PHI943 - Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis

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Professor

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***Assignment #3 – Essay***

1. Write a 5-page paper using the Examination of Christian Practice essay outline [Course Resources].

* 1. **2. Paper Outline** a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.
  2. b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.
  3. c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.
  4. d. Use a minimum of **eleven** scholarly research sources (two books and the remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

**\*Focus Assignment From Seminar Notes with Dr. Ward: refining my method of reflection for Thought Architecting within a “Cell of Resistance”.**

\*\*Look at what I’ve been doing, as a prelude to looking ahead to allow me to reflect (harvest it) for greater insight. Impact of Reflection

First century sage, Jesus the Nazarene, is remembered to have revealed: “And you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.” (Jn 8:32) The influence of this statement with its resultant philosophies, theologies, governments, and policies cannot be understated, especially in the “Christianized” regions of the world. Since that day, truth and freedom have been joined inseparably. The converse of the statement, truth unknown leads to tyranny, now haunts the 21st Century Global Technopolis which steers militantly towards dehumanization. It is imperative for truth to be individually and communally architected to ensure freedom for present and future communities.

If truth acquired results in freedom, or truth obscured results in its loss, the question is begged: How does a person and community access truth? Specifically, how can one know and discern truth amid a 24/7 barrage of dissident media platforms, siloed information organizations, smear campaigns, and multi-billion-dollar agenda schemes ruthlessly intent on veiling certain facts in favor of promoting others to achieve a desired “progressive” outcome?

The problem is lies; lies, small and large, that inculcate tyranny within society. Ron Dreher has written two book-form social critiques upon the radical adoption of ideologies, born from falsehood, that masquerade as progressive solutions to the society’s ills. By his estimation, these ideologies are lies, clearly illustrated in the days-gone-by of communism, leaving much to learn from the voices that previously resisted. Dreher stands upon the shoulders of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a free Soviet mouthpiece for the lies which overthrew his people. Solzhenitsyn identifies the culprit:

A progressive—and profoundly anti-Christian militancy—is steadily overtaking society; This spiritual power takes material form in government and private institutions, in corporations, in academia and media, and in the changing practices of everyday life. It is empowered by unprecedented technological capabilities to surveil private life. There is virtually nowhere to hide. (Solzhenitsyn, 1974)

Dreher adopts a turn-of-phrase from Solzhenitsyn’s resistance, and titles his book, *Live Not By Lies*. Dreher promotes a solution in the formation of “cells of resistance” for the direct purpose of living truth in community: “Only in solidarity with others can we find the spiritual and communal strength to resist.” (Dreher, 2020) According to Dreher, a powerful answer to the deluge of the lies that invade is, “to create distinct small communities—especially families and religious fellowships—in which it was possible both to speak truthfully and to embody truth.” (Dreher, 2020)

Turning to learning theory, N. Longworth notes in *Lifelong learning in action: transforming education in the 21st century*that,"The watchword for today is 'community' in every meaning of that word, whether it is a geographical entity as in a learning city or a learning region, or a community of people with common sense of purpose or interest, as in a religious or a tribal community" (Longworth, 2003). The ability to architect truth amid a milieu of propagandized lies looks to be an effort undertaken in community. J.O. Balswick and J.K. Morland in *Social problems: A Christian understanding and response* argue for sociological approaches to social problems: "Without the sound foundation that sociology can give, Christian interpretations of social conditions may well be erroneous.” (Balswick and Morland, 1994) The need for proper thought architecture makes use of the various sociological tools in hopes of properly assessing learning outcomes.

Today’s culture, however, with its many and varied sources of information transmission, information overload, whether it be truth or lies, is acknowledged as the hurdle these systems present. N. Trimikliniotis unfolds a dilemma in the article *Public sociology, social justice and struggles in the era of austerity-and-crises*, acknowledging, “the relationship between academic discipline of sociology and political/social struggles for equality and social justice has been an issue since the establishment of sociology.” (Trimikliniotis, 2020) The struggle concerns sociology as pre-cursor to policymaking and law-setting based on the inherent subjectivism in the assumption of “what is right.” The world is attempting to remake itself, all the while queering the very words and systems that could otherwise be useful tools in bringing crisp definitions to social ills. Worldview seems invariably foundational to sociology more so than other more material sciences.

A practitioner’s worldview will unintentionally color, illuminate, or eliminate what the scientific “observer” sees in the application of subjective science approaches. None-the-less, the “mobile commons”, defined by Trimikliniotis as the fast-moving, digitally enhanced, concerns of the marginalized masses, readily articulated across multiple platforms must be considered alongside the “study from above” methods of professional sociology. J. Schonig argues in his article *“Liking” as creating: on aesthetic category memes*, that the sharing of visual, digital memes “clearly indexes a collective desire within Internet culture: a need to feel connected online by sharing ways of seeing rather than sharing words and images, inside jokes, and subcultural knowledge.” (Schonig, 2020) Theses authors are in pursuit of ways to measure or “index” the subjective context, continually in flux within the marginalized experience; essentially attempting to identify what the mobile commons “sees” to be true, if even for a brief moment in time. Y. Katz and L. Shifman explain in their article *Making sense? The structure and meanings of digital memetic nonsense*, that digital nonsense may “potentially serve as a social glue that bonds members of phatic, image-oriented communities.” (Katz and Shifman, 2017) Examining “social glue” is necessary to access the thought architecture of the participants in each culture/community. The current digital environment is ripe with memes, varying in usage and meaning. The authors, in examining “nonsense” memes, arrive at an interesting theory of communal referential meaning which generate affective meaning. These distortions of thought, many times humorous, must not be overlooked as to their ability to establish frames of thinking due to the social connections they foster.

I propose a local community project intended to decipher both individual and community truth architecture from the various fragments of scholastic, memetic, and knowledge bits within the mobile digital commons (i.e. people group) related to a “hot topic” of cultural or spiritual relevance. This project will attempt to measure the acceptability of truth statements pre and post community reflection sessions. It will also consider not only what individuals themselves “think,” but what those individuals think others think, based on H. Gruntterink and A. Meister’s 2022 work with meta-perceptions implication in affect, cognition, behavior, and relationships.

Each participant will be given a pre-test assessment of the current issue. The test will be a series of “think, feel, know” self-assessments with a 1 to 5 Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Three question/statements will be within a “think” category, three from a “feel” category, and three from a “know” category. A parallel pre-assessment will be given with the same question/statements, only this assessment will be answered by the participants relating how each participant believes his/her community views each statement. This design is intended to account for Bou Zeineddine and Leach’s work in *Feeling and thought in collective action on social issues: Toward as Systems perspective* which draws attention to “systems meta-theory…to view our key concepts not as static, discrete, unitary variables, but as situated and synchronized assemblies of a host of lower-order components.” (Bou Zeineddine and Leach, 2021).

The “think, feel, know” pre and posttest assessment will be used as an indicator of a participant’s thought architecture based on the communication tools of think, feel, know, developed by Shirlaws Group. This project will make specific use of the framework to measure a participant’s movement within each category following community group facilitated discussions on the background, history, and pertinent facts relative to the cultural issue raised on the pre/post assessment. Each of these factors; how a person thinks about an issue, feels about an issue, and facts known about an issue, is understood to be initially formed by multivarious inputs from interpersonal conversations and/or observations, and likely, heavily influenced by the digital and continuous news and social media cycles. The “think, feel, know” markers will be relied upon to assist the detection of current truth markers within the participants and, subsequently, the communities, in which they live.

Carter and Nicolaides’ 2023 *Transformative learning: An emotional revolution*, distinguishes the process of moving a participant through certain phases of reflection to arrive at critical reflection, which is the most non-biased of each phase. The authors specifically enhance the knowledge of “edge-emotions” toward a “comfort zone”, whereby new stages of reflection come more easily. This project will be an attempt to measure this type of critical reflection movement, resulting in a personal and community movement towards truth. The post assessment, using the same frame and question/comments will be given following group exposure and facilitated reflection. Each participant’s Likert scores will be assessed to consolidate any trends of movement.

Assuming that truth markers can be improved through facilitated small group discussions of relevant facts, histories, and background of particular issues, further development of this process would need to be done to more precisely measure truthful critical reflection. Ron Dreher issues a sobering reminder in the fight to keep truth an ever-flowing fountain:

How did people keep hold of reality under communist conditions? How do they know not only what to remember but how to remember it? The answer was to create distinct small communities—especially families and religious fellowships—in which it was possible both to speak truthfully and to embody truth.” (Dreher, 2020)

In this way, truth can be architected to ensure freedom for present and future communities.

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