

SocAnthro Presuppositions

I. DOING THEOLOGY

Introduction:

- You are educators and missionaries. You must answer the question, **how do we proclaim the Gospel in our time, and our place?** In the particularity of human realities.
- How do we handle genetic engineering, computers, cloning, polygamy, spirits, witchcraft?
- Problem is a gap between the biblical texts and our days. How do we build the bridge?
- we tend to use one or another approach to build the bridge from Scripture to our day.

1. Systematic Theology:

- questions: what are the unchanging universals, and how can we gain knowledge from them to apply to us today?
- methods: algorithmic logic. Mathematical, propositional, precise, one right answer, linear.
- values:
 - = helps us build a biblical worldview. This is essential.
 - = gives a clear view of God and God's perspectives
- limitations:
 - = divorces cognition from feelings and values in order to be 'objective'. Divorce Truth/passion and holiness
 - = foundationalist: tends to linear thinking and reductionism
 - = algorithmic logic is good to gain knowledge, but that does not equal wisdom. Tends to a formulaic approach to things. Tends to lead to intellectual arrogance--we can know it all.
 - = hard to deal with the particularity of humans. A weak view of humanity.
 - = little sense of missions.

2. Biblical Theology:

- questions: what is the cosmic drama in which we are involved? What does that mean for us today?
- methods: historical analysis
- values:
 - = gives us the big picture without which life has no meaning
 - = gives us a high view of God as creator, savior, actor.
- limitations:
 - = hard to deal with the particularity of humans. Tends to a weak view of humanity.

3. Tropological Theology:

- question: how can we understand the mysteries of God and the infinite given our finite minds?
- methods: tropes and other nondiscursive signs.
- values:
 - = points us to the transcendent mysteries beyond our comprehension
 - = leads us to worship and adoration of God, makes us humble
- limitations:
 - = hard to move from transcendence to the mundane ordinariness of human existence

4. Missiological Theology:

- question: what is the Gospel message for us in our particular places and times?
- methods: exegesis of human contexts using the methods of the human sciences and analogies, types and other tropes to build bridges between Biblical times. Critical contextualization. Critique of our preliminary assumptions and categories and logic in the light of Scripture.
- values:
 - = helps us bridge the truth from Scripture to today
 - = helps us combine cognition/affectivity/morality.
 - = gives us a strong view of humanity.
 - = leads to a strong sense of mission and to pastoral and educational ministries: discipling teaching and nurturing humans in their settings.
- limitations:
 - = by itself it tends to be androcentric and weak on understanding God and cosmic realities

Our task in this course is to learn how to do missiological theology in our settings.

II. FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES:

The social sciences and humanities emerged in the context of modernity. We need to understand both the contributions and limitations this has on scientific knowledge. If we are not careful, we will become captive to the scientific rather than the biblical worldview.

1. The Emergence of Modernity:

1.1 *Greek Supernatural/Natural dualism [Indo-European roots?]:*

- stress on materialism, science and technology in the public domain
- relegation of religion to private beliefs

1.2 *Materialist view of reality:*

- stress on foundationalism, and search for elementary particles

1.3 *Mechanistic view of the natural world:*

- determinism, natural law, no room for teleology, or free will or purpose
- linear causality
- engineering mentality, humans in control become gods of creation
- no room for morality

1.4 *Hierarchical view of natural world:*

- great chain of being and command: caste system, bureaucratic organization, evolution

1.5 *Androcentrism and individualism:*

- focus on self [not soul], rights and authority
- hierarchical view of society.
- move from 'soul' to 'self'

1.6 *Rationalism:*

- faith in human reason

1.7 *Existentialism:*

- emphasis on now and news

1.8 *Myth of redemptive violence [Indo-European roots]:*

- competition, power, progress
- violence is essential part of all life
- move from 'morality' to 'values', and stress on 'fairness'
- value of success, pragmatism and primacy of power

1.9 *Public/Private split:*

- science is dominant as public truth, religion as private faith and opinion
- public domain is mechanistic, private is organic and relational, emotional, values

1.10 *Pathology as diseases and salvation through therapy:*

- no place for sin, so evil becomes pathology and illness.
- solution is therapy and treatment.

2. The Triumph of Positivistic Science:

2.1 *Positivistic view of scientific knowledge:*

- positivistic knowledge is True: 1:1 correspondence with reality, photographic
- treated all earlier knowledge as prelogical and suspect
- stress on empiricism and algorithmic logic
- tends to foundationalism and a linear view of causality
- disagreement leads to conflict

2.2 *Empiricism:*

- apply reason to empirical data in the natural realm
- independent verification of data
- seek totally objective data, uncontaminated by feelings and values.

2.3 *Mechanistic/algorithmic logic:*

- mathematics is the rational basis for science. Quantification and quantitative methods the highest value

2.4 *Search for GUTS:*

- search for Grand Unifying Theories: powerful and comprehensive, self-contained, logically consistent.

3. Challenges to Positivism:

3.1 *General relativity:* puts scientist into the picture. Perspectivalism, not relativism.

3.2 *Psychology of scientist*

3.3 *Sociology of science:*

- Mannheim, Berger

3.4 *Anthropology of science:*

- science is a western mind-game

3.5 *Philosophy of science:*

- Kuhn, Polanyi

III. THE EMERGENCE OF POST-MODERNITY

POST-MODERNITY emerged as a reaction to the arrogance and colonialism of modernity. It is a reactionary movement--anti-colonial, antiGUT in nature.

1. Characteristics of POST-MODERNITY:

1.1 *Challenge of positivism and naive realism:*

- subjectivism and relativism or idealism and incommensurability
- stress on personal experience and emotions

1.2 *Challenge to GUTS:*

- deconstructionism

1.3 *Challenge of ecological crisis and threat of technology:*

2. Challenges to Post-modernity:

2.1 *Relativism:*

2.2 *No agenda to solve human problems:*

III. MOVING BEYOND POST-MODERNITY TO GLOBALISM

We need to move beyond post-modernity to a globalism that reaffirms truth and our common humanity which underlies our differences.

1. Critical Realism:

- knowledge is maps and models of reality, not 1:1 correspondence
- hermeneutical community needed to check personal biases
- truth can be known in part
- don't need to know everything to know enough to get our tasks done
- understanding belief systems, and realize that science is not a privileged or special way of knowing things.
- knowledge is partial but can be true. Knowledge is not in foundationalism and the sum of the parts, but in the overall picture or pattern that emerges out of data
- complementarity: need many perspectives to see the whole picture.

2. To globalism, not western parochialism:

- to the oneness of humanity: no others, only us

3 To the contextualization of the Gospel:

- translation and translatability
- contextualization
- metacultural grids and global hermeneutics.
- meta-theological methods: community hermeneutics, Scripture, Holy Spirit

4. To a systems view of understanding reality:

- systems approach: looks at phenomena in terms of systems--nonlinear causality, not reductionist, but integrative. Systems we can use are: physical, biological, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual.
- system of systems view of human realities: these systems are all part of a larger system of systems.
- historical context: we must place these systems in history and God's great drama.

IV. INTEGRATING THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE

We need to seek to integrate theology based on revelation and science based on empirical observation. How do we do this?

1. Reductionism:

- this is the answer of positivism in its search for a GUT
- this does not take the contribution of each seriously

2. Stratification:

- this is the answer given in positivism due to specialization. Levels of knowledge.

3. Incommensurability:

- paradigms can not be integrated. Each is autonomous and there is no true understanding or translation possible between paradigms.

3. System of systems:

- this is the approach of critical realism. Recognizes God is in and over everything.
- research traditions are not incommensurable, translation and understanding is possible
- integration is achieved through complementarity, not GUTS, nor fragmentation.

V. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The social sciences emerge out of the scientific movement after the 'hard sciences' had taken the lead. The social sciences applied the assumptions, questions and methods of the hard sciences to seek to answer the question--"What are humans?"

1. The Encounter with the Greater World of Humans:

The social sciences, particularly anthropology, emerged out of the encounter with people around the world that arose out of the era of global exploration.

1.1 *The medieval period*:

- others as monsters and infidels and heretics

1.2 *The age of exploration*:

- others as barbarians, savages, pagans

1.3 *The age of enlightenment*:

- others as primitive, aboriginals, heathen

1.4 *The age of post-colonialism [post-modern]*:

- other as native

1.5 *The Christian view*:

- other as us: common humanity

2. The Emergence of Anthropology:

2.1 *The end of slavery and formation of the 'Defense of the Natives League.'*

2.2 *The split between missions and anthropologists.*

- missions: help by giving the best we have
- anthropologists: help by leaving them alone and not bringing them to evils of modernity

2.3 *The split between anthropologists and ethnologists:*

- question of the unity vs. diversity of human origins
- finally settled on the unity of human origins

2.4 *The tension between anthropologists and missionaries:*

- anthropologists: Rousseauian like Marxists
 - = accuse missionaries of destroying other cultures
- missionaries: Modernists like Capitalists and those for Democracy.
 - = accuse anthropologists of preserving human zoos for study

3. The Emergence of Evolution as the first Modern Paradigm:

3.1 *Biological Evolution:*

- study of race and racial arrogance

3.2 *Cultural Evolution:*

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A Comparison of Early Social Science Theories

1. Evolutionary Theories

- based on comparisons of humans [synchronically and diachronically]
- materialistic reductionism
- meaning found in history
- history is going somewhere
- the end is a utopia
- progress occurs through competition and violence
- faith in human algorithmic reason

1.1 Biological evolution

- the driving force is natural laws and survival of the fittest

1.2 Cultural evolution [anthropology]: over the long run.

- driving force is growing rationality of humans due to biological brain evolution

1.3 Social evolution [sociology]: short run.

- driving force is growing complex social systems: seen as good or bad
- the driving force is humans

- Capitalism

- = progress
- = trickle down from top
- = hierarchical
- = violence of competition
- = sin is laziness and inemptitude
- = empower the successful by leaving unchecked by corporate controls
- = utopia is Civilization
- = Adams, Locke, Comte

Marxism

- = revolution
- = overthrow from bottom up
- = egalitarian
- = violence of revolution
- = sin is social oppression
- = empower the oppressed and weak by mobilizing them
- = utopia is primitive egalitarian society
- = Rousseau

2. Evolutionary vs Social Theories

Evolutionary Theories

- dichronic
- centered on all humanity
- Civilization: technology, science
- change is progress
- = colonial era in missions
- = missions as Christianize and Civilize

Social Theories

- synchronic
- centered on social groups
- social organization and culture
- change is pathological
- anti-colonial era in missions
- = Christian as indigenous and contextualized

3. Sociology vs Anthropology

Sociology

- social knowledge to engineer progress, modernity, science and technology are good
 - balcony or helicopter view
 - focus on generalities
 - see populations
 - quantitative methods, mechanistic survey, sample
 - reductionism, control and limit variables
 - experimental, controlled
 - scientist as observer
 - objective view of the scientist, etic (scientific)
 - Adams, Locke, Comte
- = missions as civilizing
- = missions from without

Anthropology

- socio/cultural knowledge to preserve people as they are, modernity, science, technology are corrupting
 - street-level view
 - focus on particulars
 - see individual people as people
 - qualitative methods, humanistic participatory
 - thick description, always see more variables
 - observe in the flow of life
 - scientist as participant/observer
 - hermeneutical, emic and subjective view of the people + etic comparisons
 - Rousseau [anthropologist goes native]
- = missions as identification and contextualizing
- = missions as partnership and mutual participation