

HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL IN A POSTMODERN WORLD?

COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL IN A POSTMODERN WORLD

1. BEAR BOLD WITNESS

- **God's witnesses, not his lawyers**
- **empower others to make decisions**
- **speak the truth in love**
- **see the world as others see it**

2. NARRATIVE WITNESS

THE NATURE OF POST-MODERNITY

1. DECONSTRUCTION — gut

- persectivalism - *CONTRADICTORY*
- subjectivism

2. EXISTENTIALISM - history

- focus on now

3. INSTRUMENTALISM - positivism

- relativism
- pragmatism

4. EGOCENTRISM - androcentrism

- freedom, rights
- consumerism
- entertainment
- narcissism

5. MYTHS

6 Pluralism

WORLDVIEW THEMES **OF POSTMODERNITY**

1. DECONSTRUCTION – gut

- dillusionment with the Enlightenment project
- anti-colonial

2. PARTICULARISM - universalism

- celebrate diversity
- reject unity from above
- ‘culture’
- mystical wholism

1. DECONSTRUCTION // grand unified theories

1.1 Disillusionment with the grand unifying theories of the Enlightenment

- seen as imperialistic, oppressive
- seen as monocultural

1.2 Anti-colonialism

1.3 Anti-authoritarian

1.4 Anti-hierarchical

1.5 Anti-reductionist

1.6 Rehumanization of the world

1. CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION **[what is knowledge and who is the knower?]**

1.1 No objective knowledge

1.2 Saussurian signs: forms and meanings

1.3 Perspectivalism

1.4 Observer is in the picture and changes the picture

1.5 Cultural conditioning of knowledge: no Archimedian vantage point for observation

1.6 Knowledge is power

**1.7 Human studies involve
hermeneutics**

**1.8 Reflexivity: human theories
apply to the observer as well
as the observed**

2. PARTICULARISM // universalism

2.1 *Celebrate pluralism, diversity*

- replace 'civilization by 'culture'
- celebrate all cultures as equals
- reject uniformity as tyranny
- celebrate non-conformity
- see others as 'natives'
- mystical holism-latent monism

2.2 *Bricolage, patch-work*

- Balkenization of society, make-shift social alliances
- fragmentation of society calls for tolerance and coexistence of diverse groups

2.3 Democratization of popular culture

2.4 Anti Grand Unified Theories

ATTACKS AGAINST NAIVE REALISM

1. Physical Sciences:

- the scientist is part of the picture.**
- it is impossible to have a theory that is: 1) strong, 2) autonomous, and 3) logically consistent.**

2. Psychology of science:

- we are studying people, not objects. Therefore:
 - 1) reflexivity: our theories must apply to ourselves.
 - 2) the people are studying us.
 - 3) our presence modifies the scene of observation.
- we as scientists are humans influenced by our personalities and histories. Subjectivity is an essential part of knowing.

3. Sociology of Science.

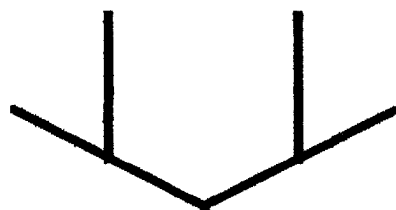
- **scientists are part of social communities that influence deeply their theories.**

4. Anthropology of Science.

- **scientists are in particular cultures and histories, and are shaped by these.**
- **as anthropologists live deeply in other cultures, their views are radically changed. They become bicultural people.**

5. Philosophy of Science.

- science is rooted in western philosophy.
- knowledge is not positivist, but shaped by the personality, community and culture of the scientist.
- knowledge is paradigmatic in nature (Kuhn).



**COLLAPSE OF
NAIVE REALISM**

DETERMINISM

1. CHARACTERISTICS:

- knowledge is determined by external realities.**
- there is no rational observer.**
- people are mechanical robots.**
- there are no claims to truth.**

2. DISAGREEMENTS:

- surface conflicts that have no real issues of truth involved.**

IDEALISM

1. CHARACTERISTICS:

- the mind creates reality.**
- the road to knowledge is reason and insight.**
- strong affirmation of absolute .**
- different mental worlds are incommensurable.**

2. DISAGREEMENTS:

- talk past each other. No external reference point to compare views.**

INSTRUMENTALISM

"A Rorschach view of knowledge."

1. Knowledge is created in the mind.

- * we do not know if it corresponds with 'reality'.**
- * it is subjective: shaped by the culture and history of the scientist.**

2. Knowledge is useful, not true.

- * all knowledge is relative.
There are no absolutes.**
- * the test is pragmatism - is it useful.**

3. Knowledge is paradigmatic:

- * knowledge can not be exhaustive.**
- * change takes by addition, and by paradigm shifts.**

4. Disagreements create no conflict.

- * there are many ways to view the same thing, all of which may be right.**

EVALUATION OF POSTMODERNITY

1. STRENGTHS:

- **challenges the arrogance of the Enlightenment project**
- **helps us see other people and their cultures**

2. WEAKNESSES:

- **offers no answers to the needs of the world**
- **has no message of meaning and salvation for humans**

EVALUATION OF POST-MODERNITY

1. STRENGTHS:

- **challenges the arrogance of human reason and the privileged position of science**
- **helps us see other peoples and their cultures as fully human**

2. WEAKNESSES:

- **offers no answers to the world's crying needs**
- **has no spiritual message of salvation, no sense of mission to a needy world**

COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL IN A POST-MODERN WORLD

1. BEAR BOLD WITNESS:

- speak the truth
- speak in love
- learn to see the world as others see it, and learn from their insights

2. NARRATIVE WITNESS:

- tell our stories as part of the cosmic story

ANABAPTIST WITNESS IN POST-MODERNITY

1. KING AND KINGDOM OF GOD – kingdoms of this earth

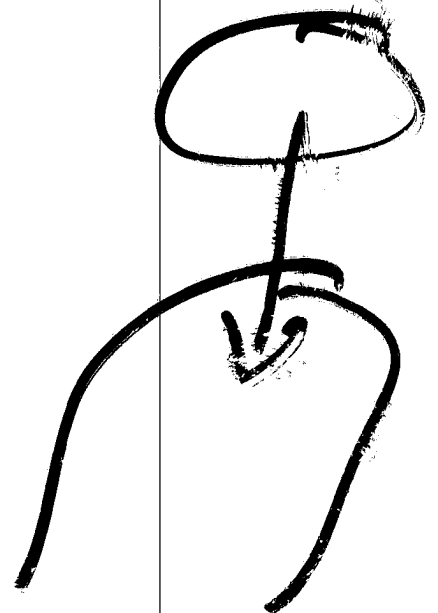
2. CROSS AS THE POWER OF SACRIFICE AND SERVICE – power as tyranny

3. CRITICAL REALISM – Instrumentalism, positivism

4. GROUP – Individual

5. OTHERS - us

6. MYTH OF REDEMPTIVE LOVE



MODERN ENLIGHTENMENT

CIVILIZATION

IMPERIALISM

SCIENCE

***PRIMITIVE/
ABORIGINE***

POSTMODERN DECONSTRUCTION

CULTURE

ANTI-COLONIALISM

EXPERIENCE

NATIVE

EPISTEMOLOGY

MODERN

- **Positivism**
- **Objective truth**
- **Absolute truth**
- **Search for GUT**
- **Correspondence
nature of truth**
- **Formal signs**

POSTMODERN

- **Instrumentalism**
- **Subjective truth**
- **Pragmatic knowledge**
- **Perspectivalism**
- **Constructed nature
of knowledge**
- **Saussurian signs**