language is constantly changing over time. These changes are not only relative to the individual, but they are also relative to the culture. As language changes, culture will change, and the definition and perception of human beings will change. In short, human beings are social constructs of language.

Since language plays a crucial role in postmodernism, one must consider how postmodern attempts to change culture through language. One way to shape language is through deconstructionism. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida is the main proposer and advocate of this concept. To explain deconstructionism, Derrida claimed that “nothing is outside the text.”²⁰⁹ According to Smith, this expression means that “everything is interpretation; interpretation is governed by context and the role of the interpretive community.”²¹⁰ As result deconstructionism “is interested in interpretations that have been marginalized and sidelined, activating voices that have been silenced.”²¹¹ Since Derrida is a “linguistic idealist who thinks there is only language, not things— only texts, not cups or tables,”²¹² Derrida perceives the world, humans, and everything

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 132.

²⁰⁹ Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* 70.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 70.

²¹¹ Ibid, 67.

²¹² Ibid, 47.

in terms of texts. Consequently, “the world is subject to interpretation, and interpretation brings in the role of our horizons of perception and our presuppositions.”²¹³ In short, Derrida considers that to know something one must interpret everything. Since a person will never be able to fully interpret a text in the way it was supposed to be interpreted by the author, interpretations are subject to every human being. Smith considers that Derrida’s claimed that “nothing outside the text” is “a naive assumption because it fails to recognize that we never really get “behind” or “past” texts; we never get beyond the realm of interpretation to some kind of kingdom of pure reading.”²¹⁴ Since the world and human beings are full of things not words, it is worth asking, how can a human being interpret himself without having a standard? Will a human being find the right and final interpretation? If it is a continuous process, will the human being ever be defined? According to Harris, deconstructionism’s “hoped result is to create a confusion about the work, weaken its effect, and thus render it powerless.”²¹⁵ Derrida’s position reflects postmodernist’s presupposition or relativism and particularism.

Like Derrida emphasized the centrality of language through deconstructionism, Jean-Francois Lyotard also emphasized its centrality through the destruction of metanarratives. According to Lyotard, a metanarrative is “thought that the term refers simply to big stories—grand, epic narratives (grand recites) that tell an overarching tale about the world. In other words, many assume that metanarratives are the target of postmodern disbelief because of their scope, because they make grand, totalizing claims about reality and have universal pretensions.”²¹⁶ Due

²¹³ Ibid, 71.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 88.

²¹⁵ Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning*, 154.

²¹⁶ Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?* 80.

to the presence of universalism in metanarratives, postmodernists reject them based on “the very idea of an autonomous reason, a universal rationality without ultimate commitments.”²¹⁷ This means that every person has the authority to think of himself, the world, and others as he wants. As a result, every person is no longer subject to any objective or ultimate source like “God” or “scientific reason,” but to self.²¹⁸ Since the “authority of self” is relative, it is in a state of constant change. Nonetheless, “the self” is the ultimate authority to decide whether a perspective or a “truth” change.²¹⁹ James Peter critiques the role and problem of autonomy exaltation in postmodernism by stating:

“As I have already noted, radical postmodernists share with their modernist predecessors a deep attraction to the power of intellectual autonomy. A central part of my critique of radical postmodernism contends that it is not radical enough: having witnessed the sudden collapse of the modern Enlightenment citadel of autonomous reason, contemporary postmodernists ought to be as circumspect about the “lure of autonomy” as they are about the objectivity of reason. By “the lure of autonomy” I refer to the human temptation to rebel against all higher authority so that we can regard ourselves, either individually or collectively, as the final judges and highest authorities on matters of ethical and religious concern. The spiritual embodiment of the lure of autonomy is Gnosticism: the gnostic presumes that we can liberate ourselves by breaking free from dependence on tradition and embodiment and thereby through elite enlightenment assert our own rightful independence over against the restrictive claims of tradition and the limits imposed on us by our embeddedness in the social and material world order.”²²⁰

In postmodernism, each person is the highest authority of self, knowledge, and interaction with others. Therefore, the other must accept a person’s self-definition on self, the world, and his society. Metanarratives are viewed as no longer necessary since every person must create their own definition of self and create their own history to choose their beliefs. Metanarratives, which are universal constants, violate one of the pillars of postmodernism- which is autonomy. In other words, metanarratives violate the authority of self.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 96.

²¹⁸ Peters, *The Logic of the Heart*, 167.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 167.

²²⁰ Ibid, 167.

Besides seeing metanarratives as a violation to “autonomous reason and authority,” postmodernists also reject them “from the fact that modernity denies its own commitments, renounces its faith, while at the same time never escaping it.”²²¹ Another reason that postmodernists reject metanarratives is that they are seen as universal autonomous reasons that historically have been used to marginalized and oppressed individuals and communities.²²² Therefore, Lyotard “legitimize diversity by validating local diversity over universal autonomous reason – this includes religion as well.”²²³ To accomplish the abolishment of metanarratives, Lyotard concludes that “the work of the philosopher not to supply reality but to invent illusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented.”²²⁴ Even though metanarratives are considered language and language defines the world in postmodernism, Lyotard seeks to eliminate metanarratives.

Like Lyotard and Derrida, Michel Foucault also highlights the importance of language through knowledge, power, and discipline. Foucault claims that “Power is knowledge.”²²⁵ This claim seems to indicate that “power relations that stand behind both institutions and ideals.”²²⁶ According to Foucault, “social institutions and relationships are necessarily constructed on the basis of power relations; power is ubiquitous.”²²⁷ These ideas seem to show evidence of Nietzsche’s influence on Foucault. Nietzsche claim that “good and evil are just names that we give

²²¹ Ibid, 96.

²²² Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity*, 170.

²²³ Ibid, 170.

²²⁴ Ibid, 170.

²²⁵ Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?* 117.

²²⁶ Ibid, 119.

²²⁷ Ibid, 136.

to the power interests of the strong versus those of the weak.”²²⁸ From this perspective, Foucault argued that humanity has been affected by “the shift from one combat to another, from one form of domination to another.”²²⁹ This idea seems to be influenced by Karl Marx’ historical development theory through the lenses of the oppressed and the oppressors. From this, one could argue that human nature is a dichotomy between the oppressed and the oppressors. Depending on a person’s power relations, a person can be defined as an oppressor or oppressed. This label will determine a person’s identity, life, thoughts, feelings, actions, and relationships. Since “the root of the most cherished and central institutions is a network of power relations,”²³⁰ relationships seem to be the most significant aspect to defining a human being.

However, these relationships work under discipline. According to Foucault, “discipline is ubiquitous and is aimed at formation for a specific end, and that end is determined by our founding narrative.”²³¹ Like other postmodernists, language lies at the heart of his theory. Language defines the kind of formation that people need, the means to achieve it, and the kinds of human beings that want to be produced.²³² Since people (the oppressors) define the language, and language defines disciplines, and disciplines define other people (the oppressed), human beings are defined by other human beings. However, who defines the individual that has the most power and each narrative if there are no universals? Even though there are many unanswered questions, it is possible to

²²⁸ Ibid, 119.

²²⁹ Ibid, 119.

²³⁰ Ibid, 117.

²³¹ Ibid, 138.

²³² Ibid, 138.

conclude that postmodernism's autonomist approach to human beings defines them as social constructs of language and power relations.

After considering, the postmodern approach of human beings, it is possible to analyze how this approach shapes a teacher. Since a teacher is a human being before his vocation, the postmodern teacher also defines himself in terms of language and power relations. One of the reasons for a teacher to define himself through language is the postmodern relationship between language and knowledge. Xin Lu Gale expands on this relationship by stating that,

“The view that knowledge is generated by language through social interactions is the key to understanding social constructionists' criticism of the traditional role of the teacher in the writing class. First, since social constructionism denies that there is a universal foundation behind or beneath knowledge, upon which what we know is built, social constructionism denies that there exists any objective knowledge of certainty or truth. Instead, social constructionists believe that "there is only an agreement, a consensus arrived at for the time being by communities of knowledgeable peers. Concepts, ideas, theories, the world, reality, and facts are all language constructs generated by knowledge communities and used by them to maintain community coherence" (Bruffee 1988, 777). In other words, for social constructionists, all knowledge is contingent and flexible, depending on communal consensus rather than some reality independent of human consciousness. Following this line of reasoning, the teacher's knowledge, which gives the teacher the supreme authority in the classroom, loses its prestigious status as "truth."²³³

Since the teachers lose their prestigious status as “truth,” the teacher seeks to create “truth” and “knowledge.” To achieve this task, the professor has two resources. One resource is the professor’s attempt to reach a consensus with his students on “truth” and “knowledge” through “the use of symbols such as language.”²³⁴ This resource seeks to reduce teacher’s identity by making him only necessary if “he works as an individual in an ideal laboratory for learning along with students.”²³⁵

²³³ Xin Liu Gale, *Teachers, Discourses, and Authority in the Postmodern Composition Classroom* (Place of publication not identified: State University of New York Press, 1996), 19.

²³⁴ Anita Oliver, "Postmodern Thought and Christian Education," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 10, no. 1 (2001): 13.

²³⁵ Gale, *Teachers*, 17.

However, if the students are able to reach a consensus without the teacher, the teacher is no longer necessary.²³⁶ This resource seeks to remove the authority of the teacher in the classroom and lower him to the intellectual level of the students. Even though the professor will seek to create “knowledge and truth” with his students, the professor has already created “knowledge and truth” through the consensus with his peers. Besides creating knowledge through consensus, the postmodern teacher has also created “knowledge and truth” through his observation and experience – empirical resources.²³⁷ Since teachers create “knowledge” and “truth” from both resources, the postmodern teachers face the existential question of: “whether the knowledge they are teaching is of an empirical nature or whether it can be constructed and negotiated with students?”²³⁸

In the postmodern attempt to answer this question and help the teachers construct their identities and understand their role in the classroom, postmodern scholars have developed three main teacher identities. One identity is known as the nurturing teacher.²³⁹ This kind of teacher is defined by postmodern writer Maxine Hairston as one who:

“... will do everything to ensure that in her class nothing disturbing would happen that might distract students' attention from writing about whatever they are interested in. Although Hairston also talks about an "interactive classroom," the interaction is strictly among students — a process Hairston calls "decentering" — with the teacher simply playing the role as the guardian angel of the threshold of the heavenly haven, in which students' intellectual growth without pain and struggle is ensured by the teacher, the protective and nurturing mother.”²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Ibid, 17.

²³⁷ Oliver, "Postmodern," 14.

²³⁸ Ibid, 13-14.

²³⁹ Gale, *Teachers*, 132.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 132.

In this view, the teacher makes sure that the students are not abusing one another. Even though the teacher does not seem to have an active and predominant role, the teacher establishes and enforces the rules of the classroom, the definition and practices of respect and tolerance in her classroom, and what kind of words, statements, and interactions are abusive. Many postmodern teachers have established this kind of teaching and suffered the negative effects of this approach. Carolyn H. Hill, a teacher of writing, shared her frustrated experience on “being” a nurturing teacher by arguing that,

“... no matter how nurturing the mother/teacher is, the asymmetrical power relationship in the classroom will not change because of the teacher's soft stance. Reflecting on her own teaching, Hill observes that she wants to play the role of the nurturing mother/teacher and rejects academic authority for the sake of students' "individual authority over their mental space." However, in practice she has been vacillating between the soft stance and the hard stance because the two seemingly opposing stances are never really separated. Hill writes, I imagined my position to be a caring one, opposed to the rule-ridden ones I thought so unlike mine. Like Brian, I lived my professional life and argued between those two seemingly separate poles. Hindsight shows me that my long-term teaching habit of seesawing, between the conscious, accepted position and the unconscious, unacceptable one, generated some interesting entanglements with certain students. Ostensibly I wanted to give up authority, help students to be self-starters. Covertly, the institution and I collaborated to see to it that students be quickly notified if that start did not place them in the proper arms of Standard English, focused and controlled. (1990, 78) The point Hill tries to make is that, even though her "loyalty to the hard line of that discipline was a reluctant one," and even though she "had trouble" seeing herself "in the role of controlling authority or parent," she nonetheless demands students' academic obedience and will try every means to ensure it. The nurturing mother/teacher is after all the controlling authority in the classroom; her "un-sharable power of the positions" was "a given" (77). Students in the nurturing mother/teacher's classroom will not "openly or frankly assume a give-and-take negotiation of their own perceptions and sentiments about class events," Hill maintains. For either they are allowed so much freedom in the classroom to wander away, physically and mentally, from assigned work that the pain and struggle of learning new things are reduced by the lowered expectations from the teacher, or they simply subject themselves so completely to the control, judgment, and protection of the teacher that they do not feel the need for negotiation. In either case, the nurturing teacher's control is secured, whether at the expense of giving up the teacher's obligations to the institution or at the cost of impeding the development of students' independent thinking and negotiating ability.”²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Ibid, 134.

The implementation of the nurturing teacher not only limited the teacher and prevented her from imparting knowledge to her students, but the teacher was also frustrated for student's lack of interest in learning and lack of responsibility. Due to students' response, the teacher was frustrated for using her teaching authority to enhance learning in her students. She even seems to admit that uncontrollable freedom prevents students from learning.²⁴² Hill's postmodern unrealistic expectation of removing all authority from the classroom by being a nurturing teacher seems to challenge her identity as a teacher and learner.

Like the nurturing teacher, another teacher identity that seeks to remove all authority from the classroom but fails is the teacher identity of an emancipator. This kind of teachers

“... are upfront about their political and social commitment and their criticism of and resistance against the dominant ideology and its hegemonic power. Their goal in teaching is often transformation: transforming the school system that reproduces inequality and injustice (Giroux), transforming the male university culture that excludes and suppresses women's voices, transforming the composition discipline that designates working-class students as remedial (Hurlbert and Blitz), transforming traditional institutional practices that turn students into objects rather than subjects through dialogic approach, transforming classrooms into sites of struggle for democracy (Daumer and Runzo), and so forth. In a sense, emancipatory teachers are also social fighters: they fight for their political, social, and cultural ideals, and they bring their battles into the classroom where they begin the emancipatory process with their oppressed students.”²⁴³

The emancipatory teacher uses his classroom as a political platform to enhance his love, beliefs, and “truths” in his students with the aim of achieving a political agenda. Since students are forced to accept the teacher's moral values, students will usually responded through silence or by echoing “what the teacher has said.”²⁴⁴ This kind of teacher “would embody the mind-set that generates the often-heard question: ‘What do you want?’ from the student.”²⁴⁵ Nonetheless, once the teacher

²⁴² Ibid, 134.

²⁴³ Ibid, 136.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 138.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 138.

has indoctrinated her students with her political cause, she has most likely produced the student's future political behavior.

An example of this kind of teacher and his influence is reflected in the German book-based movie released in 2008, *The Wave*. In this movie, Mr. Ross, a professor, conducts an experiment with his class by creating a movement called *The Wave* to teach why the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler occurred in Germany.²⁴⁶ To start the experiment the professor asks his students if they think that “there could be another dictatorship in Germany?”²⁴⁷ To this question, a student answers, “No, we are too enlightened now.”²⁴⁸ After this, the professor starts his experiment by making them march in a certain way in the classroom. Then, the students and the professor reach a consensus on the name, logo, and rules of the movement and use slogans such as “Strength to discipline”²⁴⁹ or “Strength through community and strength to action.”²⁵⁰ The students also start wearing white shirts and even bully other students so that they become part of the movement. Students that do not agree with or follow the rules of the movement in the classroom have to leave or are silenced. Students also begin to make appearances in the community as a movement. At the end of the movie, the professor is forced to end the experiment when one of the students who has found his identity in this cause and movement commits suicide. This movie illustrates how a teacher can become an emancipator and the detrimental results that this identity can bring to an academic institution. The professor took the role of the emancipator by promoting his personal idea that a

²⁴⁶ *The Wave*, directed by Dennis Gansel, featuring Jurgen Vogel, format of movie (Rat Pack Filmproduktion and Christian Becker, 2008), DVD.

²⁴⁷ “Quotes,” *The Wave*, IMDb, last modified 2023, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1063669/quotes/?ref_=tt_trv_qu

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ *The Wave*, 2008. DVD.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

dictatorship could recur in contemporary Germany. The teacher's emancipatory identity was also reflected when students who disagreed with the ideas in the classroom were expelled from the class, and others were silenced. Students who felt oppressed in their schools and families find this movement as a “liberation” from their oppressors. Since liberating students from the “oppressors” becomes the goal of an emancipatory teacher, this movie presents the failure of a teacher that finds his identity as an emancipator by losing his students, his vocation, and even himself.

Like this movie presents the failure of a teacher as an emancipator, teachers that have taken this postmodern teacher identity into the real world have also experienced failure by not enhancing learning in their students and are facing existential crisis in their vocations as teachers. C.H. Knoblauch, a postmodernist professor at the University of North Carolina, describes his experience and teacher vocational and existential struggle by trying to “apply critical pedagogy to the teaching of a group of students from the ‘comfortable middle of the American middle class and from the White, mainstream suburban culture.’”²⁵¹ Xin Gale reports Knoblauch’s experience by stating:

“In ‘Critical Teaching and Dominant Culture,’ Knoblauch observes how his liberatory intention and pedagogy became seemingly out of place in a class in which most students are hardly poor, oppressed, disenfranchised outsiders but are politically, ideologically, culturally, financially, and academically comfortable people who aspire for The Good Life that only the American dominant class and culture can offer. Within such a context, Knoblauch asks himself a series of questions about critical teaching: Who is to be liberated from what? Who gets to do the liberating? What is the role of the teacher in this class?”²⁵²

From Knoblauch’s experience, one could argue that the identity of a teacher as an emancipator seems to fail by not meeting the needs of all students regardless of social-economic status, race, and beliefs. Since learning and teaching is perceived as something constructed individually and not universally, teachers that take the emancipatory teacher identity seem to make distinctions

²⁵¹ Gale, *Teachers*, 139.

²⁵² *Ibid*, 139-140.

between their students based on social economic status, race, and gender.²⁵³ This distinction of learning could develop individuals that will be “oppressed” in society due to their lack of learning, knowledge, and conceptual tools of what they should have acquired while they were in the school regardless of their personal and social conditions.²⁵⁴ Therefore, the emancipatory teacher fails to achieve the postmodern goal of removing all forms of authority that contributes to an oppressive social relationship, limits students learning based on their racial and social condition and opens or expands the gap between those that are “oppressed” and “oppressors” through knowledge.

Besides the postmodern teacher identity as an emancipator, postmodernism also has the teacher identity as a mediator. This kind of teacher sees himself as a “a cultural mediator, whose responsibility is not only to teach students how to write correctly but to facilitate students' entry into school culture and to initiate students into the academic Community.”²⁵⁵ Even though the idea of a teacher as a mediator also seeks to remove any distinction between classes, this view enforces dichotomy distinctions by stating that,

“... teachers are insiders and students are outsiders of the academic community, that the insiders' culture and language are aspired to by outsiders because of their superiority, and that the outsiders have to struggle and sweat in order to become insiders. In addition, because of the intrinsic goodness of academic discourse and the desirability of gaining entrance to the privileged academic community, the good intentions of mediating teachers are taken for granted. The teachers are there to guide students to move from their minority cultures to mainstream culture, to ease their pain and suffering as they move away from their home communities to join the new community of academics.”²⁵⁶

Like the other identities, this identity also seeks to remove any oppressive relationship in the classroom and society. Nonetheless, the teacher as a mediator seems to promote an oppressive

²⁵³ Ibid, 141.

²⁵⁴ Ronald Barnett, “Knowledge, Higher Education and Society: A Postmodern Problem,” *Oxford Review of Education* 19, no. 1 (1993): 43.

²⁵⁵ Gale, *Teachers*, 141.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 140.

relationship by making a distinction between “oppressed minority students” and the “oppressors’ large community of academics.” Besides establishing this distinction, this kind of teacher aims to move students from an “oppressed” situation to an “oppressor” situation. To achieve this task, Gale argues that the teachers “not only need to know all the existing normalized theories and pedagogies in their discipline, but they also need to critique and investigate the implications of these theories and pedagogies to create Responsive Abnormal Discourse.”²⁵⁷ This kind of Discourse is:

“... characterized by the writer's familiarity with the norms, conventions, ideologies, and major concerns of normal discourse as well as by the writer's intention to ignore or abandon them. Nonetheless, the writer's ability to ignore or abandon them to produce Responsive Abnormal Discourse does not come merely from the writer's willfulness but develops in the process of the writer's intimate interaction with normal discourse. In this sense, Responsive Abnormal Discourse depends on normal discourse for its creation and existence, for without the writer's experience with normal discourse it would be impossible for Responsive Abnormal Discourse to find its subject matters or means of articulation. Its relationship to normal discourse is therefore parasitic and derivative.”²⁵⁸

The mediator teacher sees Responsive Abnormal Discourse as an effort to resist the normal discourse that reflects insensitivity to “the tension caused by class, race, and gender differences.”²⁵⁹ Only by having a Responsive Abnormal Discourse, students will be “encouraged to take the subject position as the narrator when interacting with the teacher.”²⁶⁰ By taking this position, this view considers that students no longer take the passive role of a learner through listening, but he also becomes an active learner and teachers. This will also remove authority from the professor as authoritative, and students will share authority with the teacher. Even though the

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 147.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 80.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 146.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 146.

Responsive Abnormal Discourse seeks to help students feel secure in the environment, the Responsive Abnormal Discourse limits student's expression according to the teacher's standards on "classism, racism, and sexism."²⁶¹ Like the other postmodern teachers' identity, the teacher as a mediator also fails to break oppressive relationships and reflects authoritative tyrannical actions to create a learning environment "free" from pain and suffering by limiting students' expression and opinion if it will caused pain to another student according to the teacher's relative standards.

The postmodern ideas and attempts to break the "oppressive" relationships in education by equalizing teacher's and student's authority have failed in theory and in practice due to their use of "oppressive power" to alter authority from one group to another. To understand how postmodernism can be tyrannically and oppressive in an institutional environment, Gale expands on postmodernism's arbitrary of teaching and knowledge:

"First, teaching is arbitrary in the sense that, not only are meanings selected to be taught usually chosen in accordance with the material, symbolic, and pedagogic interests of the dominant groups or classes, but the selection of these meanings is based on and legitimized by power relations (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 7). In other words, the process of selecting meanings is arbitrarily decided upon, usually by the culture in power, and the meanings selected are also arbitrary—a symbolic system that represents the "structure and functions of that culture" which "cannot be deduced from any universal principle, whether physical, biological or spiritual," nor be "linked by any sort of internal relation to 'the nature of things or any 'human nature'" (8). The "cultural arbitrary" is the product of power; those who are in power decide on the process of selection and the meanings to be selected."²⁶²

Postmodernism's approach of eliminating any oppressed-oppressor relationship seems incoherent when teachers and students are still oppressed by the consensus of the higher community of educators, policymakers, and even businesses that determine the nature of

²⁶¹ Ibid, 146.

²⁶² Ibid, 37.

knowledge and truth.²⁶³ Like this approach is incoherent at the higher levels, it is also incoherent in a local classroom due to the authority factor. Teachers reflect two kinds of authority. First, the teacher reflects the “authority of office”²⁶⁴ which represents the “power to enforce obedience.”²⁶⁵ Second, teachers also reflect “the authority of expertise” which represents the “power to influence action, opinion, and beliefs.”²⁶⁶ Both authorities are secured by the knowledge that the teacher claims and demonstrates to have through his degrees, research, and contributions to the academia.²⁶⁷ Even though postmodernism's attempt to remove all authority from the teachers seems incoherent and unachievable, the postmodern educational approach of promoting a political agenda in academic institutions has led many teachers to oppress their students by silencing them if they oppose the teachers’ and culture’s opinions. To reflect how the postmodern teacher oppressed his students by silencing them, Gale argues that:

“When students are "silenced by the teacher's political agenda," the power that silences them stops being the authority Bizzell endorses. Only coercive power will silence the students, an institutional power that grants authority to the teacher's political agenda. Seen in this light, Bizzell's authority does not differ much from the traditional teacher's authority: for the authority of both depends on the teacher's prestigious discourse, and both justify their superiority to their students by the position they hold in the institution. Like the traditional teacher's authority, personal authority can also oppress in the classroom context. Paine's and Bizzell's arguments are derived from the radical school's view of the teacher's authority, which has been formed in the course of the radical educationists' struggle against the hegemony of the dominant groups in society and in schools in the past two decades. In order to counter the negative effects generated by the series of education reforms that have weakened the teacher's authority and made teaching difficult, radical educationists like Paine and Bizzell attempt to use personal authority in lieu of institutional authority to achieve their democratic and emancipatory goals in schools. However, in their struggle to break away from oppressive institutional authority, radical educationists risk the danger of

²⁶³ Ibid, 37.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 37.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 37.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 37.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 37.

suppressing the institutional authority implicated in the teacher's personal authority and consequently of suppressing students with personal authority in the classroom.”²⁶⁸

Paine and Bizzell’s postmodern argument of using teacher’s personal authority to suppress students that reject teacher’s and culture’s emancipatory goals reflects postmodern educational failure of enhancing learning in students. Theoretically, it has been presented how postmodern seem to contradict themselves on the teacher’s identity, role, and use of authority in a classroom. Nonetheless, historical events present practical evidence on how the postmodern ideas on the limited and almost no-authority of the teacher limits and damages learning in students, teacher, and researchers. The Chinese education crisis between 1966 and 1976 is one of the many historical events that reflect on how this approach negatively affects teacher and students:

“Was the climax of Mao Tsetung's series of political movements since 1949 aimed at transforming the superstructure in China to suit the economic basis that was supposed to serve the proletarian classes— workers, peasants, and soldiers. Always critical that the Chinese educational system had been serving the interests of the old, overthrown ruling class and excluding the broad masses from college education, Mao called on the working class, the new ruling class, to destroy the old educational system and build a new one that would serve the interests of the broad masses. Mao accused the Chinese intelligentsia of attempting to restore the lost paradise of feudalists, imperialists, and capitalists through propagating bourgeois ideologies in teaching, and the Cultural Revolution, as he named it, was launched to mobilize workers, peasants, soldiers, and revolutionary students to take over the power of the academics so that the proletariat would become masters of colleges and universities. Cruelly persecuting prominent scholars and professors with various means, persistently denouncing through mass media the ‘conspiratory crimes’ committed by academics to try to overthrow the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat,’ abandoning the traditional college entrance procedures and traditional ways of teaching, Mao successfully paralyzed the academic institution with cries of ‘education crisis.’ Deng Xiaoping, who had spoken in defense of the autonomy of the academic institution and had been criticized severely by Mao at the beginning of the Revolution but pardoned later, lamented in 1975: Out of the 150,000 scientific and technical cadres in the Academy of Sciences, no one dares go into the research laboratories. They are all afraid of being disparaged as ‘white’ specialists. The young are frightened and the old are frightened. . . . Research personnel no longer read books nowadays. (Meisner 1977, 387) Schools suffered even more severe damages. When the Revolution started in 1966, young Red Guards did what Mao deemed revolutionary: Turn the old-world upside down, smash it to pieces, pulverize it, create chaos and make a tremendous mess, the bigger the better. (339).”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 52-53.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 41.

From the Chinese educational experience, one can learn that the postmodern approach negatively affected education by discouraging students and teachers to learn, read, teach, and develop scientific and technical research.

Like this approach resulted in an educational crisis in China, the implementation of this approach seems to give the same result in the United States in the twentieth-first century. First, teachers are affected by the postmodern idea of the role of a teacher by being “confused and disconnected”²⁷⁰ from their vocation and their students. Second, teachers also face personal anxiety for authenticity that results in a “continuous psychological quest in a world without a secure moral anchor.”²⁷¹ Third, “the paradox of globalization creates national doubt and insecurity and carries with it dangers of resurrecting and reconstructing traditional curricula of an ethnocentric and xenophobic nature.”²⁷² Fourth, “Organizational fluidity challenges the balkanized structures of secondary school teaching, yet addresses the needs for collaboration and shared occupational learning in contexts that are larger and more complex than small, simple elementary schools.”²⁷³ Fifth, “Technological sophistication and complexity create a world of instantaneous images and artificial appearances.”²⁷⁴ Sixth, “The compression of time and space can lead to greater flexibility, improved responsiveness and better communication in our schools, but it can

²⁷⁰ Andy Hargreaves, *Changing Teachers, Changing Times Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2001), 83.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 83.

²⁷² Ibid, 83.

²⁷³ Ibid, 83.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 84.

also create intolerable overload, premature burnout, superficiality and loss of purpose and direction.”²⁷⁵ Seventh,

“Moral and scientific uncertainty reduces confidence in the factual certainties of what is taught, decreases dependency on scientifically "proven" "best methods" of how things are taught, and makes it difficult to secure moral agreement about why things are taught. In response, teachers are either becoming more involved in developing their own missions and visions or are being placed at the moral mercy of the market force of parental choice or are being directed to extol and expound the virtues of standards, tradition and basic skills by those who nostalgically reconstruct mythical certainties of ill-remembered pasts. The challenge for teachers is to develop situated rather than scientific certainties in their own schools as collaborative communities. But these should also embrace and be attentive to broader moral frameworks that extend beyond their own particular schools to the domains of policy and public debate.”²⁷⁶

The lack of moral and epistemological universality and objectivity in teaching makes the postmodern teacher very uncertain of his identity, his vocation, his field of expertise, and his relationship with the students. This uncertainty makes the teacher anxious about what to teach.²⁷⁷

As a result, the teacher may take one or all the proposed postmodern teacher identities of nurturing mother, emancipator, and mediator.²⁷⁸ Sadly, as it was previously presented, the teacher that takes any or all proposed postmodern identities will still fail to achieve his unrealistic expectation of breaking any authority relationship in the classroom without the use of coercive power.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 84-85.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 82-83.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 82-83.

²⁷⁸ Gale, *Teachers*, 139.

CHAPTER 2

HOW DOES BEING A CHRISTIAN SHAPE PEDAGOGY?

After analyzing how a transcendent Christian approach and the postmodern approach shape a teacher, this chapter will analyze how each approach shapes a teacher's pedagogy. Pedagogy is crucial in education. Some scholars consider that pedagogy "designates the transmission of information from one point to another."²⁷⁹ Others surmise that pedagogy "signals the communication, dissemination, or production of knowledge, analysis, and theoretical frameworks."²⁸⁰ In short, "Pedagogy is how we teach what we teach."²⁸¹ Since pedagogy is like the driving force of education, it is crucial to remember that education is "the formation of the heart and desires --- the vision of the "good life"--- instead of the absorption of ideas and information."²⁸² Therefore, a teacher's pedagogy forms students' hearts, minds, and beliefs.

Since pedagogy cannot be separated from the teacher, every pedagogy is shaped by a philosophical anthropology.²⁸³ To analyze the effect of philosophical anthropology, Smith presents a distinction between a pedagogy that primarily perceives human beings as "thinking things" and cognitive machines and a pedagogy that perceives them as primarily lovers. For the first pedagogy, "ideas and concepts are at the heart because they are aimed primarily at the head."²⁸⁴ The second type of pedagogy or *formative pedagogy* "considers that our thinking and cognition arise from a

²⁷⁹ Derek R. Ford, *Politics and Pedagogy in the Post-Truth Era: Insurgent Philosophy and Praxis* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 12.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 12.

²⁸¹ Douglas Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning: An Approach to Distinctively Christian Education*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossways Books, 1991), 8.

²⁸² Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 17-18.

²⁸³ Ibid, 27.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 28.

more fundamental, precognitive orientation to the world. And that precognitive or prerational orientation to the world is shaped and primed by very material, embodied practices. Thus, such a pedagogy is more attuned to the formative role of ritual.”²⁸⁵ Considering how the perception of human being shapes pedagogy, this chapter will start by presenting how the Christian transcendent approach affects a teacher’s pedagogy. Then, it will present how the autonomist postmodern approach affects a teacher’s pedagogy. Lastly, this chapter will close by presenting how the Christian teacher’s pedagogy leads to better learning than the postmodern teacher’s pedagogy.

Transcendent Christian Approach to Pedagogy

As it was presented in the previous chapter, the transcendent Christian approach perceives human beings as lovers, believers, and thinkers. Therefore, a Christian teacher perceives himself and students in a transcendent sense. As a result, the Christian teacher’s pedagogy will aimed for the “formation of a peculiar people— a people who desire the kingdom of God and thus undertake.”²⁸⁶ Throughout Scripture, teaching and learning are at the core of the Christian life of the teacher and the learner. To mention one of the many examples of the Bible, one must consider Ezra. Ezra 7:10 records, “For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.” As a learner, Ezra read the Scriptures, as a teacher he taught them to the people. Like Ezra, every human being is a learner and a teacher by nature. He is constantly receiving information from some and delivering it to others. This perspective will help teachers to be open to learn from their students as well; and students will also be open to learn from their professors, other students, and even people that may not be as educated

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 28.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 34.

as they are. Nicholas Wolterstorff highlights the importance of teaching and learning through Scriptures by stating,

“Teaching and learning meanings in the Old Testament include, “ways of God; illuminating truth; seeing spiritual reality; instructing devotion, ownership, and responsibility. New Testament ideas include holding a discourse; causing one to learn (the idea behind teaching is learning); placing beside the learner (delivering information in a way accessible to the learner); interpreting information; revealing hidden and secret ideas; being a spokesman; and tending a flock. These ideas involve more than repeating information.”²⁸⁷

From Scriptures’ perception on teaching and learning, a teacher will seek to point the heart, the mind, and the spirit of his students to Christ through education and learning. According to Smith, “education is not something that traffics primarily in abstract, disembodied ideas; rather, education is a transcendent endeavor that involves the whole person, including our bodies, in a process of formation that aims our desires, primes our imagination, and orients us to the world—all before we ever start thinking about it.”²⁸⁸ According to Wolterstorff, “Through learning a person comes to recognize himself as a human being in the only way that is possible; namely by seeing himself in the mirror of an inheritance of human understandings and activities.”²⁸⁹ Since learning and education are intertwined, Wolterstorff wrote,

“Christian learning and teaching are intertwined, each influencing and guiding the other: While we teach in this one moment of history, we are a part of what has gone before us and what will follow us. What we know of the Christian faith we received from others, who have learned before us; what future generations will know of the Christian faith is what we currently teach them. To honor our heritage and to preserve for posterity, we must take seriously our role in teaching and learning.”²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom*, 13.

²⁸⁸ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 40.

²⁸⁹ Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom*, 13.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 1.

Since our culture has been shaped from universal and local narratives and experiences, and humans are transcendent beings, Christian teachers will teach from a transcendent pedagogy that include three main parts. First, it will seek to shape a student's heart and desires toward God by showing them evidence of God's great love for them and humanity throughout history in each discipline. To promote the shaping of the heart, Smith wrote that "our discipleship — our formation in Christ — is more fundamentally a matter of precognitive education of the heart. And Christian worship that is full-bodied reaches, touches, and transforms even those who cannot grasp theological abstractions."²⁹¹ The presence of a Christian teacher in the classroom, his pedagogy, and class management could be considered Christian worship. As a result, students' assignments and class "worship" may lead them to the development of habits and acquired virtues. Even though some students may not be interested in learning certain topics, Wolterstorff argues that "Disinterested learning is a component with culture that, in good measure, engages culture as its object. My thesis is twofold: The Christian community ignores that component of culture at its peril. And the participation of the Christian community in that form of culture is one way in which it can contribute to that mode of human flourishing which is shalom."²⁹² The hands-on assignments will help students to interact with their closest communities (family, friends, and neighbors), and their larger communities — such as their city and their country. As Smith noted, a class or university "inherently religious is not just its teaching, and not even just its perspectives, but its practices."²⁹³

Second, a teacher's pedagogy will also include shaping the mind of the students by listening to their presuppositions and leading them to consider their validity or invalidity by taking

²⁹¹ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 136.

²⁹² Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom*, 101.

²⁹³ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 113.

the truth of the Bible as the standard and source of truth. Romans 12:2 encourages the training of the mind by stating, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Following the Biblical command, Smith wrote that “the Scriptures are read and encountered as a site of divine action, as a means of grace, as a conduit of the Spirit’s transformative power, as part of a pedagogy of desire.”²⁹⁴

Third, the teacher will help shape the student’s beliefs so that they align with God’s Word. Even though a teacher cannot cause a person to believe, a teacher could involve Christian worship that “is nothing less than an invitation to participate in the life of the triune God”²⁹⁵ and let the Holy Spirit work who “nourishes, transforms, and empowers us just through and in such material practices.”²⁹⁶ In short, “Christian learning is learning shaped by one’s Christian cultural formation, and learning that is the medium of Christian formation.”²⁹⁷ Therefore, a Christian teacher understands that his role as a teacher in and outside the classroom is beyond delivering information.

A Christian teacher gives students a glimpse of what the church is – a community of believers that love and worship God and edify each other. As a result, a Christian-teacher class may be the only and the first encounter that a student or staff have ever had with Christ. Following Christ’s example, the teacher also seeks to form a relationship with his students within the boundaries of respect and the roles of teacher and student. The teacher does not delegate his authority as teacher to the students, but within his authority the students are comfortable enough to ask questions and have conversations with the teacher. Gary Keogh highlights the importance

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 134.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 150.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 150.

²⁹⁷ Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom*, 257.

of teacher- students' relationships by stating "Really good pedagogy is based on the interpersonal encounter between teacher and student, and we must retain our awareness of the fact that to them, we are the representatives of a system towards which they may have a deeply rooted suspicion. We need to show them that education is not against them, but for them."²⁹⁸ To develop this kind of relationship, a Christian teacher, who is a true lover because of Christ, has three main habits that shape him and his pedagogy. First, a Christian teacher prays. Jesus, the most excellent teacher, portrayed this habit. Luke 5:16 records, "But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray." Following Jesus' example, Smith wrote, "In intercessory prayer, we are reminded of at least two things: First, that we are called, even chosen, as a people not for our own sake but for the sake of the world. Just as Adam and Eve were created to be God's image bearers in and to the world, and just as Israel was chosen in order to be a light unto the nations, so the church is called to be the people of God to and for the world."²⁹⁹ A Christian teacher is in constant communion with the Greatest Teacher and the source of all knowledge and wisdom to learn and to teach. Since prayer is a request for a divine intervention and God is the only one that knows the hearts and minds of all people, God the Holy Spirit is the only one that can work in students' hearts to bring the conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). In other words, the Holy Spirit is the one that can use a teacher's classroom to shape students' hearts, minds, and beliefs.

The second habit of a Christian teacher is the reading of Scripture. 1 Timothy 4:13 records, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching." Following the truth of the Scripture, Smith wrote that "we should emphasize that the narrative of Scripture is a primary fund for the Christian imagination. As Richard Hays puts it, learning to read

²⁹⁸ Gary Keogh, *A Pedagogy of Purpose: Classical Wisdom for the Modern Classroom* (Melton, Suffolk: John Catt Educational, Limited, 2021), 136.

²⁹⁹ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 193.

Scripture well is a means for the “conversion of the imagination.”³⁰⁰ Origen, one of the early Christian theologians and scholars to live among a pagan world, understood that “Gentile converts to the faith needed to have their minds re-made, and that instruction in how to read Scripture was at the heart of Paul’s pastoral practice: Gentiles needed to be initiated into reading practices that enabled them to receive Israel’s Scripture as their own.”³⁰¹ The power of Scripture is so great that Hebrews 4:12 records, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” A Christian teacher’s classroom may be the only time of the day, week, or their lives that students interact with the Bible or ask questions about the Bible. Nonetheless, God can use this limited time to transform and renew students’ and professors’ minds.

The third habit of a Christian teacher is to be ready to give a defense for his Faith. 1 Peter 3:15 records, “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” Students are so attacked by such a wide range of information that not only shapes their perception of reality, but their view of God. Since students come to the classroom with presuppositions made against God and the Christian Faith, a teacher must discern each question, and perceive the main issue behind each question – like Jesus did. As a result, a teacher must be ready to give a response that glorifies God. In the case of not knowing the answer, the professor can encourage the class to explore the issue together.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 197.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 197.

The implementation of these habits will not only develop a deeper and stronger relationship with the triune God, but it will also develop a deep and strong teacher and student-relationships. These relationships will help the professor to better understand the kind of students that he has, and to identify their learning styles. In the words of Keogh, “The driving force [of education] though, is a transcendent approach that has a clear purpose. Pedagogy is very similar: the boxes that we tick can assist with good pedagogy, using a variety of learning styles, peer assessment, interleaving and so on.”³⁰² The clear purpose of a Christian teacher’s pedagogy is to point students’ hearts, minds, and beliefs to Christ through the academy and trust in the Holy Spirit and his transforming power.

Throughout history, various types of pedagogies have been developed. One of the pedagogies that reflect a transcendent approach is the *Signature Pedagogies*. According to Şenol Hülya, these-types of pedagogies “make a difference. They form habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of the hand”.³⁰³ To understand how this pedagogy forms these habits, one must consider that a *Signature Pedagogy* is an idea that the American psychologist and educator, Lee Shulman, “applied to vocational areas of learning and noted here that the learner is ‘trained’ in three areas of the professional work involved. These are: (1) Thinking as a professional. (2) Performing as a professional. (3) Acting as a professional.” To train in these areas, Shulman also considers three dimensions,

“First, the surface structure he argues is the operational aspects of teaching and learning such as questioning students and demonstrating specific techniques important to those professions. Second, the deep structure involved a set of assumptions about how to impart the specific knowledge within that profession. Third, the implicit structure according to

³⁰² Keogh, *A Pedagogy of Purpose*, 49.

³⁰³ Şenol Hülya, *Pedagogy: Challenges, Recent Advances, New Perspectives, and Applications*. Vol. 1 (London: IntechOpen, 2022), 495.

Shulman involves the moral aspects of that profession such as attitude, values and dispositions. Here he uses law as an example of legal reasoning and moral judgements.”³⁰⁴

A Christian approach that reflects this kind of pedagogy is the Inside-Out Approach developed by Josh Chatraw and Mark Allen. This approach is “a frame of reference that the Christian can internalize and apply to a wide array of apologetic situations.”³⁰⁵ As its name stated, this approach is divided in two sections inside and outside. This inside section seeks to lead students to diagnose “what needs to be affirmed and challenge, and where it leads.”³⁰⁶ The outside section seeks to analyze “where competing narratives borrow from the Christianity; and how does Christianity better address our experiences, observations, and history.”³⁰⁷ This approach will be expanded on the next chapter on curriculum.

After considering the above information, it is possible to conclude that being a Christian shapes a teacher’s pedagogy from its purpose to its design and implementation. The purpose of a Christian teacher’s pedagogy is oriented toward the formation of people that desire the kingdom and worship the kingdom God. To accomplish this purpose, the Christian teacher will establish deep, strong, and healthy academic relations with his students through Christ’s love and respect. These values will be evident in and outside the classroom through teacher’s behavior, and design and implementation of curriculum, lectures, and assignments that aim to aligned student’s love, thoughts, and beliefs to the triune God. Since these practices (or liturgies) are only instruments to point students to Christ, the Holy Spirit is the One that aligns hearts, desires, minds, and souls to God. Therefore, the teacher will trust in God’s sovereignty and will engage and incorporate the

³⁰⁴ Ibid, 495.

³⁰⁵ Josh Chatraw, Mark D. Allen, and Mark Dwayne. *Apologetics at the Cross an Introduction for Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 214.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 221.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 221.

habits of prayer, reading of Scriptures, and giving a defense for the faith. The incorporation of these habits will lead teachers to learn from the Great Teacher (Jesus), point students to Christ, and develop good relationships with his students.

Autonomist Postmodern Approach to Pedagogy

Just as being a Christian shapes a teacher's approach to pedagogy, having a postmodern mindset also shapes a teacher's approach to pedagogy. To understand the postmodern pedagogy, one must consider it from a pragmatic view. According to Smith, postmodernism pushes philosophy out of pedagogy and places pragmatism in its place.³⁰⁸ As a result, postmodernism raises new challenges to pedagogy toward

“the search for new visions and the refinement of human existence (towards better and more humane society) in order to encourage human intellectual potentials and decrease aggression, violence and poverty, having in mind that the age of postmodernism has been marked by the alarming value system shift from philosophical establishment of basic philosophical issues of existence towards narrow definition of economic interests, whose social development on the whole has been narrowed down to economic rationality, reflected in profit.”³⁰⁹

To understand postmodern pragmatism, one must remember that postmodern teacher's foundational idea of human nature lies on the premise that “students have no ‘true self’ or innate essence. Rather, selves are social constructs.”³¹⁰ As a result, postmodern teachers “view education as a type of therapy. Education helps individuals construct their identities rather than discover them. Individuals and society progress when people are empowered to attain their own chosen goals.”³¹¹ Even though there are multiple variables that affect the social development of

³⁰⁸ Gojkov, “Postmodern Pedagogy.” *Educația-plus*. 8, no. 2 (2012): 33.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 9.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 17.

³¹¹ Ibid, 17.

individuals, postmodern main social construct is the dichotomy between higher and lower classes- or the perspective of the oppressed and the oppressor. As a result, the “postmodern pedagogy is expected to deal with discussions of power within and between various groups, as part of a broader social context in which pedagogical institutions are anticipated to be democratic public spheres.”³¹²

Although postmodernism seeks to avoid the dichotomy between those who have power and those who do not, postmodernism needs this dichotomy to function and justify its radical pluralism in all the areas of an individual and civilization. “Radicalized pluralism is loyalty to plurality of perspectives, meanings, methods and values; pluralization of concepts like truth, justice or humanity and everything.”³¹³ Social divisions between those who have power and those who do not form smaller groups within each dichotomy that provide multiple and diverse definitions of God, self, and others based on their circumstances and relation to power. Due to the lack of absolutes and standards, all these definitions are considered as true even if they radically opposed each other. As a result, the main driving force of postmodern pedagogy is pluralism. According to Gojkov, “Postmodernism is the historical period in which radical plurality becomes more serious and accepted as fundamental arrangement of society, prevailed by plural patterns of thinking and action, creating even dominant and mandatory standpoint.”³¹⁴ Therefore, a postmodern teacher pedagogy will focus on shaping his students as pluralistic social constructs that affect their community by eliminating absolutes. To accomplish this purpose, a postmodern teacher will plan his classes, lessons, practices, and assignments through three fundamentals.

³¹² Gojkov, "Postmodern Thinking and Relativism Theory in The Field of Pedagogy," 55.

³¹³ Ibid, 50.

³¹⁴ Gojkov, “Postmodern Pedagogy,” 25.

First, the rejection of absolutes and acceptance of pluralistic ideas without questioning. One of the main ways to enhance pluralism is to eliminate any absolutes and standards in his students.³¹⁵ To achieve this goal, a professor will portray people with absolutes as evil people that discriminate and are judgmental. This imagery will cause students to reject absolutes. For example, a history postmodern teacher could teach his students about standards and absolutes through Adolf Hitler in Germany. Due to the association between Hitler and absolutes, students will reject absolutes and standards. Nonetheless, the professor will also associate pluralistic thought with heroic historic figures that help the community. For example, a history postmodern teacher could teach that Martin Luther King Jr.'s perception on pluralism led him to stand up for segregation abolition in the United States. Since students will associate good with pluralism, students will support any idea, thought, and practice that rejects absolutes without questioning the veracity of its claim.

Also, students are more likely to become and support anything that can be perceived as outside of the norm – the more distinct and crazier, the better and more acceptable.³¹⁶ To enhance this behavior, a postmodern teacher will praise and elevate the student that is more distinct and outside of the standard than the others. To justify this elevation, the professor will present him as a victim of society that needs to be embraced, accepted, and elevated to break the standards. Through this behavior, students are encouraged to act and define their identity against the norm. So, if there are two standard genders as male and female, the student is encouraged to look for another one because those two are authoritative and oppressive. In a panel discussion hosted at the

³¹⁵ Deborah Kilgore, "Toward a Postmodern Pedagogy." *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 2004, no. 102 (2004): 45.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, 47.

Heritage Foundation in Washington D.C., a mother reported how her daughters' elementary school teacher celebrated a girls' declaration of homosexuality in the classroom.³¹⁷ This practice evidenced the teachers bias-on gender, and her agenda of influencing her students to support and embrace homosexual behavior as part of their identities. This practice is an example of Smith's ritual forces of culture that:

“... are not satisfied with being merely mundane; but, embedded in them is a sense of what ultimately matters (compare Phil. 1:10). “Secular” liturgies are fundamentally formative, and implicit in them is a vision of the kingdom that needs to be discerned and evaluated. From the perspective of Christian faith, these secular liturgies will often constitute a mis-formation of our desires— aiming our heart away from the Creator to some aspect of the creation as if it were God. Secular liturgies capture our hearts by capturing our imaginations and drawing us into ritual practices that “teach” us to love something very different from the kingdom of God.”³¹⁸

Since secular is considered anything that opposed the standard of the triune Christian God, all secular postmodern practices seek to eliminate the Christian standard and set anything in its place. Therefore, all these practices are the result of a skewed autonomist postmodern approach of seeing human beings as social constructs that are constantly changing. As a result, the postmodern teacher's pedagogy seeks to label his students with certain cultural words and definitions. This labeling reveals the importance of language in a human being as a social construct. For example, a postmodern teacher will use phrases such as “be what you want to be.” Therefore, a person must define through language what he wants to be so that he can be understood, accepted, and treated as such.

The importance of the use and study of language leads this writer to consider the second fundamental of a postmodern teacher's pedagogy that is the concept of relative truth. To enhance this fundamental concept in students, a postmodern teacher will reconfigure the concept of

³¹⁷ Ibid, 47.

³¹⁸ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88.

knowing by stating “that there is no longer anything grand or universal to know and that the teacher’s authority to know only exists within an authority-granting institution and by the will of the members who play by its rules.”³¹⁹ To teach this concept, the professor will aim his class discussion towards topics that students disagree on and will walk them through procedural rules to draft a “new truth” from the discussion.³²⁰ This exercise will lead students to understand how truths are not absolutes, but relatives, and how they are constantly changing and emerging. Therefore, this exercise is the reflection of the postmodern teacher’s pedagogy of using deconstructionism to arrive to new “truth” or concepts.

By reaching a class consensus at the end of the discussion, the described exercise also evidences the third fundamental of a postmodern teacher’s pedagogy that is the relations of power. To avoid any oppressed power relationship, the postmodern teacher will no longer call his class students, but learners. According to Deborah Kilgore, “To honor students we [postmodern teachers] refer to them as learners, as if they weren’t really subject to the teacher’s pedagogical machinations at all.”³²¹ To support her claim, Kilgore argues,

“To understand power as something that we exercise rather than possess means giving up the notion that power flows from a centralized entity like the state, the university, or the teacher, turning to the production of social positions in the adult education classroom. postmodern pedagogy, we would acknowledge that what unfolds before us in the adult education classroom does so largely at our behest. We would be concerned with naming what makes us submissive and identifying what grants us power. We would move from there to the collective creation of what I think of as powerful knowledge, knowledge that is personally empowering and socially transforming. In moving toward a postmodern pedagogy, we are most interested in shaking up the social positions of teacher and student and the power relationship between them. Such aspirations will require us to consider the death of the teacher, the subversion of the student, and the diffusion of power.”³²²

³¹⁹ Kilgore, "Toward a Postmodern Pedagogy," 47.

³²⁰ Ibid, 19.

³²¹ Ibid, 49.

³²² Ibid, 49.

Even though the professor still has the power to decide what he teaches and what he does not without consulting the students, the postmodern teacher seeks to create an image that there are no power relations in the classroom by using language. Nonetheless, the power relations between students and professor are still present. Therefore, professors and students are equal in language since both are considered and called “learners,” but are not in action or status. For the postmodern view, the purpose of studying and acquiring education is to change the society through the elimination of social classes or status - by empowering the oppressed and subduing the oppressors.

After considering all the information presented above, it is possible to conclude that the postmodern autonomist approach of defining human beings as social constructs through language limits the teacher’s pedagogy to radical pluralism through the abolishment of standards, absolutes, and oppressive relations of power, and the establishment of relative truth through deconstructionism.

Conclusion

Now that both approaches have been presented, this chapter will conclude by presenting how the Christian transcendent approach of human nature positively influences pedagogy that leads to better learning than the autonomist postmodern approach of human nature through values and confidence. The Christian transcendent approach of human beings as lovers, believers, and thinkers leads to better learning due to its pedagogy of equipping and shaping students’ hearts to do God’s will by seeking the Kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33).³²³ The Kingdom of God incorporates student’s love for God with all their hearts, minds, souls, and strength, and to love their neighbor as themselves (Mark 12:30-31).³²⁴ Due to this transcendent

³²³ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 136.

³²⁴ Ibid, 113.

and clear purpose, students happily seek and desire to learn about God, His works through time, and the purpose that He has for them. Proverbs 29:18 states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” Since the students love God, they seek to obey His Scriptures. Therefore, they are passionate to learn what God says, and to learn how they can obey it in the world.³²⁵ As a result, students will engage in learning by doing homework, attending to class, and even participating in extracurricular activities.

Opposite to this love for God that encourages learning, the lack of a transcendent and definite purpose of the autonomist postmodern approach decreases learning. The postmodern teacher’s pedagogy does not have a transcendent purpose, but a limited one that seeks to change society through the teaching of the values of diversity, tolerance, freedom, creativity, emotions and intuition without having any standard.³²⁶ Therefore, these values are determined by each person differently, and the seeking of the truth is limited to “I believe this, you believe this. Let’s talk about something else.”³²⁷ If there are not absolutes and discussions that may people feel bad or unconfutable are avoided, there is no point of learning. Learning is subject to earning a degree that help them get good money or position- pragmatic.³²⁸ The thought of changing society comes after their well-being is secure. Students avoid engaging in controversial topics that oppose the majority.³²⁹ In case of engaging with these topics, it is more likely that they will support the trend

³²⁵ Ibid, 150.

³²⁶ Kilgore, "Toward a Postmodern Pedagogy," 49.

³²⁷ Ibid, 45.

³²⁸ Gojkov, “Postmodern Pedagogy,” 9.

³²⁹ Gale, *Teachers*, 19.

idea or the idea of the majority.³³⁰ Even though postmodernism seeks to abolish standards and absolute truth, they consider that the consensus of the community establishes the set of truths under which people should live.³³¹ As a result, students become supporters of the crowd, and are very uncertain on their individual beliefs due to the constant change of cultural perceptions. Student learns to go with the flow of society and feelings, and to live in a constant state of doubting and adjusting.³³² As a result, the student becomes like “a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” (James 1:6) Therefore, he is not interested in increase his learning unless he finds something that gives him a pragmatic benefit- as money, fame, or beauty.³³³ These motivations drawn students’ hearts away from God. Their lack of relation with the triune God, make them feel lacking purpose – even if they have accomplished their career or personal goals. Their distracted heart and lack of Christian absolutes, makes the government’s laws the final authority if it embraces pluralism.³³⁴ As a result, individuals limit right and wrong to the majority and the law. Consequently, students are more likely to wait until they are taught than to invest themselves in learning without receiving any award or direct training by an “expert.”³³⁵ Even though postmodernism rejects absolutes, it uses them to organize communities and stir up crowds.³³⁶

Opposite to taking any idea or feeling as truth from the crowd or the government, teachers and students that follow a Christian transcendent approach will engage in proving the veracity of

³³⁰ Ibid, 9.

³³¹ Gale, *Teachers*, 19.

³³² Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?* 221.

³³³ Gale, *Teachers*, 19.

³³⁴ Ibid, 37.

³³⁵ Gale, *Teachers*, 232.

³³⁶ Ibid, 17.

the claim through the practice of prayer, reading and studying any issue through the light of Scripture, and the intellectual research.³³⁷ This transcendent approach to the learning process and discovery involves individual and collective learning discussions. Once the process is completed, students developed a sense of confidence and certainty in their findings.³³⁸ This satisfaction encourages students to learn a wide variety of issues in the light of the Scriptures. And their findings encourage their curiosity to engage in learning to grow in the wisdom of the infinite, and to affect their communities.³³⁹ Students do not settle or wait for the consensus of the crowd, or the opinion of a teacher or their peers as postmodern do, but they measure those opinions to the standard of Scripture to determine their veracity and usefulness through a personal relationship with God and with others.³⁴⁰

The Christian transcendent approach leads to better learning through empowering students with confidence in the Scripture to discover, develop, wonder, and search in humility. Instead of avoiding controversial topics, students engage in them and bring them to the light of Scriptures.³⁴¹ Since the purpose of learning transcends worldly meanings, learning becomes an essential part of the students' life that goes beyond getting recognition, money, power, or changing societies.³⁴² It becomes a way to know God through Jesus, to discover the universe that God created, and to edify our community through the help of Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Christian transcendent approach of

³³⁷ Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom*, 13.

³³⁸ Hargreaves, *Changing Teachers*, 82-83.

³³⁹ Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom*, 13.

³⁴⁰ Leslie Teach Them Diligently Raising Children of Promise, 60.

³⁴¹ Wolterstorff, *Education for Shalom*, 13.

³⁴² Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 113.

absolute values will lead to better learning than the postmodern autonomist approach of relative pluralistic values.

CHAPTER 3

HOW DOES BEING A CHRISTIAN SHAPE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT?

After considering how being Christian shapes a pedagogy, this chapter will analyze how being Christian shapes the development of the curriculum. This is crucial to the development of societies due to its role to transfer knowledge from one generation to the next one.³⁴³ Curriculum is crucial to the development of societies due to its role as a means of transferring knowledge from one generation to the next one.³⁴⁴ Due to the importance of a curriculum, many scholars have attempted to define the term throughout history. Aristotle defined curriculum as “the attainment of one’s true good and happiness.”³⁴⁵ Since a curriculum is vital in a person’s life and society, this chapter will begin with an analysis of how the Christian approach affects the development of a curriculum. Then, it will present how the autonomist postmodern approach affects the development of a curriculum. Lastly, it will present a curriculum proposal to teach an elective class at a secular university from a Christian transcendent Approach.

Transcendent Christian Approach

Since the transcendent Christian approach perceives human beings as lovers, believers, and thinkers, and its pedagogy aims to point students to love God and others, a curriculum will present the content that needs be taught to accomplish pedagogy’s purpose. Before analyzing the content and how a curriculum works, one must consider how this approach defines a curriculum. Orlando Ho has defined curriculum as “the deliberate organization of well-designed words and deeds,

³⁴³ Michael Young, “What Is a Curriculum and What Can It Do?” *The Curriculum Journal*. 25, no. 1 (2014): 7.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 7.

³⁴⁵ Orlando Nang Kwok Ho, *Rethinking the Curriculum: The Epistle to the Romans as a Pedagogic Text* (Singapore: Springer, 2018), 5.

structured upon a selected theme (or within a given domain), such that genuine intellectual inquiries, dialogic engagements, and meaningful interactions will be experienced; and these should lead to critically reflected learning outcomes.”³⁴⁶ When God delivered the Greatest Command to the people of Israel, He also provided a curriculum to accomplish this command from generation to generation. This curriculum is recorded in Deuteronomy 6:7 by stating “You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” The content of this curriculum are the words of the Lord given that day (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). And the parents use His Words to teach their children. The method to teach them is described as “diligently” (v.4). According to a word study performed by Leslie Nunnery, the word *diligently* is:

“The Hebrew word translated for us as “teach them diligently” literally means “to whet or sharpen” and conveys the idea of instilling an idea, attitude, or habit by persistent instruction. It’s incredibly interesting to note that the only time in Scripture it is translated this way is in this passage. There are eight other occurrences of this particular word in the Old Testament, and every other time, it is used in the context of sharpening a sword or an arrow or being pierced through.”³⁴⁷

Therefore, the method is to teach the content persistently. However, to accomplish this method, the teacher should incorporate dialogue inside and outside the classroom, and all they long. One could argue that a teacher could use the *Socratic Elenchus Pedagogy* that “is about dialogue transformative learning that encourages dialogue in which both the educator and the learner participate equally in discourse.”³⁴⁸ In this the student could ask a question and the professor

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 5.

³⁴⁷ Leslie Nunnery, *Teach Them Diligently Raising Children of Promise* (Green Forest: New Leaf Publishing Group, Inc., 2018), 60.

³⁴⁸ Hülya, *Pedagogy*, 152.

will respond. The teacher could also use the *Field Base Pedagogy* that encourages “the collection of materials needed for learning in the field.”³⁴⁹ There are many pedagogies that could be incorporated into the development of this curriculum.

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament also provides a variety of examples of the curriculum since Christ, the Greatest Teacher, taught students. Following Christ's example, the disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, taught the word of God. As a result, the Bible also records the curriculum that the apostles follow. For example, Ho considered that *The Epistles* are a great example of a curriculum as narrative.³⁵⁰ From the study of *The Epistles* as a curriculum, Ho concluded that “a ‘poor’ curriculum is the individual’s lifeworld considered in its own right, not as an artifact of external world.”³⁵¹ It is amazing to consider how the curriculum examples from the Bible approach the heart, minds, and beliefs of the people to cause an impact in the community.

Since the curriculum learning outcomes affects both the personal and relational life of an individual and society, one must consider what should a curriculum from a transcendent Christian approach looks like. A curriculum must incorporate elements to point student’s heart, minds, and the believes towards God. To accomplish this, a curriculum could apply the *Inside Out* method design by Josh Chatraw and Mark Allen. This method is divided into two parts: inside and outside. The inside seeks to diagnose students believes, and the outside seeks to point students to Christ by presenting how Christianity is a better option.³⁵² Since students have established certain views with the aim of achieving what they love, this approach addresses student’s heart by asking

³⁴⁹ Ibid, 190.

³⁵⁰ Ho, *Rethinking the Curriculum the Epistle to the Romans as a Pedagogic Text*, 5.

³⁵¹ Ibid, 97.

³⁵² Chatraw, Allen, and Dwayne, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 202.

questions such as where does this view lead?³⁵³ The approach also addresses the students as thinking and believing beings by asking question such as What in this view can be affirmed and what needs to be challenged?³⁵⁴ After the student diagnosed his inside or own loves, believes, and thoughts, his heart could be ready to consider the outside or another option. That option is the Christian faith. This approach points students to Christ by asking questions such as Where do competing narratives borrow from the Christian story? And how does Christianity tell a better story?³⁵⁵ Since the transcendent Christian approach perceive human beings as lovers, thinkers, and believers, the Christian teacher will draft his curriculum aiming to point student’s love, thoughts, and beliefs to Christ.

Autonomist Postmodern Approach

Contrary to the transcendent Christian approach, the autonomist postmodern approach to curriculum focuses on the pedagogy to enhance relativist pluralism through the teaching of the values of diversity, tolerance, freedom, creativity, emotions, and intuition. Since postmodernist perceive human beings as social constructs, the curriculum is aimed to construct students that portray and advocate for the relative postmodern values. According to postmodernism, “Curriculum is about empowerment and liberation. In this sense, racial, gender, and cultural dimensions of the postmodern curriculum are also concerned with the politics of power.”³⁵⁶ Many famous postmodernists have developed their curriculum based on this concept. For example, postmodern scholar, Paulo Freire, makes the following tree-steps recommendation for education

³⁵³ Ibid, 221.

³⁵⁴ Ibid, 221.

³⁵⁵ Ibid, 221.

³⁵⁶ Patrick Slattery, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era: Teaching and Learning in an Age of Accountability*. 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 183.

that lies on the foundation of “constructing an authentic community of equal subjects”³⁵⁷: “(1) name own experience of oppression; (2) articulate own vision of beneficial relationships; (3) engage in practical experiences of cultural change.”³⁵⁸ He also considers that “in each ‘step’ [the community should] construct.”³⁵⁹ For Freire, the purpose of education is to lead people to permanent liberation on the pedagogy of the oppressed.³⁶⁰ Freire curriculum will aim to construct students’ identity by incorporating critical unifying characteristics such as “knowledge is shaped by cultural location, culture is dynamic, assessment of cultural media is essential to understanding, basic human responsibility is to create culture.”³⁶¹

Like Paulo Freire, since postmodern Christians have abandoned orthodox Christianity’s claims on God and truth and have embraced the exaltation of self, they teach religious studies and other disciplines teach from a postmodernist curriculum that is focused on liberating and transforming the dichotomy between the oppressor and the oppressed at secular universities. Postmodern college professor William B. Kennedy aims his curriculum to nurture ideology and religion. He defines religion as

“The deformation of truth for the sake of social interest.”³⁶² To accomplish this aim, he developed five strategies. One of those strategies is that “Educators to broaden our shared understandings of human nature and development. Humans are shaped by social relationships grounded in material realities, so we need to use depth psychology to expose how domination and liberation are part of human psyche and to increase awareness of resistance.”³⁶³

³⁵⁷ Bower, *Critical Pedagogy in Christian Education*, 40-41.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 40-41.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, 40-41.

³⁶⁰ Ibid, 65-66.

³⁶¹ Ibid, 53.

³⁶² Ibid, 65-66.

³⁶³ Ibid, 65-66.

Since human beings are perceived as social constructs and postmodern values are based on pluralism, postmodernists seek to form students through their educational culture that support and portray the values of pluralism. According to Kilgore, any postmodern curriculum will incorporate six key features or standards:

“(1) Radicalization of hermeneutics. As a result, the capacity for reflection utterly evaporates. (2) Moral education does not emerge from philosophical reflection, but from the fact of education. (3) Procedural orientation curriculum: It is the main feature to teach postmodern moral education capable of handling postmodern pluralism and relativism. (4) The concept of an “open future” is an important feature of the postmodern world. (5) Curriculum from the implications of being decentered (rejection of metanarratives), and himself from responding to a position which cannot be a position, namely postmodernism. (6) Postmodern approaches in teaching and education follow from the transformation of the meaning of knowledge as a characteristic of the *Zeitgeist*.”³⁶⁴

Since the autonomist postmodern approach aimed to construct students through the language of a culture, curriculums will be full of content and redefinition of terms that will embrace diversity from a pluralistic view and the liberation of relations of power. These curriculums will encourage students to rebel against the norm and will distort their youth passion of adventure and helping the most needed people.

Class Proposal

After considering both approaches and the need to share the Gospel of Christ in secular Universities, this writer attempts to propose a class that could be taught in the future. To remove as many barriers as possible that could prevent the teaching of this class, the teacher will engage in prayer to follow God’s timing and place to make a proposal to offer the class, the preparation of people’s hearts to approve this class, and students’ hearts and minds to register for the class and receive the Gospel of Christ and be saved.

³⁶⁴ Kilgore, "Toward a Postmodern Pedagogy," 59.

To achieve this purpose, the curriculum will be designed for a class that lasts one academic semester at the University. The curriculum will apply the *Inside-Out Method* that Josh Chatraw and Mark Allen developed. Following this approach, the first half lectures of each topic will be oriented toward the *Inside* step that diagnoses non-Christian “take” on their perspective of postmodernism, and the connection between Christianity and postmodernism.³⁶⁵ Through these discussions, I will be able to learn what they love and what is their perception of a good life, their beliefs, and their thoughts toward God, self, and others. From the Inside Out Method, the following two questions will be addressed:

" **(1) What can we affirm and what do we need to challenge?** The most beneficial approach is first to affirm the aspects of the other person’s position that you find admirable and then to identify points that are impractical or inconsistent.³⁶⁶ **(2) Where Does It Lead?** One way to help others see their blind spots is to trace out where their assumptions and beliefs will ultimately lead if they are applied consistently. Fallen cultures often contain assumptions that make Christianity seem implausible, yet those who hold these assumptions usually haven’t worked them out in their head. Those assumptions are, after all, the very air they breathe. Because of this, by asking questions and discussing the implications of certain views, an apologist can expose those views as overly simplistic and unlivable.”³⁶⁷

After these diagnosis questions have been discussed, the next half lectures on each topic will be oriented toward the *Outside* step that points to Christianity and the Gospel.³⁶⁸ Since students may have never questioned their ideologies, after questioning they are open to hear an alternative. Like Josh Chatraw wrote,

“By working inside rival stories to show how their own narratives fail to adequately answer life’s biggest questions we’ve created space for the other person to seriously consider how Christianity offers a more satisfying and rationally coherent story. By narrating how

³⁶⁵ Chatraw, Allen, and Dwayne, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 216.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, 216.

³⁶⁷ Ibid, 216.

³⁶⁸ Ibid, 218.

Christianity answers life's most fundamental questions and captures "the rich texture of this life and history," we open the door for them to come into the gospel story."³⁶⁹

Even though the whole curriculum has been drafted for them to hear the Gospel, this is the climax of the class. As a result, the discussions will be oriented to answering the following questions:

"(1) Where do competing narratives borrow from Christian story? Having listened carefully to take inventory of what can be affirmed and what needs to be challenged in an unbeliever's view, we will be positioned to show how the Christian story includes vital resources that, though they may be present in the unbeliever's framework, are actually borrowed from Christianity, since their framework does not have anything to ground such resources."³⁷⁰ **(2) How does Christianity better address our experiences, observations, and history?** How does Christianity better "capture the rich texture of this life and history"?²⁵ Being able to answer this question in conversations and to connect human and cultural aspirations to Christianity is directly related to having a rich understanding of the gospel."³⁷¹

The student will leave the classroom knowing that they are human beings in need of Jesus to save them from their sins. To receive Jesus, they must believe on Him. Even though I may not know students' decision for salvation, I can trust that the Holy Spirit is in control and that He will do his work in their lives in His time - as it is written in Hebrews 4:12. Therefore, I must "trust and obey," as this old hymn encourages us to do.

³⁶⁹ Josh Chatraw. *Telling a Better Story How to Talk About God in a Skeptical Age* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 69-70.

³⁷⁰ Chatraw, Allen, and Dwayne. *Apologetics at the Cross*, 218.

³⁷¹ Ibid, 220.

Proposed Syllabus:

HGS 111

The Role of Government: Perspectives from the Christian Thought and Postmodernism

Spring R 2023

Section 001

01/16/2024 to 05/12/2024

Meeting Times

Wednesday 10:00-11:30

Contact Information

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Course Description

A comparative study between the Christian and the postmodern thought on the role and practice of government concerning human nature, freedom, and power relations in responding to moral challenges presented by cultural developments in the contemporary world.

Requisites:

NONE- Elective Class- 2 Credit Hours

Rationale

Societies today face great confusion and division on what is the government supposed to do, what are its limits, and to what extent the government should intervene or affect the moral life of the people. Political leaders and citizens look to scholars for informed guidance on how to fulfill their role as good citizens in their government. Since multiple views affect people's behavior, scholars in every area of society need to use the concepts accurately and clearly in explaining the current situation and the perspectives of the people involved. Two of the major patterns of thought of the people involved in the Western world are the Christian and postmodern thought. Through the understanding of these views, students will be more tolerant of each other and will work towards the good of society by finding common ground that promotes greater social development and economy.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- A. Distinguish between two distinct perspectives on the role of government and citizens.
- B. Compare how each perspective defines human nature, freedom, power relations, and the role of government.

01/17: **Introduction:** What is government?

Ferdon and Richer, "[A Christian View of Government.](#)" 43-45.

Gundogan, "[Postmodern Politics and Marxism.](#)"

Max Weber, [Politics as a Vocation](#), p. 126-167.

Raadschelders, *The Three Ages of Government*, Introduction and Ch. 1 (I- 46)

Vermeule, "[All Human Conflict is Ultimately Theological.](#)"

01/24: Existing types of government

Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, Ch. 1-4

Niblack, Albert P. (Albert Parker). *Why Wars Come, or Forms of Government and Foreign Policies in Relation to the Causes of Wars*, Ch. 4-6

Siaroff, Alan. *Comparing Political Regimes*, Ch. 9-11.

T. L. [The True Notion of Government Shewing, I. The Original of Government, II. The Several Forms of Government, III. The Obligations Betwixt Governours and Governed](#)

01/31: Postmodern Foundation on Government

Lemke, Thomas. *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*, Ch. 1-2, 6.

Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* Ch. 1

Smith, *Jacques Derrida: Live Theory*, p. 85-88

Thiele, [Thinking Politics](#). Ch. 1

Williams, James. *Liotard and the Political*, Ch. 6-7.

Winchester, *Nietzsche's Aesthetic Turn: Reading Nietzsche after Heidegger, Deleuze, and Derrida*, Ch. 4.

02/7: Christian Thought on the Foundation of Government

1 Samuel 8, Mark 12, Romans 13

Grudem, Wayne A. *Politics According to the Bible*, Ch. 1- 4

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 103, art. 1-8, and q. 104, art. 1-4.

Harrison, *Augustine*, Ch. 6.

Black, Amy E. *Five Views on the Church and Politics*, Introduction

*Student-led class discussion comparing the Christian and postmodern approaches to the foundational principles of government.

02/14: Human, Society, and Nation from the Postmodern Approach

Eagleton, [The Illusions of Postmodernism](#). Ch. 3.

Hutcheon, [The Politics of Postmodernism](#), Ch. 1-2.

Lemke, Thomas. *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*. Ch. 1-2, 7-8.

Smith, James K. A. *Who's Afraid of Relativism?* Ch. 1-2.

Thiele, [Thinking Politics](#) Ch. 2.

02/21: Human, Society, and Nation from the Christian Approach

Genesis 1-3, Psalm 8, Psalm 139, Romans 5
Thomas Aquinas, [*Summa Theologiae*](#) q. 117, art. 1-4
VanDrunen, *Politics after Christendom*, Ch. 1-2, 7
Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism?* Ch. 5

* Student-led class discussion comparing the Christian and postmodern approaches to human nature, society, and nation.

02/28: Language, History, and Culture from the Postmodern Approach

Henrich, *The WEIRDest People in the World*, Ch. 2.
Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 3.
Lemke, Thomas. *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*, Ch. 9, 10.
Smith, James K. A. *Who's Afraid of Relativism?* Ch. 3.
Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* Ch. 2-3
Thiele, [*Thinking Politics*](#). Ch. 3

03/6: Language, History, and Culture from the Christian Approach

Psalm 78, Proverbs 12, Acts 17
Denecker, Tim. *Ideas on Language in Early Latin Christianity from Tertullian to Isidore of Seville*, p. 25-55.
Smith, [*Desiring the Kingdom*](#), 48-50, 120-176
Smith, *Speech and Theology*, Ch. 4.

* Student-led class discussion comparing the Christian and postmodern approaches to language, history, and culture.

* Turn in Virtual Entertainment Paper by Friday 03/08)

03/13: SPRING BREAK

03/20: The State and Power from the Postmodern Approach

Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Ch. 4-5.
Smith, James K. A. *Who's Afraid of Relativism?* Ch. 4.
Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* Ch. 4.
Lemke, Thomas. *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*, Ch. 12-13.
Šajda, [*Modern and Postmodern Crises of Symbolic Structures: Essays in Philosophical Anthropology*](#). Ch. 4.
Thiele, [*Thinking Politics*](#) Ch. 4 – 5.

03/27: The State and Power from the Postmodern Approach

Romans 13, Daniel 2, 1 Peter 2
Thomas Aquinas, *On Politics and Ethics*, Ch. *On Kingship or The Governance of Rulers (De Regimine Principum, 1265-1267)*. p. 14-26

Dyson, R. W. *St. Augustine of Hippo the Christian Transformation of Political Philosophy*. London Ch. 2-5
VnDrunen, *Politics after Christendom*, Ch. 1-2

04/3: The State and Power from the Christian Approach

Exodus 18, Ecclesiastes 10, Daniel 7

Allen, "[The City of God and the City of Man](#)," p. 9-12

Lado, Ludovic. "[Toward a Spirituality of Politics](#)." *Theological studies*. 84, no. 2 (2023): 198–211.

Chatraw, Josh, and Karen Swallow Prior. *Cultural Engagement*, Ch. 9.

* Student-led class discussion comparing the Christian and postmodern approaches to State and Power.

04/10: Ecology from the Postmodern Approach

Gare, *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crisis*. Ch. 3

Eagleton, [The Illusions of Postmodernism](#). Ch. 4-5

Thiele, [Thinking Politics](#) Ch. 4.

Thiele, [Thinking Politics](#) Ch. 6.

04/17: Ecology from the Christian Approach

Job 12, Psalm 19, Proverbs 27

Grudem, Wayne A. *Politics According to the Bible*, Ch. 10.

Chatraw, Josh, and Karen Swallow Prior. *Cultural Engagement*, Ch. 7.

Blowers, Paul M. "From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving our World by Norman Wirzba (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), xii + 162 Pp." *Modern Theology* 33, no. 3 (2017): 491-492.

*Submit "Experiencing a Christian Service Paper" by Friday, April 19th at midnight.

*Student-led class discussion comparing the Christian and postmodern approaches to Ecology.

04/24: Type (s) of government that aligns with the Postmodern Approach

Gare, *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crisis*. Ch. 5

Storm & Josephson. *Metamodernism*. Ch. 7.

Thiele, [Thinking Politics](#). Ch. 4

Thiele, [Thinking Politics](#). Ch. 7

Aronowitz, "[Postmodernism and Politics in Postmodernism](#)."

05/01: Type (s) of government that aligns with the Christian Approach

1 Chronicles 28, Proverbs 29 and 31, Revelation 11, 21-22.

Kahan, Alan S. *Tocqueville, Democracy, and Religion*, Ch. 4.

Black, Amy E. *Five Views on the Church and Politics*, Conclusion.

Rhonheimer, "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Idea of Limited Government."
https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=GBIB&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE|A643640557&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon
Koyzis, David Theodore, and Richard J. Mouw. *Political Visions & Illusions*, Ch. 9,
Epilogue

* Student-led class discussion comparing the Christian and postmodern approaches to the best kind of government.

05/08: Final Exam Week

*Submit Capstone/Final paper by Friday, May 10th at midnight.

Course Assignments

Visual Entertainment Reflection Paper: (25% of the final grade).

A student must write a 1500-2000-word paper applying first-unit concepts on a political TV show or movie and submitted by Friday 02/08 at midnight. The student will choose a political movie or show. After watching it, the student will identify and analyze what is the TV shows or movies' approach to the government's foundational principles, and view on human beings, society, nation, culture, language, history, state, power, and the environment. In the end, the student reflects and gives his opinion on how he perceives the incorporation of these thought patterns in the movies and/or shows.

Experiencing a Christian Service Paper: (25% of the final grade).

Experience attending a Christian religious service, and identify and analyze their approach to human beings, society, nation, culture, language, history, the State, power, and the environment. You are also encouraged to connect or interview a member of the leadership team to identify their perception of the foundation of their government. After living this experience, the student must write a short reflection of 1500-2000 words incorporating the course notes and readings from 03/20 to 04/24, and submit it by Friday, April 17.

Capstone/Final Paper: (30% of the final grade)

The student will apply the insights of the readings and the course by writing a 6000-word paper that compares the postmodern and Christian responses to a particular political issue or law. Once the student has identified the issue or the law, the student must compare the postmodern answer and Christian answer to the issue or law based on each approach definition of human being, state, and ecology. The student must submit this paper by Friday, May 10.

Presentation: Discussion Leader (20% of the final grade)

Students must also be prepared to lead a class discussion throughout the semester for the length of fifteen minutes comparing the Christian and postmodern approach to one of the elements of government discussed in the course such as human nature, society, nation, culture, language,

history, State, power, and ecology. The course schedule for presentations will be determined during the first week of class.

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance in courses is expected throughout the length of the term. The U.S. Department of Education requires that every university monitor the attendance of their students. Student attendance includes, but is not limited to:

Physically attending a class where there is an opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students, submitting an academic assignment; taking an exam, an interactive tutorial, or computer-assisted instruction; attending a study group that is assigned by the school; participating in an online discussion about academic matters and initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course.

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
940-1000	920-939	900-919	860-899	840-859	820-839	780-819	760-779	740-759	700-739	680-699	680-699

For courses with a Pass/NP final grade, please refer to the Course Grading section of this syllabus for the assignment requirements and/or point value required to earn a Passing final grade.

Add/Drop Policy

No course can be added after the first week of classes without signed approval from the course instructor and the Registrar's Office. A Fall/Spring course may be dropped up to and during Drop/Add Week.

Late Assignment Policy

Course Assignments should be submitted on time.

If the student is unable to complete an assignment on time, then he or she must contact the instructor prior to the assignment's due date.

Assignments that are submitted after the due date without prior approval from the instructor will receive the following deductions:

1. Late assignments submitted within one week after the due date will receive a 10% deduction.
2. Assignments submitted more than one week, and less than 2 weeks late will receive a 20% deduction.
3. Assignments submitted two weeks late or after the final date of the course will not be accepted.
4. Group projects/assignments will not be accepted after the due date.

Conclusion

After considering all the information presented in this chapter, it is possible to conclude that a teacher who holds a Christian transcendent approach to human nature is more likely to improve student learning outcomes than those taught by a teacher who holds an autonomist postmodern approach to human nature by providing a certain and objective source of truth, knowledge, reality, and identity. To start, one must consider how both approaches oppose each other on their source and definition of truth. For a Christian teacher, “truth exists and is found most profoundly in Jesus Christ.”³⁷² Since God the Son [Christ] is the truth (John 14:6), truth is objective, and it is determined by the triune transcendent God. Due to this objective truth, the Christian teacher has certainty and universal set of beliefs, values, knowledge that enable him to discern truth from error. This objective truth also free the Christian teacher from any anxiety to create any faulty “truth” and “knowledge.” This freedom encourages the Christian teacher to desire, learn, discover, apply, and teach the objective truth.³⁷³ In relation to his students, the Christian teacher can enhance learning by freeing his students from the anxiety of creating unstable “truth” and “knowledge” by teaching objective and universal truth and encouraging his students to “embrace faith by constructing their own faith based on biblical principles.”³⁷⁴ Due to the objectivity and universalism of truth, the Christian teacher encourages better learning by preparing his students to function anywhere in the world and in any sphere of society regardless of their age, gender, race, or socio-economic status.

³⁷² Richard J. Edlin, "Keeping the Faith: The Christian Scholar in the Academy in a Postmodern World." *Christian Higher Education (London, UK)* 8, no. 3 (2009): 206.

³⁷³ Ibid, 214.

³⁷⁴ Oliver, "Postmodern Thought and Christian Education," 18.

Conversely, the postmodern teacher discourages unfettered learning by arguing for “an elimination of the notion of absolute truth [and metanarratives] in favor of a socially constructed or negotiated truth.”³⁷⁵ Since this is an “absolute claim in itself,”³⁷⁶ the postmodern teaching contradicts itself by enhancing what it seeks to eliminate.³⁷⁷ This contradiction creates anxiety and confusion for a teacher when deciding what to teach and what not to teach.³⁷⁸ A teacher’s lack of certainty delegates to students the great responsibility of discovering “truth” and “knowledge.” This responsibility is too much for a learner who is in process of maturing.³⁷⁹ It makes students anxious, confused, and passive learners.³⁸⁰ This anxiety and confusion will prevent them from discerning fallacies from truth. Due to the constant change of the definition of “truth,” students are unable to build confidence and will be unequipped to defend their “knowledge” and “truth” if the crowd opposes them.³⁸¹ Since students could wonder, what is the point of learning or discussing this if it will rapidly change? Why invest so much in something uncertain? This lack of confidence discourages students from presenting opposing views to their culture and their classroom and makes them passive and vulnerable learners that accept and change their perception of “truth” and “knowledge” according to the trend of the culture.³⁸² As it was presented in this chapter, teachers who apply the postmodern idea of “truth” experienced passive responses from in students.

³⁷⁵ Ibid, 14.

³⁷⁶ Ibid, 14.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, 14.

³⁷⁸ Hargreaves, *Changing Teachers*, ” 83.

³⁷⁹ Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited: From Protestant to Post*, 351.

³⁸⁰ Hargreaves, *Changing Teachers*, ” 134.

³⁸¹ Ibid, 57.

³⁸² Ibid, 56.

Like the Christian and the postmodern teachers differ on their perception of “truth,” both teachers also differ on their postmodern view on “knowledge.” The postmodern teacher believes that:

“Knowledge is not “fixed,” rather it is an attempt to understand the social conditions by which knowledge is formed. Epistemology is “an effort to understand the conditions in which knowledge is produced. “Discourse about schooling and school practices are tied less to the concept under discussion, for example, special education, than they are to the power relationships which formed them.”³⁸³

Since knowledge is unfixed³⁸⁴ and constructed by “students, teachers, community, and relations of power,”³⁸⁵ knowledge is arbitrarily set by the consensus of those that have control and power in society.³⁸⁶ This powerful people use language and various symbols to establish the kind of knowledge people should have.³⁸⁷ This establishment of knowledge reflect a contradiction on the postmodern view that seeks to eliminate any universal and objective claim.³⁸⁸ As a result, the postmodern teacher that has charged his students with the responsibility of creating “knowledge” will disregard students created knowledgeable if it does not align with the consensus of those who have power – the teacher himself and the governing authorities. This kind of education decreases learning by

“...forming people who will be residents, not inhabitants. This is an education of upward mobility that results in a pedagogy of disconnection and an ethos of displacement. In the context of a global economy, higher education produces career-oriented consumers who have no intimate knowledge of, or sense of commitment to, any place. This is an education for homelessness.”³⁸⁹

³⁸³ Oliver, "Postmodern Thought and Christian Education," 15.

³⁸⁴ Ibid, 15.

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 15.

³⁸⁶ Gale, *Teachers*, 37.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, 19.

³⁸⁸ Oliver, "Postmodern Thought and Christian Education," 14.

³⁸⁹ Bouma-Prediger, and Walsh. "Education for Homelessness or Homemaking?", 291

By using the postmodern belief on “knowledge,” the postmodern teacher enhances a culture of consumption rather than learning in his students. The former type of culture prevents students from directing their love towards their ultimate, eternal, satisfying Love and Good (God), and promotes students’ distortion of love by pointing it towards “the images, that global capitalism, renders us all restless and insatiable consumers, unable to settle.”³⁹⁰ In other words, the postmodern teacher sees knowledge as a material good rather than as an act of love.

Opposite to the postmodern teacher, the Christian teacher believes knowledge is fixed,³⁹¹ and “the act of knowing is an act of love, the act of entering and embracing the reality of the other, of allowing the other to enter and embrace our own. This all happens within a community.”³⁹² In the educational journey, the teacher and the students enter each other’s reality, respect one another, and discover and learn to apply the objective truth and knowledge in their lives and their communities. According to Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian Walsh, the Christian teacher seeks to build community by educating for homemaking. This education is directed by ecology which is “founded upon the theological insight that we [human beings] are creatures - limited and liable to error- living in a world not of our own making. Being ecologically literate is simple, knowing the rules of the house, and ought to engender a humble and thoughtful keeping of this God’s blue-green earth.”³⁹³ Therefore, a Christian teacher enhances better learning by teaching students how God’s revealed truth and knowledge on humanity’s role and responsibility in the world helps people and communities to live and build society.

³⁹⁰ Ibid, 291.

³⁹¹ Oliver, "Postmodern Thought and Christian Education," 14.

³⁹² Bouma-Prediger and Walsh, “Education for Homelessness or Homemaking?” 284.

³⁹³ Ibid, 287.

Like truth and knowledge, the Christian and the postmodern professor also differ on their identity as teachers. For the Christian teacher, God (his Creator) is the Ultimate Teacher (Isaiah 48:17). Since the Christian teacher's identity is found in God, the Christian teacher will imitate God in his profession. To understand how God reflect his identity as a teacher, the Christian teacher studies and imitates the Image of the Invisible God - Christ (Colossians 1:15). God the Son is the objective identity of what it means to be a teacher, how to teach, and what to teach. Duncan Ferguson expands on Christ's vocation as a teacher by stating that:

“Jesus understood his vocation as one who proclaims the kingdom of God, invites people to change directions (repent), and receive God's power and presence. He speaks of it as a transforming experience for individuals, but also as divine power to transform social and political social structures to ensure justice and the well-being of all.”³⁹⁴

Like Christ, a Christian teacher's identity as a teacher is focused on proclaiming the kingdom of God in his discipline of expertise. Reflecting the Christian teacher, the student that also has a redeemed reason will flourish in his vocation with the right motivation. This inner transformation will help the student to promote the well-being of society. Knowing the importance of His vocation, Christ use creative ways to meet the needs of his listeners and followers³⁹⁵ by making His teachings “attention-getting, engaging, and compelling, and in many cases almost poetic.”³⁹⁶ Some of those creative ways include parables, metaphors, analogies, and the reading of Scripture.³⁹⁷ Like Christ, the Christian teacher will aim to meet of their students and will research and try creative tools and ideas to teach their students and enhance their learning.

³⁹⁴ Ferguson, *The Radical Teaching of Jesus*, 62.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, 58.

³⁹⁶ Ibid, 58.

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 58.

Christ also enhance the learning of his students by living out His teaching. He thought with words and actions.³⁹⁸ Like Christ, a Christian teacher's words and actions must be coherent with his teaching on the Kingdom of God in and outside the academic institution. His teaching must be a lifestyle. Since Jesus live out His teaching, Jesus also confronts, engages, and challenges his students to live them out to. By seeing and hearing Jesus' words, Jesus' students are encouraged to live them out.³⁹⁹ Like Christ, a Christian teacher's live will confront, engage, and challenge student to live out their learning. Besides demonstrating his learning, Christ also wisely answer to hard and controversial questions, and He also kept silence in others (Matthew 27:14). Like Christ, a Christian teacher "will settle for nothing less than a comprehensive account of reality. Not content with the what of things, [he/she] wrestles with the why of things; not content with knowing how, [he/she] asks what for...the Christian [scholar] cannot evade the hard questions about what it all means,"⁴⁰⁰ and discern when to keep silence.⁴⁰¹ Due to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in a believers' heart, a Christian teacher can find and live out Christ's identity as a teacher.

Opposite to the Christian teacher, the postmodern teacher has the anxiety of creating his teacher identity. The postmodern teacher sees himself "as a wanderer,' a 'drifter,' 'attached to no home,' and 'always suspicious of stopping, staying, and dwelling'."⁴⁰² Since the postmodern self is a "wanderer," the postmodern teacher finds himself "constant process of construction, and that

³⁹⁸ Brian K. Blount, "Jesus as Teacher: Boundary Breaking in Mark's Gospel and Today's Church." *Interpretation* (Richmond) 70, no. 2 (2016): 184.

³⁹⁹ Ibid, 184.

⁴⁰⁰ Edlin, "Keeping the Faith: The Christian Scholar in the Academy in a Postmodern World," *Christian Higher Education* (London, UK) 8, no. 3 (2009): 214.

⁴⁰¹ Ferguson, *The Radical Teaching of Jesus*, 57.

⁴⁰² Bouma-Prediger and Walsh, "Education for Homelessness or Homemaking?" 283.

which is warranted [on being a teacher] at one time may be unwarranted at another time.”⁴⁰³ Therefore, the postmodern teacher spends his career-life wondering about his identity and trying to construct and reconstruct it according to the context and academic environment.⁴⁰⁴ Since the teacher's identity will be in constant change, the postmodern teacher sees each identity construction as a “resting place rather than a destination.”⁴⁰⁵ In order to construct an identity that the postmodern teacher can call a “resting place,” the postmodern teacher thrives and focus his identity on breaking any perception of an “oppressive” relationship.⁴⁰⁶ Since the postmodern understanding of “oppressive relationship” is linked to the concept of “authority,” the postmodern teacher seeks to break any authoritative figure in the classroom by placing himself and the students in the same level of authority.⁴⁰⁷ This level means that no one in the class has the authority to reject a claim or idea as false until the class reaches a consensus on its validity.⁴⁰⁸ Since the postmodern teacher perceives no difference between his authority and his students, the teacher can choose one of three postmodern approaches to teaching such as: the nurturing mother, the emancipator, and the mediator.⁴⁰⁹ The frustrated and low results of these identities on enhancing learning prevent students from acquiring the necessary knowledge to academically compete outside their local context⁴¹⁰ and leave the teacher in greater anxiety to create a new teacher identity that serves him

⁴⁰³ Oliver, "Postmodern Thought and Christian Education," 14.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 14.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 14.

⁴⁰⁶ Gale, *Teachers*, 37.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 37.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 37.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 136-140.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, 134.

as a temporal “resting place” by removing any sense of authority in the classroom. Even though theoretical and empirical research has explored certain effects of postmodernism in universities, it will be important to conduct further empirical research comparing the Christian and postmodern approaches to higher education by observing teachers’ and students’ behaviors and academic outcomes.

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- Álvaro Uribe, On the Returning of FARC: "Aquí no hubo paz, sino el indulto para responsables de delitos atroces." (Alvaro Uribe, On the Returning of FARC: "There was no Peace, but the pardon for those responsible for atrocious crimes"). INFOBAE. <https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2019/08/29/alvaro-uribe-sobre-el-regreso-de-las-farc-a-las-armas-aqui-no-hubo-paz-sino-el-indulto-para-responsables-de-delitos-atroces/>
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Appendix 1: Interview with a professor at an Elite University in the United States

1. What is it like teaching religious concepts at a secular university? Tell me about your experience in a non-sectarian university.

Answer: The professor says that it is hard since there are various tempting possibilities that include (1) to be offered options; (2) consumer goods; (3) where people have lived or where they are from. Go in one direction. Therefore, a professor must embody a certain picture of people that will be respected. Also, he reflected that he is considered a government employee. Therefore, there are certain guidelines that he needs to submit to.

2. If you teach a human flourishing or government class, how do you help people to see human fallenness, human accountability, and human dignity? How do you teach a class and incorporate the wisdom of Christianity at various points, teaching this wisdom in a significant way to students who do not share your same underlying ontological convictions?

Answer: In one of his classes that presents the relationship between God, politics, and peace, the professor starts after 9/11, and incorporates political theology. From there, he seeks to expose the students to the culture and to questions. To accomplish this purpose, he integrates at least three of the following aids in his classes:

1. Philosophers and theologians
2. Historians
3. Social scientist
4. Ethnographic
5. Scripture/ texts.

The professor also incorporates scenes from old movies that could lead to political and moral discussions.

3. How do you operate in an environment where these people feel uncomfortable with the teaching and concepts of Christianity?

Answer: Even though this question was not directly answered, it seems that he focused on integrity and character. He also pointed out that even if a concept is hard for students to take, students seem to already know what to do. For example, forgiveness! These are the kind of concepts that they have experienced.

4. How and what do you recommend me to know or look into as I design a religious class to teach at a nonsectarian university?

Answer:

- a. Use and follow:
 - Technique
 - Then, this technique is articulated.
 - This develops an ethical position – be aware that the best comes from the other side.

- b. Remember that discussion more unapologetic – He considers that the most effective discussions for students are those that they see or experience.

5. What and how can students learn from the Christian tradition (beliefs) even while students are not committed to this tradition? How is it helpful for the students?

Answer: Find a way to relate the concepts to your experience in life. Using history to help them make sense of life.

6. How can I encourage students to consider Christianity as an option beyond being just a dogmatic belief?

Answer:

- c. The quality of a scholar is to have character and meet the standards and needs of his department.
- d. Students are at best when they have a sense of familiarity that helps to be profound and trustworthy.
- e. Note: He seems to incorporate historical figures.

7. Is there any other advice you would give me as a teacher or as a person?

Answer:

- a. Find and meet students where they are (like Paul when he addressed the Athenians and introduce them to the unknown God).
- b. Identify whether you have some recognition of their beliefs (important to address your class).
- c. Acknowledge that students worry about their views being criticized. It also generates anxiety.

8. Will it be possible for a conservative Christian teacher like me who believe in the Trinity, humanity's fallen nature, Jesus Christ as the Only Way to Heaven, and the inerrancy of Scripture to work in a nonsectarian university? What will be the opportunities or obstacles that I may face?

Answer: The same as any other teacher as long as he teaches with integrity. Presenting the best arguments of the argued topic.

Appendix 2: Interview with a professor at an Ivy League University in the United States

1. **What is it like teaching religious concepts at a secular university? Tell me about your experience in a non-sectarian university.**

Answer: Overall, he seems to have a good experience. He says that although his university is not for Christianity, His department is very Christian. He said that His department was created to be like a protection for the Christian students, and with the aim to speak about Christianity. This department was created by an epidemiologist and is directed by a strong Christian (Catholic) epidemiologist that recently faced problems with His faith, but that was free and kept in his position. He says that his positive experience is linked to the Christianity of His department. Nonetheless, he also expressed fear of being quiet of fire at some point for His religious beliefs.

2. **If you teach a human flourishing or government class, how do you help people to see human fallenness, human accountability, and human dignity? How do you teach a class and incorporate the wisdom of Christianity at various points, teaching this wisdom in a significant way to students who do not share your same underlying ontological convictions?**

Answer: The professor seems to stay close to the text that he is teaching and tries to avoid sensitive topics such as those related to sexual orientation. He also avoids language such as sinner. He said that he uses concepts that they can all relate to, and especially one of loving the enemies seems to be blown-minded to his students.

3. **How do you operate in an environment where these people feel uncomfortable with the teaching and concepts of Christianity?**

Answer: The professor found that most of his students are not uncomfortable with Christianity, the issue seems to be that they have never been exposed to the Christian faith and a Christian community.

4. **How and what do you recommend me to know or look into as I design a religious class to teach at a nonsectarian university?**

Answer: He encouraged me to be very discerning about what to teach and what/how to say it. Know the culture of the university and avoid sensitive topics. He considers that even one of his university's failures is that they do not have robust courses on the History of Christianity as they do for other religions – or how Christianity came to be. The professor considers that even if a scholar rejects Christianity, it is important for a scholar to know since our culture, countries, and society were highly influenced by Christianity.

5. **What and how can students learn from the Christian tradition (beliefs) even while students are not committed to this tradition? How is it helpful for the students?**

Answer: It is helpful to students because they learn common virtues that must be applied in their lives to flourish (health). One of his examples was loving our enemies.

6. **How can I encourage students to consider Christianity as an option beyond being just a dogmatic belief?**

Answer: He did not really address this question, but pointed out that Christianity should be looked at as it responds to the key needs of society. He also seems to point out what has been taught, what Christian theologians (or church fathers) have taught, and how it has affected society.

7. **Is there any other advice you would give me as a teacher or as a person?**

Answer: He repeated to be very discerning.

8. **Will it be possible for a conservative Christian teacher like me who believe in the Trinity, humanity's fallen nature, Jesus Christ as the Only Way to Heaven, and the inerrancy of Scripture to work in a nonsectarian university? What will be the opportunities or obstacles that I may face?**

Answer: He says that this question seems to involve concepts that are problematic and highly debatable even among Christians. One of the biggest problems he seems to discern is to be conservative- which seems to have a bad association. The professor says it depends on the kind of publications, and statements that a person made. The professor pointed to the example of a former lecturer at his university who made biological research and published a book arguing that testosterone hormone reflects the biological difference between men and women. After the publication and popularity of her book, this lecturer was fired and canceled by this university. This lecturer was not conservative or Christian, she was quite the opposite- even the head of a department that oppose Christian values. From this example, the interviewed professor advice to be careful about the kind of topics a person talks about, and the way that the topics are spoken or taught.