Lion and Lamb Apologetics
Postmodernism and Truth

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Perhaps one of the most important topics in our day is truth. Indeed, the nature and knowledge of truth are foundational to the way people think about and live their lives. Historically, the classic correspondence theory of truth has been the prominent view, and it has outlived most of its critics. But, so we are often told, these are postmodern times; the classic model—once entrenched in the western mind-set—must now be replaced by some form of neo-pragmatism or some other anti-realist model of truth. That is, it must be replaced if one is concerned about the rampant victimization reflected all around us. Thus, the phrase "we hold these truths to be self-evident" now reads "our socially constructed selves arbitrarily agree that certain chunks of language are to be esteemed in our linguistic community." Something is radically amiss here!

From a careful read of the previous paragraph, it is no doubt obvious that I am an unrepentant advocate of the correspondence view of truth and have a certain disdain for the various anti-realist views. My aim in this essay is twofold: 1) to sketch out the correspondence theory and the postmodern rejection of it; and 2) to identify five confusions of which I believe postmodernists are guilty. I then conclude by warning that not only are postmodern views of truth and knowledge confused, but that postmodernism is an immoral position and that people who love truth and knowledge—especially disciples of the Lord Jesus—should do everything possible to stop the plague of postmodernism.

THE CORRESPONDENCE THEORY OF TRUTH

In its simplest form, the correspondence theory of truth is the view that a claim—technically, a proposition—is true just in case it corresponds to reality; that is, a proposition is true when what it asserts to be the case is the case. In order to get clearer on the meaning of the correspondence view of truth, some technical language is necessary. Put generally, *truth obtains when a truth-bearer stands in an appropriate correspondence relation to a truth-maker*.

Some clarifications are in order. First, what is a truth-bearer? A truth-bearer—the thing that is either true or false—is not a sentence, statement, or other piece of language but a *proposition*. A proposition is, minimally, the content of a sentence. For example, "Snow is white" and "*Schnee ist weiss*" are two different sentences that express the same proposition. A sentence, on the other hand, is a linguistic object consisting in a sense-

perceptible string of markings formed according to a culturally arbitrary set of syntactical rules, a grammatically well-formed string of spoken or written scratchings/sounds. Sentences are true in case they express a true proposition or content. We will return to the topic of propositions later.

Second, what about truth-makers? What is it that makes a proposition true? The best answer to this question is *facts*. A fact is something (technically, it is a "state of affairs") that obtains in the world. For example, the grass's being green, an electron's having a negative charge, or God's being all-loving are all facts.[1] Consider, then, the proposition that grass is *green*. This proposition is true just in case a specific fact, namely, grass's being green, actually obtains in the real world. If Sally has the thought that *grass is green*, the specific state of affairs (grass actually being green) "makes" the propositional content of her thought true just in case the state of affairs actually is the way the proposition represents it to be. The grass's being green makes Sally's thought true even if Sally is blind and cannot tell whether or not it is true and even if Sally does not believe the thought. In other words, reality makes thoughts true or false. A thought is not made true by someone believing it or by someone being able to determine whether or not it is true. Put differently, evidence allows one to tell whether or not a thought is true, but the relevant fact is what makes it true. It goes without saying that "makes" in "a fact makes a proposition true" is not causal but rather is a substitution instance of "in virtue of"—the proposition is true in virtue of the fact.

Our study of truth-bearers has already taken us into the topic of the correspondence relation. Correspondence is a two-placed relation between a proposition and a relevant fact that is its intentional object. A two-placed relation, such as "larger than," is one that requires two things (say, a desk and a book) before it holds. Similarly, the truth relation of correspondence holds between two things—a relevant fact and a proposition—just in case the fact matches, conforms to, corresponds with the proposition.

Why Believe the Correspondence Theory?

Why should one accept the correspondence theory of truth? A number of reasons could be offered, but perhaps the simplest one is an argument called the descriptive argument. The descriptive argument places careful attention on the description and presentation of a specific example of one's coming to experience truth in order to see what can be learned about truth itself. As an example, consider the case of Judy and Al. While at home, Judy receives a call from a local car dealership that the vehicle she recently ordered—a Mazda

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[1] For present purposes, this identification of the truth-maker will do, but the account would need to be filled out to incorporate future states of affairs that will obtain or counterfactual states of affairs that would have obtained given such and such.

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MX-5 Miata—has arrived and is ready to go. At this point, a new mental state occurs in Judy's mind—the thought that her Mazda MX-5 Miata is in the dealership parking lot.

Judy, being aware of the content of the thought, becomes aware of two things that are closely related to it: the nature of the thought's intentional object (her Mazda MX-5 Miata being in the dealership parking lot) and certain ways of determining the truth of the thought. For example, she knows that it would not be relevant for verifying the thought to visit the local coffee shop and order a latte. Rather, she knows that she must take a series of steps that will get her to the appropriate dealership and look for a particular salesman in order to confirm the vehicle's arrival.

So Judy heads out for the dealership being guided by the proposition that *the Mazda MX-5 Miata is in the dealership parking lot*. On the way, suppose her friend Al joins her, though Judy does not tell Al where she is going or why. They arrive at the dealership, and they both see the Miata. At that moment Judy and Al simultaneously have a certain sensory experience of seeing the Mazda MX-5 Miata. But Judy has a second experience that Al does not: Judy experiences that her thought matches, or corresponds with, an actual state of affairs. She is able to compare her thought with its intentional object and "see," or be directly aware of, the truth of the thought. In this case Judy actually experiences the correspondence relation itself, and truth itself becomes an object of her awareness. In this case, "truth" is ostensively defined by this relation that Judy experiences.

POSTMODERNISM AND TRUTH

It is difficult to define or even characterize postmodernism, given its loose alliance of diverse thinkers from the various academic disciplines. Nonetheless, it is possible to provide a fairly accurate characterization of postmodernism in general since its friends and foes understand it well enough to offer debate on its strengths and weaknesses.[2]

As a philosophical position, postmodernism is primarily a reinterpretation of what knowledge is and what counts as knowledge. More broadly, it represents a form of cultural relativism about such things as reality, truth, reason, value, meaning, the self, and other notions. On a postmodernist view, there is no such thing as objective reality, truth, value, reason, and so on. All these are social constructions, creations of linguistic

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[2] For a helpful introduction to postmodernism, see Joseph Natoli, *A Primer to Postmodernity* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997). See also, J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), Chap. 6; Garrett DeWeese and J. P. Moreland, "The Premature Report of Foundationalism's Demise," in *Reclaiming the Center: Evangelical Accommodation in a Post-Theological Era*, ed. Justin Taylor, Millard Erickson, and Paul Kjoss Helseth (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, Books, 2005), 81–105.

practices, and as such are relative not to individuals but to social groups that share a common narrative.

Postmodernism denies the correspondence theory, claiming that truth is simply a contingent creation of language that expresses customs, emotions, and values embedded in a community's linguistic practices. For the postmodernist, if one claims to have the truth in the correspondence sense, this assertion is a power move that victimizes those judged not to have the truth.

Five Confusions That Plague Postmodernism

According to Brian McLaren, making absolute truth claims becomes problematic in the postmodern context. Says McLaren, "I think that most Christians grossly misunderstand the philosophical baggage associated with terms like *absolute* or *objective* (linked to foundationalism and the myth of neutrality).… Similarly, arguments that pit absolutism versus relativism, and objectivism versus subjectivism, prove meaningless or absurd to postmodern people.…"[3] McLaren not only correctly identifies some central postmodern confusions, but his statement indicates he exhibits some of the confusions himself. Let's try to unpack some of the philosophical baggage to which McLaren refers and bring some clarity to the confusion.

#1: Misunderstandings about the Nature of Absolute Truth

The first postmodern confusion involves misunderstandings about the nature of absolute truth. In a metaphysical (and correct) sense, absolute truth is the same thing as objective truth. On this view, people discover truth, they do not create it, and a claim is made true or false in some way or another by reality itself, totally independently of whether the claim is accepted by anyone. Moreover, an absolute truth conforms to the three fundamental laws of logic (i.e., identity, excluded middle, and noncontradiction), which are themselves absolute truths. Furthermore, a commitment to the absolute truth of some particular proposition entails no particular thesis about how one came to know that proposition.

By contrast with the metaphysical notion, postmodernists claim that a commitment to absolute truth is rooted in what's called "Cartesian anxiety" (from René Descartes's method of doubting everything in his search for undeniable or "indubitable" truth) and its need for absolute certainty. What this amounts to is the view that if one accepts the absolute truth of a certain claim, then it follows that one is also accepting the view that one can be undeniably certain about the claim. However, since there is very little that one

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[3] Brian McLaren, "Emergent Evangelism," *Christianity Today* (November 2004), 42–43.

can be *undeniably* certain about, this creates a kind of epistemological anxiety. Thus, one postmodernist recently opined that commitment to objective truth and the correspondence theory is merely "an epistemic project [that] is funded by 'Cartesian anxiety,' a product of methodological doubt.…"[4]

As I have already pointed out, this claim is entirely false philosophically. Advocates of a correspondence theory of objective truth take the view to be a realist metaphysical thesis, and they steadfastly reject all attempts to epistemologize the view. Moreover, historically it is incredible to assert that the great western thinkers from Aristotle to Descartes—correspondence advocates all—had any concern whatever about any sort of Cartesian anxiety. The great correspondence advocate Aristotle was hardly in a Cartesian quandary when he wisely pointed out that in the search for truth, one ought not expect a greater degree of epistemic strength than is appropriate to the subject matter, a degree of strength that varies from topic to topic. The correspondence theory was not born when Descartes got up from his armchair, and postmodernists lose credibility when they pretend otherwise.

#2: Two Confusions about Knowledge and Objectivity

Postmodernists also reject the notion that rationality is objective on the grounds that no one approaches life in a totally objective way without bias. Thus, objectivity is impossible, and observations, beliefs, and entire narratives are theory-laden. There is no neutral standpoint from which to approach the world. Therefore, observations, beliefs, and so forth are perspectival constructions that reflect the viewpoint implicit in one's own web of beliefs. For example, Stanley Grenz claims that postmodernism rejects the alleged modernist view of reason that "… entails a claim to dispassionate knowledge, a person's ability to view reality not as a conditioned participant but as an unconditioned observer—to peer at the world from a vantage point outside the flux of history."[5]

Regarding knowledge, postmodernists believe that there is no point of view from which one can define knowledge itself without begging the question in favor of one's own view. "Knowledge" is a construction of one's social, linguistic structures, not a justified, truthful representation of reality by one's mental states. For example, knowledge amounts to what is deemed to be appropriate according to the professional certification practices of various professional associations. As such, knowledge is a construction that

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[4] Philip Kennison, "There's No Such Thing As Objective Truth, and It's a Good Thing, Too," in *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*, ed. Timothy Philips and Dennis Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 157.

[5] Stanley Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 15.

expresses the social, linguistic structures of those associations, nothing more, nothing less.

These postmodernist claims represent some very deep confusions about the notion of objectivity. As a first step toward clearing away this confusion, we need to draw a distinction between psychological and rational objectivity. It is clear from the quote above that Grenz's confused understanding of objectivity is at least partly rooted in his mistaken conflation of these two senses. *Psychological objectivity* is detachment, the absence of bias, a lack of commitment either way on a topic.

Do people ever have psychological objectivity? Yes, they do, typically in areas in which they have no interest or about which they know little or nothing. Note carefully two things about psychological objectivity. For one thing, it is not necessarily a virtue. It is if one has not thought deeply about an issue and has no convictions regarding it. But as one develops thoughtful, intelligent convictions about a topic, it would be wrong to remain "unbiased"—that is, uncommitted regarding it. Otherwise, what role would study and evidence play in the development of one's approach to life? Should one remain "unbiased" that cancer is a disease, that rape is wrong, that the New Testament was written in the first century, that there is design in the universe, if one has discovered good reasons for each belief? No, one should not.

For another thing, while it is possible to be psychologically objective in some cases, most people are not psychologically objective regarding the vast majority of the things they believe. In these cases, it is crucial to observe that a lack of psychological objectivity does not matter, nor does it cut one off from knowing or seeing the world directly the way it is or from presenting and arguing for one's convictions. Why? *Because a lack of psychological objectivity does not imply a lack of rational objectivity, and it is the latter that matters most, not the former*.

To understand this, we need to get clear on the notion of rational objectivity. *Rational objectivity* is the state of having accurate epistemic access to the thing itself (e.g., having accurate knowledge of a thing). This entails that if one has rational objectivity regarding some topic, then one can discern the difference between genuinely good and bad reasons/evidence for a belief about that topic and one can hold the belief for genuinely good reasons/ evidence. The important thing here is that bias does not stand between a knowing subject and an intentional object, nor does it eliminate a person's ability to assess the reasons for something. Bias may make it more difficult, but not impossible. If bias made rational objectivity impossible, then no teacher—including the postmodernist herself—could responsibly teach any view the teacher believed on any subject! Nor could she teach opposing viewpoints because she would be biased against them!

We will return below to the topic of cognitive access to the objects of consciousness, but for now I simply note that Grenz exhibits the twin confusions, so common among postmodernists, of failing to assess properly the nature and value of psychological objectivity and of failing to distinguish and properly assess the relationship between psychological and rational objectivity.

#3: Confusions between Classical Foundationalism and Foundationalism Per Se

To put it simply, foundationalism is the view in epistemology that knowledge and belief rest on the foundation of basic beliefs. Postmodernists reject foundationalism as a theory of epistemic justification. For example, as they assert "the demise of foundationalism," Stanley Grenz and John Franke observe with irony, "How infirm the foundation."[6] Rodney Clapp claims that foundationalism has been in "dire straits" for some time, avowing that "few if any careful thinkers actually rely on foundationalist thinking," even though they cling like addicted smokers to "foundationalist rhetoric." Says Clapp, evangelicals "should be nonfoundationalists exactly because we are evangelicals."[7] Nancey Murphy is concerned to justify a "postmodern" theological method in the face of "a general skeptical reaction to the demise of foundationalism in epistemology."[8]

A major reason for this rejection is the idea that foundationalism represents a quest for epistemic certainty, and it is this desire to have certainty that provides the intellectual impetus for foundationalism. This so-called Cartesian anxiety is alleged to be the root of foundationalist theories of epistemic justification. But, the argument continues, there is no such certainty, and the quest for it is an impossible one. Further, that quest is misguided because people do not need certainty to live their lives well. Sometimes Christian postmodernists support this claim by asserting that the quest for certainty is at odds with biblical teaching about faith, the sinfulness of our intellectual and sensory faculties, and the impossibility of grasping an infinite God.

Unfortunately, this depiction of the intellectual motives for foundationalism represents a confusion between foundationalism per se and an especially extreme Cartesian form of foundationalism, with the result that versions of modest foundationalism are simply not taken into consideration. To see this, note that *foundationalism* refers to a family of theories

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[6] Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 38. Grenz and Franke use the phrase "the demise of foundationalism" ten times in the first fifty-four pages (Part I) of the book.

[7] Rodney Clapp, "How Firm a Foundation: Can Evangelicals Be Nonfoundationalists?" in *Border Crossings: Christian Trespasses on Popular Culture and Public Affairs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2000), 19–32.

[8] Nancey Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion, and Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 131–132.

about what kinds of grounds constitute justification for belief, all of which hold the following theses:

(1) A proper noetic (i.e., mental or intellectual) structure is *foundational*, composed of properly basic beliefs and non-basic beliefs, where non-basic beliefs are based either directly or indirectly on properly basic beliefs, and properly basic beliefs are non-doxastically grounded, that is, not based entirely on other beliefs.

(2) The basing relation that confers justification is irreflexive and asymmetrical.

(3) A properly basic belief is a belief that meets some Condition C, where the choice of C marks different versions of foundationalism.

Classical foundationalism, of which the Cartesian project is the paradigm example, holds that Condition C is indubitability (or some relevantly similar surrogate): the ground of the belief must guarantee the truth of the belief. It is recognized in nearly all quarters that classical foundationalism is too ambitious. Even granting, as I certainly would, that there are some indubitable beliefs, there simply aren't enough of them to ground our entire noetic structure. Further, it clearly seems that certain beliefs that are not indubitable may legitimately be held as properly basic—for example, beliefs grounded in perception, memory, or testimony. And more: classical foundationalism is motivated largely by the belief that certainty is a necessary condition of knowledge, or that one must know that one knows in order to have knowledge. But these analyses are either too strict or lead to an infinite regress, leading in either case to the skeptic's lair.

In point of fact, the past three decades have witnessed the development of various versions of foundationalism that avoid the criticisms leveled against the classical version. Among contemporary epistemologists, modest foundationalism of some form is, as one philosopher put it, the "dominant position."[9] Thus, it is intellectually irresponsible for Clapp, Murphy, and others to claim that foundationalism is losing favor among philosophers. As far as I can tell, apart from intellectual dishonesty, this false viewpoint can be sustained only by conflating classical foundationalism with foundationalism per se, but this is simply mistaken, as the widespread acceptance of modest foundationalism makes clear. Modest foundationalism holds that Condition C is something weaker than indubitability: the ground of the belief must be truth-conducive. Thus at least some

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[9] Michael R. DePaul, "Preface," in *Resurrecting Old-Fashioned Foundationalism*, ed. Michael R. DePaul (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), vii.

C *Cogito*

properly basic beliefs in a modest foundationalism are defeasible (subject to being shown to be false by subsequent evidence).

#4: Confusions about the Identity of the Truth-Bearer

As we have already seen above, the informed correspondence theorist will say that propositions are truth-bearers. What is a proposition? Minimally, it is the content of declarative sentences/statements and thoughts/beliefs that are true or false. Beyond that philosophers are in disagreement, but most would agree that a proposition 1) is not located in space or time, 2) is not identical to the linguistic entities that may be used to express it, 3) is not sense-perceptible, 4) is such that the same proposition may be in more than one mind at once, 5) need not be grasped by any (at least finite) person to exist and be what it is, 6) may itself be an object of thought when, for example, one is thinking about the content of one's own thought processes, and 7) is in no sense a physical entity.

By contrast, a sentence is a linguistic type or token consisting in a sense-perceptible string of markings formed according to a culturally arbitrary set of syntactical rules. A statement is a sequence of sounds or body movements employed by a speaker to assert a sentence on a specific occasion. So understood, neither sentences nor statements are good candidates for the basic truth-bearer.

It is easy to show that having or using a sentence (or any other piece of language) is neither necessary nor sufficient for thinking or having propositional content. First, it's not necessary. Children think prior to their acquisition of language—how else could they thoughtfully learn language—and, indeed, we all think without language regularly. Moreover, the same propositional content may be expressed by a potentially infinite number of pieces of language, and thus that content is not identical to any linguistic entity. This alone does not show that language is not necessary for having propositional content. But when one attends to the content that is being held constant as arbitrary linguistic expressions are selected to express it, that content may easily be seen to satisfy the non-linguistic traits of a proposition listed above.

Second, it's not sufficient. If erosion carved an authorless linguistic scribble in a hillside—for example, "I'm eroding"—then strictly speaking it would have no meaning or content, though it would be empirically equivalent to another token of this type that would express a proposition were it the result of authorial intent.

Postmodernists attack a straw man when they focus on the alleged inadequacies of linguistic objects to do the work required of them in a correspondence theory of truth. Speaking for himself and other postmodernists, Joseph Natoli claims that "No one representation, or narrative, can reliably represent the world because

language/pictures/sounds (signifiers) are not permanent labels attached to the things of the world nor do the things of the world dwell inside such signifiers."[10] Unfortunately, even granting the fact that language (and certain sensations) is problematic if taken to represent things in the world (e.g., that the language/world hookup is arbitrary), it follows that human subjects cannot accurately represent the world only if we grant the further erroneous claim that representational entities are limited to language (and certain sensations). But this is precisely what the sophisticated correspondence theorist denies.

Again, Richard Rorty says, "To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is not truth, that sentences are elements of human language, and that human languages are human creations. Truth cannot be out there—cannot exist independently of the human mind—because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there.… Only descriptions … can be true and false."[11] It should be obvious that Rorty attacks a straw man and that his argument goes through only if we grant that sentences are the fundamental truth-bearers.

#5: Confusions about Perception

Postmodernists adopt a highly contentious model of perception, often without argument. The result is that postmodernists are far too pessimistic about the prospects of human epistemic success.

Postmodernists adopt a linguistic version of Rene Descartes's idea theory of perception (and intentionality generally). To understand the idea theory, and the postmodern adaptation of it, a good place to start is with a commonsense, critical realist view of perception. According to critical realism, when a subject is looking at a red object such as an apple, the object itself is the direct object of the sensory state. What one sees directly is the apple itself. True, one must have a sensation of red to apprehend the apple, but on the critical realist view, the sensation of red is to be understood as a case of being-appeared-to-redly and analyzed as a *self-presenting property*. What is a self-presenting property? If property F is a self-presenting one, then it is by means of F that a relevant external object is presented directly to a person, and F presents itself directly to the person as well. Thus, F presents its object mediately though directly, and itself immediately.

This is not as hard to understand as it may first appear. Sensations, such as being-appeared-to-redly, are an important class of self-presenting properties. If Jones is having a sensation of red while looking at an apple, then having the property of being-appeared-to-redly as part of his consciousness modifies his substantial self. When Jones has this

[10] Natoli, *A Primer to Postmodernity*, 18.
[11] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4–5.

sensation, it is a tool that presents the red apple mediately to him, and the sensation also presents itself to Jones. What does it mean to say that the sensation presents the apple to him mediately? Simply this: it is in virtue of or by means of the sensation that Jones directly sees the apple itself.

Moreover, by having the sensation of red, Jones is directly aware both of the apple and of his own awareness of the apple. For the critical realist, the sensation of red may, indeed, be a tool or means that Jones uses to become aware of the apple, but he is thereby directly aware of the apple. His awareness of the apple is direct in that nothing stands between Jones and the apple, not even his sensation of the apple. Because that sensation presents the apple directly, though as a tool, Jones must have the sensation as a necessary condition for seeing the apple. On the critical realist view, a knowing subject is not trapped behind or within anything, including a viewpoint, a narrative, or a historical-linguistic perspective. To have an entity in the external world as an object of intentionality is to already be "out there"; there is no need to escape anything. One is not trapped behind one's eyeballs or anything else. It is a basic fallacy of logic to infer that one sees a point-of-viewed object from the fact that one sees an object from a point of view.

Before leaving the critical realist view, it is important to say that the theory does not limit self-presenting properties to those associated with the five senses and therefore does not limit the objects of direct awareness to ordinary sensory objects. The critical realist will say that a knowing subject is capable of direct acquaintance with a host of non-sense-perceptible objects—one's own ego and its mental states, various abstract objects like the laws of mathematics or logic, and spiritual beings, including God.

By contrast, for Descartes's idea theory, one's ideas—in this case, sensations—stand between the subject and the object of perception. Jones is directly aware of his own sensation of the apple and indirectly aware of the apple in the sense that it is what causes the sensation to happen. On the idea theory, a perceiving subject is trapped behind his own sensations and cannot get outside of them to the external world in order to compare his sensations to their objects to see if those sensations are accurate.

Now, in a certain sense postmodernists believe that people are trapped behind something in the attempt to get to the external world. However, for them, the wall between people and reality is not composed of sensations as it was for Descartes; rather, it is constituted by one's community and its linguistic categories and practices. One's language serves as a sort of distorting and, indeed, creative filter. One cannot get outside one's language to see if one's talk about the world is the way the world is. Thus, Grenz advocates a new outlook, allegedly representing some sort of consensus in the human sciences, that expresses "a more profound understanding of epistemology. Recent thinking has helped us see that the process of knowing, and to some extent even the process of experiencing

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the world, can occur only within a conceptual framework, a framework mediated by the social community in which we participate."[12]

It has been noted repeatedly that such assertions are self-refuting. For if we are all trapped behind a framework such that simple, direct seeing is impossible, then no amount of recent thinking can help us see anything; all it could do would be to invite us to see something as such and such from within a conceptual framework. Given the self-refuting nature of such claims, and given the fact that we all experience regularly the activity of comparing our conceptions of an entity with the entity itself as a way of adjusting those conceptions, it is hard to see why anyone, especially a Christian, would adopt the postmodern view. In any case, I have seldom seen the realist perspective seriously considered by postmodern thinkers, and until it is, statements like Grenz's will be taken as mere mantras by many of us.

FINAL REMARKS ABOUT THE IMMORAL NATURE OF POSTMODERNISM

For some time I have been convinced that postmodernism is rooted in pervasive confusions, and I have tried to point out in this essay what some of them are. I am also convinced that postmodernism is an irresponsible, cowardly abrogation of the duties that constitute a disciple's calling to be a Christian intellectual and teacher.

In her provocative book *Longing to Know*, Ester Meek asserts that humans as knowers exercise a profound responsibility to submit to the authoritative dictates of reality.[13] Thus, "It is not responsible to deny objective truth and reality in knowing; it is irresponsible. It is not responsible to make the human knower or community of knowers the arbiters of a private truth and reality; it is irresponsible."[14] Again, Meek claims that "Good, responsible knowing brings blessing, shalom; irresponsible knowing brings curse."[15] In another place Meek warns that … the kind of freedom implied by the thought that we humans completely determine our reality leaves us with a gnawing sense of the relative insignificance of our choices. I think it leads not to total responsibility but to careless irresponsibility, both with regard to ourselves and with regard to other humans, not to mention to the world. And, paradoxically, it leads not to a deeper sense of [communal or individual] identity and dignity but to a disheartening lack of it."[16]

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[12] Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 73–74.

[13] Ester Lightcap Meek, *Longing to Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), 146–147.

[14] Ibid., 148.

[15] Ibid., 179.

[16] Ibid., 182.

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We Christians need to pay careful attention to Meek's claims. As humans, we live and ought to live our lives not merely by truth but by knowledge of truth. Knowledge of truth gives us confident trust and access to reality. Moreover, as those called to be teachers and scholars for the church and, indeed, for the unbelieving world, we are called not only to impart and defend truth, but to impart and defend knowledge of truth, and even more, to impart and defend knowledge of truth *as* knowledge of truth. This entails that we must impart and defend the notion that we do, in fact, have knowledge of important spiritual and ethical truths. Among other things, this gives confidence in truth and knowledge to those we serve. Thus, we are irresponsible not simply if we fail to achieve knowledge of reality; we are doubly irresponsible if we fail to impart to others knowledge *as knowledge*. The corrosive affects of postmodernism eat away at the fulfillment of these duties and responsibilities that constitute our calling from Almighty God.

Meek goes on to point out that the achieving of knowledge and the teaching of it as knowledge … calls for courageous resolve. And this courageous resolve, when proven true, merits the deep admiration of others."[17] The need for such courage is especially grave today as we labor in an intellectual milieu in which the worldviews of naturalism and postmodernism both entail that there is no non-empirical knowledge, especially no religious or ethical knowledge.

Faced with such opposition and the pressure it brings, postmodernism is a form of intellectual pacifism that, at the end of the day, recommends backgammon while the barbarians are at the gate. It is the easy, cowardly way out that removes the pressure to engage alternative conceptual schemes, to be different, to risk ridicule, to take a stand outside the gate. But it is precisely as disciples of Christ, even more, as officers in his army, that the pacifist way out is simply not an option. However comforting it may be, postmodernism is the cure that kills the patient, the military strategy that concedes defeat before the first shot is fired, the ideology that undermines its own claims to allegiance. And it is an immoral, coward's way out that is not worthy of a movement born out of the martyrs' blood.[18] [19]

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[17] Ibid., 167. For the best, most accessible treatment of postmodernism available, see Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

[18] I wish to thank Garry DeWeese for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

[19] Moreland, J. P. (2007). "Postmodernism and Truth," in N. L. Geisler & C. V. Meister (Eds.), *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith* (pp. 113–126). Crossway Books.