

Handout: Notes & Resources for
An Introduction to Christ and Academic Culture

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Introductory Remarks:

Slide: #3

Important things to say

- A. Because the scale of the project I'll be talking about is so large, even a 30,000' overview is hard to give.
- B. Narrowing the field, what I'll actually focus on:
 - 1. Defining some terms.
 - 2. Why the project of thinking about Christ and academic culture is challenging.
 - 3. Why the project is still worth your time as a Christian who happens to be an academic.
 - 4. ACI resources to aid in the project of developing a view of Christ & academic culture.
 - 5. Focus on one area of academic culture that likely affects your professional work.
 - 6. A few conclusions.

Your notes & Questions:

Slide #4

Important Things to Say

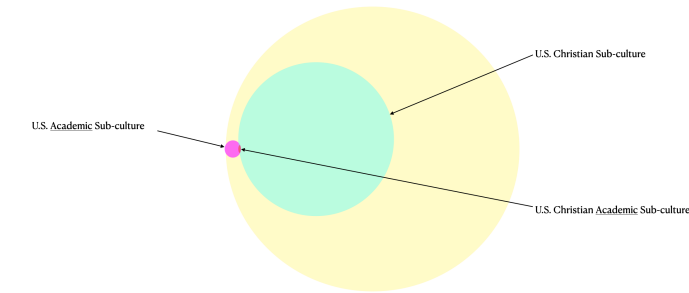
- A.
- 1. Provisionally say there are three big parts: social/cultural, theological, and philosophical



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Slide #5

A. 2 Overview of the Project: Culture & Sub-Cultures

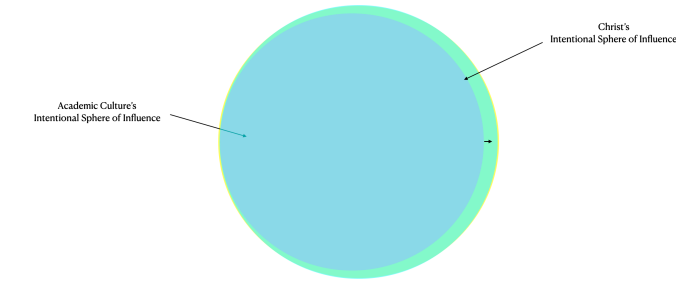


Culture in Terms of Relative Numbers (not to scale)

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Slide #6

A. 3 The Issue of Spheres of Influence Overlap

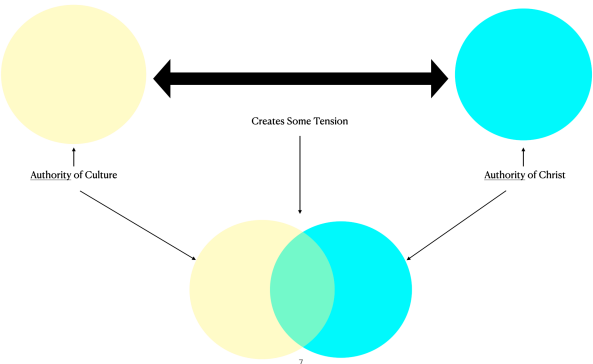


Culture

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Slide #7

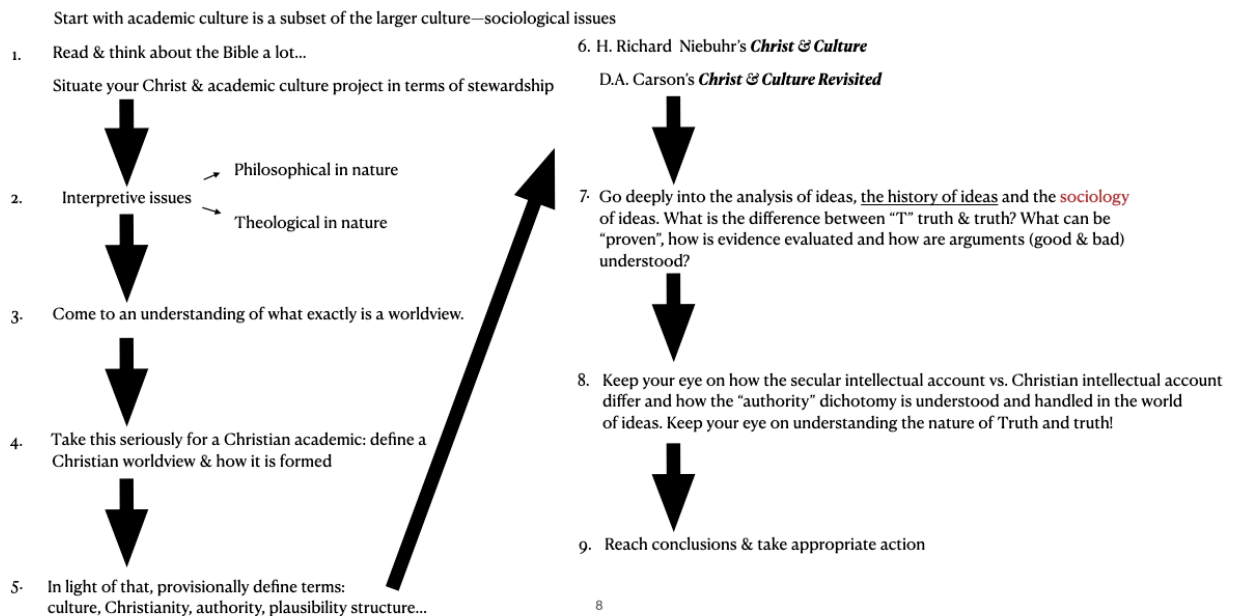
A.4 The Issue of Possible Authority Overlap in Academe



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Slide #8

A. Sketching a pathway for understanding the Christ and academic culture life-time project, from 30,000'



Supplemental notes on Slide #8

Sociological Data Starters:

- Read the Bible.
- Do Sociological Research.

First Wave (late 50s):

[The Academic Mind](#) (Book)

Second Wave (1990s-):

[Jewish Institute: Volume II: Religious Beliefs & Behaviors of College Faculty](#) (download)

[How Many Ward Churchills?](#)

[Bias Seen in Bias Studies](#)

[Is the Academy a Liberal Hegemony?](#) Zipp & Fenwick

[The Ideological Profile of Faculty in the Humanities and Social Sciences](#) Reply to Zipp & Fenwick

[What's in a Grade? Academic Success and Political Orientation](#)
[Politics and Professional Advancement Among College Faculty](#)

Third Wave (2006-):

[The Social and Political Views of American Professors](#). Google Document
[How Religious are America's College and University Professors?](#) (Gross & Simmons)

[The Religiosity of American College and University Professors](#) (Gross & Simmons)

[Faculty Bias Studies](#) (American Federation of Teachers)

Related, see also:

[Academic Bias](#) (Wikipedia)

[Faculty Partisan Affiliations in All Disciplines: A Voter-Registration Study](#) (Cardiff & Klein)

[Why are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care?](#) (Book, Neil Gross)

[Bias Against Women in Academia History—A Propaganda Analysis](#) (JSTOR)

[Positivity Bias In Higher Education Research](#)

[Is There a Liberal Bias Among American Professors?](#)

[The Value of Ideological Diversity Among University Professors](#) (Whittington)

[The Politics of American Sociologists](#)

[Current Theoretical and Political Perspectives of Western Sociological Theorists](#) (Semantic Scholar)

[Homogenous: The Political Affiliations of Elite Liberal Arts College Faculty](#) (National Association of Scholars)

[The Vanishing West 1964-2010: The Disappearance of Western Civilization from the American Undergraduate Curriculum](#) (Chronicle of Higher Education)

[Why Are Liberals So Condescending?](#) (Washington Post)

[The Wedge Driving Academe's Two Families Apart?](#) (Chronicle of Higher Education)

See also ACI's resources for:

[Pursuing Full Professorship](#)

[White Paper on Peer to Peer Evangelism](#)

Further Supplement for Sketch of Pathway Slide (numbering corresponds to points in the Pathway):

1) It doesn't hurt to be aware of what is the current "orthodoxy" among the schools of thought in academe at the start...domain by domain. For instance: being aware of the dominance & "authority" of empirical studies.

Or for instance: serious debate between structuralism and post structuralism in the humanities—which affects interpretation; science: the latest iteration of quantum mechanics in physics.

Also, it doesn't hurt to have a sense of key areas of conflict between theism and current science: the beginning of our universe & mind/body problem.

2) Some interpretative theological issues:

"being in the world, but not of the world" (not a single verse, but a teaching derived from verses—1 John 2:15-17; John 15:19, John 17:14-16

"...render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's..." —Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:14-16

"...Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men, whether to the king as the supreme authority, or to governors..." —1 Peter 2:13

6) Resources on Niebuhr and Carson's work:

Notes & Resources on H. Richard Niebuhr's Types

[Notes on H. Richard Niebuhr's 5 types](#)

[ACI Podcast on Niebuhr's 5 types](#)

Notes & Resources on D.A. Carson's "revisitation" of Niebuhr:

[Carson's Critique of Niebuhr's Types](#) (Slides from Podcast)

[Carson's Critique of Niebuhr's Types](#) (ACI Podcast)

[Carson's Alternative to Niebuhr's Typologies](#) (Slides from Podcast)

[Carson's Alternative to Niebuhr's Typologies](#) (ACI Podcast)

Slide #9

B) 1. Defining Some Terms

As I Will be Using Them

- Christians and Christianity
 - Understand the term Christian is profoundly "connected" to the NT documents.
 - Historical/Theological—followers of Christ
 - Recipients of God's grace in Christ, that is not of works...and in some sense is of works.
 - Vicarious substitutionary atonement...by faith.
- Christian scholarship
 - Scholarship informed by a Christian perspective
 - examples: a Christian view of the nature of science; a Christian view of the mind/body problem; Christianity and the problem of free-will, a Christian view of the academic disciplines...one by one.
 - "I believe in God as I believe in the sun, not just because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."
- Christian academic integration
 - Scholarship informed by Christian perspective—so roughly speaking I'm using the terms synonymously
- Not to be confused with scholarship done by Christians from or informed merely from a secular perspective.

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Supplementary on Slide #9

[Link to ACI Resources on Theological Acuity](#)

[Link to ACI Resources on Christian Scholarship](#)

[Link to ACI Essay on Faith & Reason](#)

Slide #10

B) 1. Defining Some Terms (cont.)

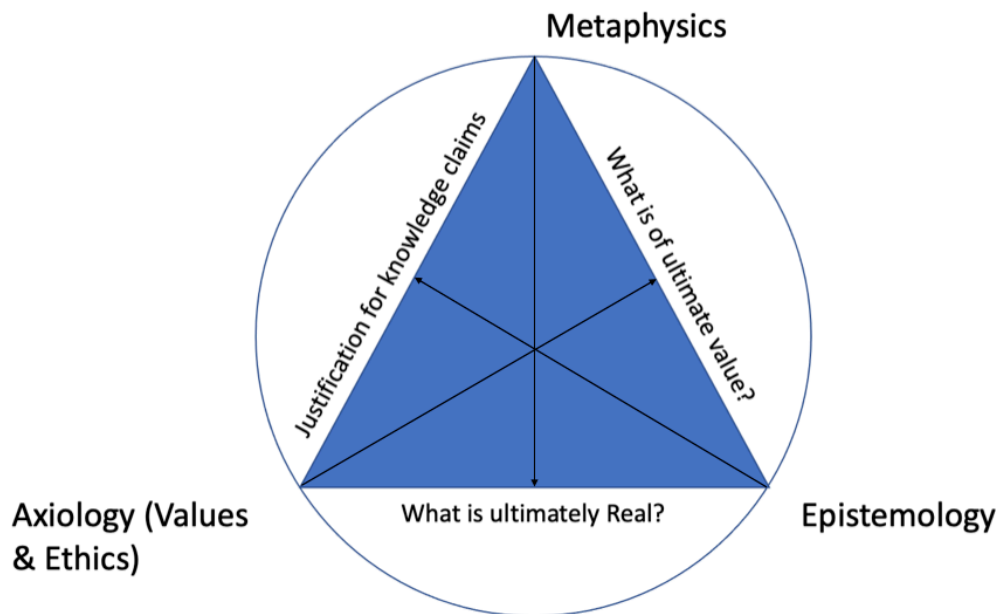
As I Will Be Using Them

- **Authority of culture**—a spectrum
 - High end—Christian “accepts” everything from academic culture—no critique from a Christian perspective
 - Low end—Christian accepts nothing or very little without critical thinking—everything seen through eyes of Christ, but not all things are perhaps as relevant.
- **Authority of Christ**—
 - High End— “...We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take **captive** every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
 - Low End—Christianity as a whole is an inaccurate account of reality...and therefore to be held, if at all, merely privately. No interaction at all in the public square or market place of ideas.
- **Worldview**
 - Weltanschauung—for an individual or group—a comprehensive & systematic way of seeing, understanding & organizing “data”*
 - Different ways of expressing this idea of worldview: 1) through (grand) narrative or stories; 2) attempt to do this with greater verbal or mathematical “rigor”

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Slide #11

Credit: diagram suggested by a similar diagram presented in an apologetics course taught by Charles Moore at Denver Seminary



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Supplementary to Slide #11

Short Essays:

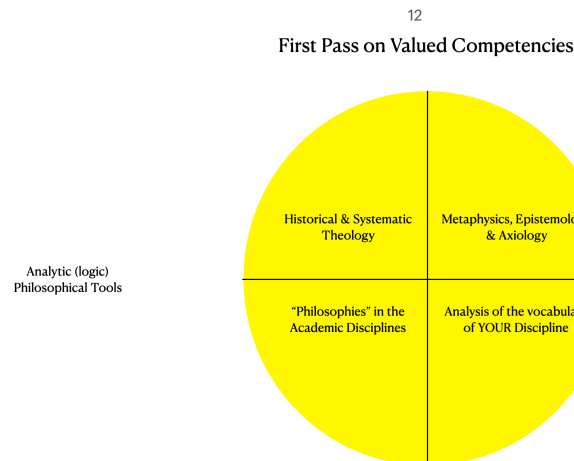
[Worldview & Thinking Christianly 1](#)

[Worldview & Thinking Christianly 2](#)

B) 2. Why This Project is so Challenging?

- Understanding Christ and academic culture as an academic involves, at least:
 - A penetrating analysis of historical theology and systematic theology & the philosophical issues “around” theology (historical & interpretive)
 - A penetrating analysis of philosophical domains: metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology (ethics & values) and their histories
 - A penetrating analysis of the various philosophies of the academic disciplines
 - (egs. Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Theology....) & schools of thought within disciplines (egs. structuralism in linguistics, post-structuralism in literature...)
 - And a penetrating analysis of the current state of **your** particular academic discipline—including an understanding of the sociology of ideas.
 - A sophisticated & developed Christian worldview?

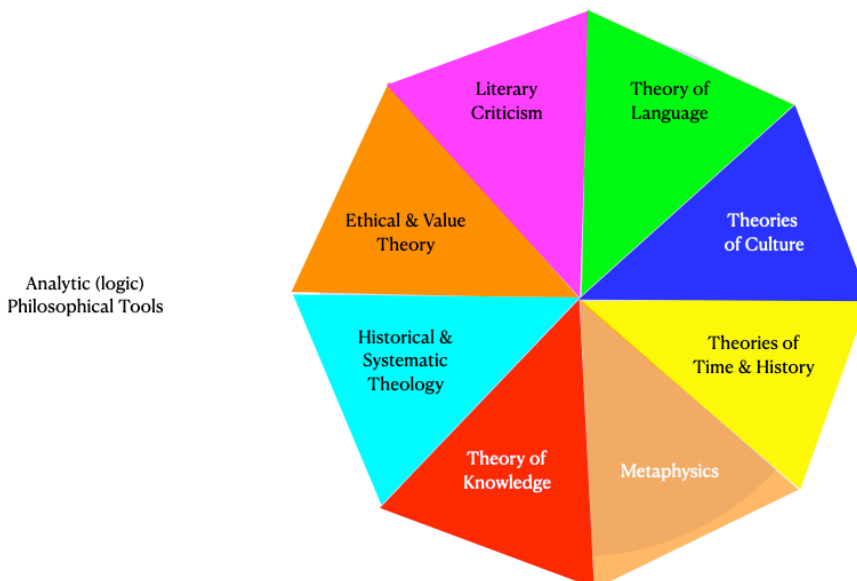
Slide #13



Slide #14

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Second Pass: Valued Competencies for Understanding Christ and Academic Culture



B) 3. Why it is Still Worth Your Time & Effort

- It provides a sophisticated path for pursuing integrality, and a way to measure the integrity between the life of your mind and the way you live your life.
- Wholeness...completeness...fulfillment. A goal and a process to live a “good life” as a Christian, who is called as (or to be) an academic.
- You are commanded as of first importance to, “...Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and **with all your mind...**” (emphasis mine)
- Fulfill this not merely as obedience, but as a matter of gratitude. A response to grace.

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Supplementary to Slide #15

—Remember this is a life-time project

—There have been distinguished people who have taken on this project for their generation, including: Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, contemporaries like historian George Marsden and philosopher Alvin Plantinga and lots of others.

Plantinga Notes:

[The Need for Christian Scholarship](#)

[The Nature of Christian Scholarship](#)

* Plantinga Video: [On Christian Scholarship](#)

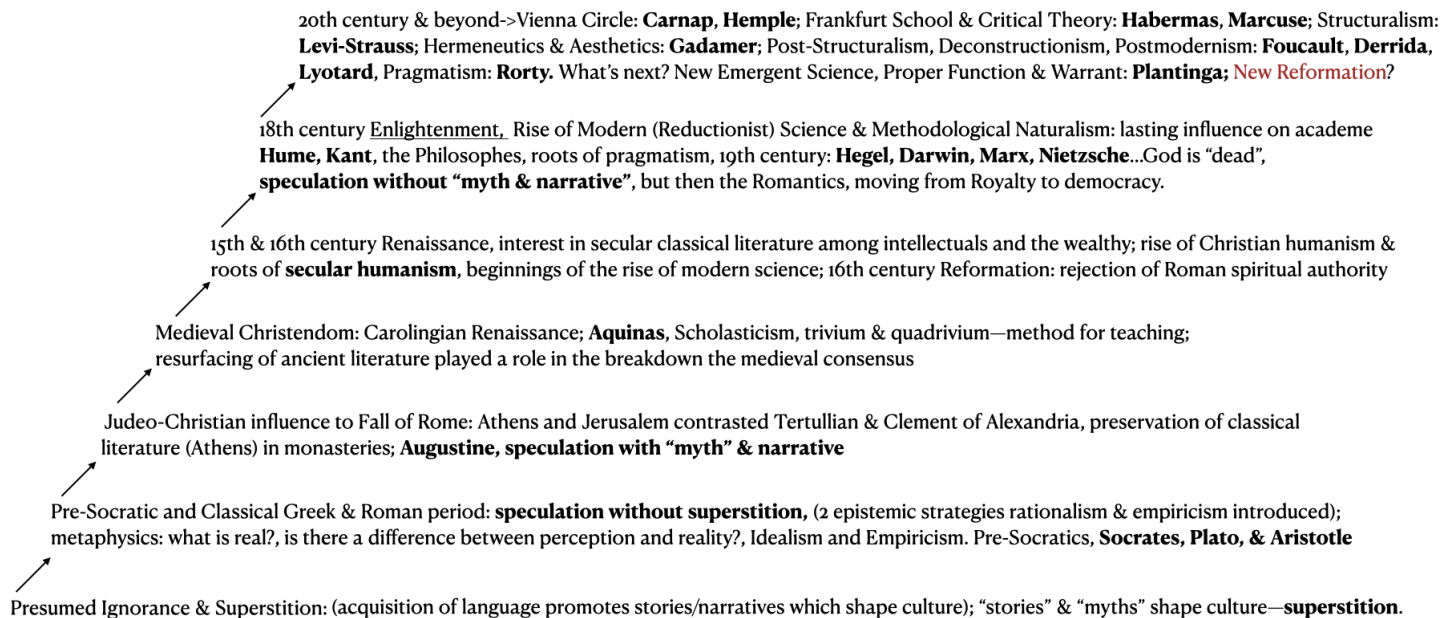
Slide #16

B) 4. ACI Resources for the Project

- ACI Christ & culture resources on our site:
 - Our Home Page: <https://academicconnectionsgcm.org>
 - Our “Faith & Scholarship” portal:
 - <https://www.academicconnectionsgcm.org/other-resources/scholarship/faith-and-scholarship-porta/index.html>
 - Our Christ & culture page:
 - <https://www.academicconnectionsgcm.org/other-resources/scholarship/christ-and-culture-resource/index.html>

Slide #17

B) 5 Quick Take on Some Shifts in (Intellectual/Cultural) Thinking in the West and its impact on academe. (Roughly, the received tradition)



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Supplementary for Slide # 17

See "[Late timeline](#)" handout

Then we'll go back to the "story" of the shifts in thought among the intellectuals.

Not including everything that can be included in this sketch; by the way, this sort of thing calls for a philosophy of history.

I'm not saying or trying to imply this has been a steady "upwards" progression towards the "right" answer.

This "story" doesn't fully explain everything because besides the analysis of ideas there is the sociology of ideas—itself a subset of sociology. There are sociological issues apart from the sociology of ideas that shape academic culture.

Short ACI articles about how critical theory can play a role in shaping academic culture:

- [Jesus and Academic Culture, Part 1](#) (Introduction)
- [Jesus and Academic Culture, Part 2](#) (Presenting the Gospel in Academe)
- [Jesus and Academic Culture, Part 3](#) (Shifting From Seeking Truth to Seeking Social Justice)
- [Jesus and Academic Culture, Part 4](#) (Critical Theory and Critical Theories)
- [Jesus and Academic Culture, Part 5](#) (Answering Concerns and Critics)

8 Podcast Series: [Jesus & Academic Culture](#) (12 minute introduction)

ACI video: [A Primer on Critical Theory](#)

B) 6. Some Conclusions

- Not too much in this presentation is directly on the sociological part...except the diagrams & references.
- By focusing on the history of ideas we can see the result of paradigm shifts in the received tradition in academia that affects culture & your life now
 - Went from pre-written history's superstition to authority of Reason without myths
 - Middle ages tried to synthesize the Christian "narrative/myth" with Reason
 - Renaissance & especially Enlightenment were a strong return to Reason without the guarantees of the Christian "narrative" (eventually leading to the exclusion of objectivity and much more...)
 - Romanticism of the late 19th century can be seen as an escape from Reason, but not a return of the intellectuals to the Christian "myth"
 - Rejection of metaphysics (or made subjective), existentialism and pragmatism growing in the 20th century; Aesthetics and Art as a "new" myth; some hold this new myth as a mix of subjectivity and objectivity. There is serious trouble justifying how they hold that position on secular terms.

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	Metaphysics	Epistemology	Axiology & Ethics
Person in the Street "Common Sense"	Realist—real physical world, with subjects and objects that exist "out there". No theory of abstract objects or mathematics	Not just a guess; uses common sense and justified true belief; knowing is being sure; accepts expert authority.	There is objective moral rights and wrong, but no theory about it.
Typical Christian in the Street Sunday school education	Realist—real physical world, with subjects and objects that exist "out there". No theory of abstract objects or of mathematics, except vague sense these are hard problems.	Not just a guess; knowing is being sure, will often accept something as knowledge if it came from what they think is an expert authority.	There are objective moral rights and wrongs; and, Scripture & conscience tells us what they are.
Early Science: Galileo	Realist about an external world, mathematical theories try to get at the deep structure of the world "out there."	Discovering the "deep structure" out there. Mathematics seems to explain the world that exists independently of our opinion. We know by experience & reflection.	I don't know, perhaps Scripture & the Church's teaching
Early Science: Newton	Realist about an external world, not a clue as to what the "out there" really is, but mathematics explains how it works well.	Looking for the deep structure "out there." Mathematics seems to explain the world that exists independently of our opinion.	Unknown by me.

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Trying to Get a Sense of How Worldview Presently Impacts Thinking

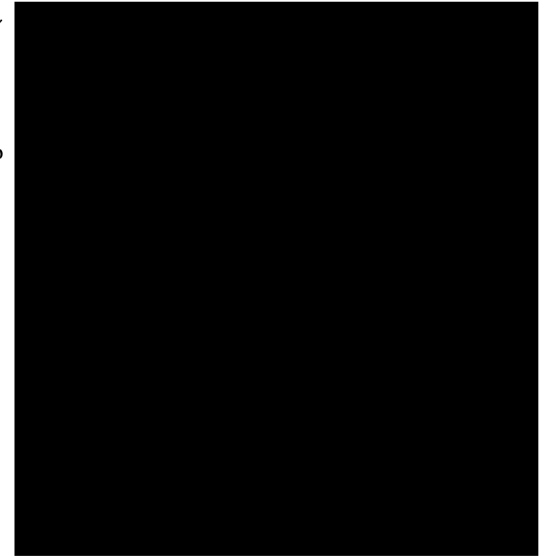
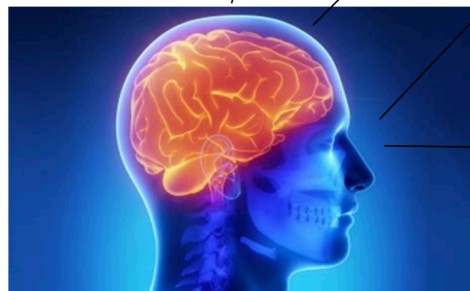
Slide #20

Realist Structuralism: 1. Metaphysics: Critical Realist

2. Representation of the data in the mind
3. Possibility of objectivity (mind independence) as the theories close in on the Truth
4. Foundational theory of knowledge (deductive **Cartesian**)
5. Correspondence theory of Truth

Post-structuralism: 1. Categories in our mind allow us to have experience (Kantian)

2. The "interface" (our experience), isn't the Truth, but it allows us to survive & multiply (evolutionary psychology); **Anti-Realism**, metaphysical constructivism?
3. Not a representation of an external Reality, just the "ideas" in our mind/brain; the death of "T" truth. Either no deep structure, or we cannot ever know the deep structure. Worse—claiming that sort of knowledge is: imperialistic & oppressive.
4. Coherency theory of knowledge
5. Subjectivity: leads to nihilism, counter-intuitively to: humanism or Machiavellianism; **Hoffman**



Data (presumably "out there"
and with deep structure to be discovered)

Realist Structuralism (discovering the deep structure in the data)

Post-structuralism (mind constructing "whatever structure" with no means to compare it to the Truth)

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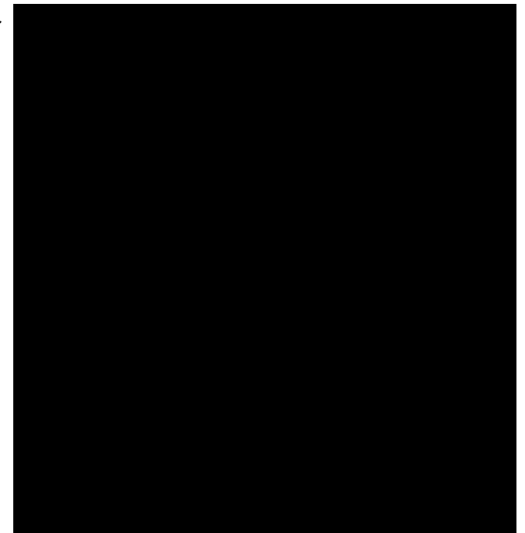
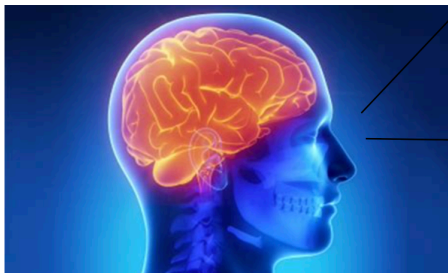
Slide #21

Pragmatic or Instrumentalist Realist

1. Nuanced degree hybrids in Worldview categories
2. Metaphysics: Critical Realist, Non-Constructivism, yet finds it hard to define things like what is motion or what is physical?
3. Epistemology: Instrumentalist (alleged of Newton), Coherency Theory; Linguistics. e.g. **Chomsky**, emphasis on innate knowledge, cites progress of science, promotes tolerance and wants to be a non-relativists but has problems with justification.

Pragmatic or Instrumentalist Realist2*

1. Nuanced degree hybrid in Worldview categories
2. Metaphysics: Realist because he "discerns" objectivity epistemically; finds it hard to define things like what is motion or what is physical?
3. Epistemology: key is that aesthetics teaches there is subjectivity and objectivity in our knowledge; rejects relativism in many important areas, promotes tolerance, e.g. **Gadamer**



Data (presumably "out there",
with a deep structure to be discovered)

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Supplementary links to cited examples above:

[Dr. Don Hoffman](#)

[Dr. Noam Chomsky](#)

[Hans-Georg Gadamer](#)

[Descartes](#)

Slide #22

B1. Some Conclusions (con't)

- **What we didn't seem to want to realize is that the return to Reason on secular terms would lead to back to radical skepticism!** Metaphysical skepticism and epistemic pragmatism—no longer correspondence of our ideas to reality (Truth), but rather “regimes of truth” (post-structuralism), perspectivism, which seems to capture the linguistic turn in philosophy.
 - Despite the protest from the New Aesthetics, we're back to raw power & propaganda being the key (in the spirit of individual and cultural nihilism), examples: Homer, Machiavelli, Nietzsche, Marx, the Frankfurt School, and Foucault.
 - Counterintuitively, we're in both a nihilistic age which annihilates all Truth and would support “hard” power to get what it wants, and a sort of a secular humanist age “myth” that uses “soft” power—with its exaltation of humanity, ambivalence toward heroic individuals & cultures, emphasis making the here and now “better,” intolerance of Christian values, but still uses power to overcome those who disagree with their aesthetics and sensibilities.
- This is in a current cultural sense “with whom we have to do” in academe; we have some important things to discern and to say as Christian academics. This should be further explored!!

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END

Related Readings:

- Carson, D.A.. ***Christ & Culture Revisited***. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008.
- Crouch, Andy. ***Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling***. InterVarsity Press, 2008.
- Dik, Bryan. ***Redeeming Work: A Guide Discovering God's Calling for Your Career***. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2020.
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- _____. ***Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture***. Eerdmans, 1988.
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