Faith-Learning Integration and Interdisciplinary Studies

David D. Reedy

Omega Graduate School

February 11, 2024

Professor

Dr. David Ward, Ph.D., Th.M

**David, fantastic job on your developmental reading log for PHI 805-22! You chose relevant sources that were in line with the course Essential Elements. You showed nuanced critical thinking in how some reading selections were both additive and variant to your perspective as a Christian scholar and you defended your evaluations. I loved the charts! I have rarely seen any in a developmental reading assignment and it was refreshing. Your selected readings are great and from appropriate and current scholarly sources. It was a pleasure to read. Your log mostly conforms to APA style, but see the minor recommendations.**

**Nice work! -- Prof. David Ward**

**Grade: A**

Assignment

### *Developmental Readings*

Review Assignment #3, the course essential elements, assigned readings, and recommended readings to identify selections of books and scholarly articles to identify and select developmental reading sources and entries.

* Refer to the “[Student Guide to Developmental Readings](https://drive.google.com/file/d/161V_FaYR2BnNGCSFUlWPjUSIQzcH04Hq/view?usp=share_link)” for updated information on sample comments, rubrics, and key definitions related to developmental readings.

**Source One:** Ward, David. (2014). Interdisciplinary faith-learning integration for social change. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, *26*(1), 29–56.

**Comment 1:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“Christian interdisciplinary synthesis of criteria for truth should always include consistency, correspondence, coherence, conscience, and capability…Consistency is the quality of being free from self-refuting logical contradiction. Correspondence confirms claims with verifiable evidence in the external world. Coherence refers to the explanatory power of making the best sense of all data better than rival hypotheses, Conscience requires that a claim passes the threshold of moral adequacy. Capability demonstrates a claim’s problem-solving ability and practical results. Cumulatively convincing means a truth claim is supported by converging lines of confirmation supporting its validity that commends it beyond a reasonable doubt. Finally. chronological competitiveness means that a truth claim or theory out-performs its rival hypotheses over time.” (pp. 42-43)

**Essential Element:** Interdisciplinary Research

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of interdisciplinary research. This observation threads the needle between a pure foundationalist approach and a pure relativistic/critical approach to research.

**Contextualization:**  Interdisciplinary research has two challenges from a Christian perspective. First, how to utilize information coming from disciplines that are largely dominated by postmodern and critical approaches without sacrificing the truths of the Christian faith which are received through revelation. Secondly, how to get a seat at the table and gain a hearing for Christian insight into matters impacting the lives of people, these five “criteria” for searching for truth are appreciated from a Christian viewpoint in the recognition that a real world exists with principles in play (created by God in providing order to creation) that can be discovered and substantiated in a variety of ways that can help communicate Christian values and solutions to the world. This does not disallow the fact that as Christians we recognize the fallenness of this world and the imperfection of human wisdom. Nor does it disallow Christians to recognize that fundamental Christian knowledge comes to us as given through revelation and not discovered through worldly research. But these criteria are useful to help a researcher with a Christian worldview to engage with research from non-Christian approaches to glean out nuggets of truth from the surrounding dross when they shine forth.

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

The interdisciplinary process (as used at OGS) includes the following seven steps:

1. Problem clarification
2. Literature review
3. faith-learning integration
4. interdisciplinary research
5. contextualization
6. ethical/social leadership
7. lifelong learning evaluation

It is grounded in a Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation metaphysical worldview. Its purpose is to engage real-world problems with potential solutions.

**Essential Element:** Interdisciplinary research

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive and variant to my understanding of interdisciplinary research.The overall article is extremely helpful for explaining the OGS model of learning as a structured process. As we discussed, it was more nebulous and free-floating in the early 2000s and this in my opinion adds much value to the program. The generalized Christian worldview as described here has value, but also limitations.

**Contextualization:**

The description of the Christian worldview as a metaphysical worldview that is narrative beginning with the Creation and progressing through the Fall, Redemption, and Consummation does in general capture the Biblical narrative as a generalization. However, it is recognized that different faith traditions in Christianity subscribe to different meanings to these categories, especially the last three. Roman Catholicism provides a different answer than Lutherans and Calvinists as to what is fallen and what is the impact. There are differences in understanding about what redemption means and how it is applied. For interdisciplinary research and faith-learning integration, there is the question of what is the target of redemption, individuals or this world or both, and how this would relate. Lutheran tradition has much to say about how fall-redemption-consummation impacts our engagement with the secular world. This will be explored further in my readings.

**Source Two:** Harris, Robert. (2004). *The Integration of faith and learning*. Cascade Books. <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/1725161/1>

**Comment 3:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“If it turns out that a particular assumption is both fundamental to the discipline and inimical to Christian belief, the scholar may find himself impelled in the direction of disciplinary transformation.” (p. 244)

“First of all, this dimension emphasizes that the ultimate aim of faith-learning integration is not merely to complete the integrative task within each separate discipline, but to enhance our overall vision of reality in the light of Christ.” (p. 245)

**Essential Element:** Faith-learning integration

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my consideration of faith-learning integration. The author’s description of three approaches (compatibilist, transformational, and reconstructive) **is** a useful lens for clarifying the approach and was considered in the discussion essay for the first assignment. These two comments taken together help the Christian researcher to not lose sight of the big picture.

**Contextualization:**

Undeniably Christian research will encounter variant materials in the various professional and academic disciplines that engage questions regarding how do and how should human beings live their lives in the world. The author here reminds us not to simply dismiss and not engage with such material, but to consider not only what might be gleaned from such material as reflecting an underlying reality sans interpretation, but also how the discipline might benefit from transformation, or even reconstruction, for including into the life of the church and for benefiting human life in the world. His focus on enhancing “our overall vision of reality in the light of Christ” (p. 245) reminds me of a graphic of “the synoptic wheel) I observed over thirty years ago in a philosophy text regarding a synoptic approach to knowledge. The synoptic approach emphasized the interconnectedness of different fields, recognizing that complex phenomena often require insights from multiple perspectives. By drawing upon disciplines such as biology, sociology, psychology, economics, and more, practitioners can uncover deeper insights, identify patterns, and develop holistic solutions that address the multifaceted nature of real-world challenges. This approach encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and fosters a more nuanced understanding of complex systems and phenomena.

**Source Three:** Howell, B. M., & Paris, J. (2019). *Introducing cultural anthropology: A Christian perspective*. Baker Academic.

**Comment 4:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“Cultural anthropologists use the culture concept to understand human individuals and groups, especially how people make and are shaped by the cultural dimensions of life, such as family, education, power, religion, art, and economy.”  (p. 36)

The primary method of ethnographic research is participant observation.  (p. 38) This involves taking a position in the organization being studied, even a leadership position.  (p. 40)   Interviews are purposeful and documented.   Mapping focuses on how people use space.  A life history documents the “trajectory of a single life”.  Surveys are commonly used.  (p. 40) The key is a “holistic understanding” and explaining a “…cultural context from the inside, understanding the motives, actions, and beliefs of others in their own terms.”

**Essential Element:** Interdisciplinary research.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of interdisciplinary research. The key points about a branch of anthropology, cultural anthropology, suggest the tools of the discipline may have value in research given the powerful impact culture has over how people live their lives and in resisting or enabling change. Various “dimensions of life” are worth considering, but also should be looked at as integrated into society. The particular methodical tools listed here could certainly be used in a qualitative/quantitative research project. Particularly insightful is the permission to enter the system to understand the system from the inside, an approach that in the modern era would not be considered objective enough to eliminate bias.

**Contextualization:**

The insight that one can enter a system or examine a system from the inside has particular value for my research as my goals are to enable the church to be more effective in the world, a system I am very much a part of as a parish pastor and congregational advisor. One might say that this insight from cultural anthropology sounds similar to “standpoint theory” found in critical theory, but there is a significant difference. While both cultural anthropology and standpoint theory aim to understand human experiences within specific contexts, cultural anthropology focuses on cultural immersion and understanding from within, while standpoint theory emphasizes the insights gained from marginalized perspectives to critique and challenge dominant narratives and power structures. Cultural anthropology entertains the probability that a person from outside the culture could enter the culture in such a way as to understand it. Standpoint theory would say this is not possible, especially regarding subcultures based on race, gender, or some other identified marginalized group or culture. While I don’t completely agree with either cultural anthropology or critical approaches that one culture or worldview cannot truly understand another nor critique another, there is strong value suggested here in the cultural anthropology approach for entering the system as a participant to study an issue from the inside.

**Source Four:** Dreher, R. (2018). *The Benedict option: A strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian nation*. Penguin.

**Comment 5:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“As our civilization seems to be going the way of the Roman empire, more Christians among its nations are asking themselves -- and one another -- how to be latter-day St. Benedicts who preserve living faith that gave birth to our civilization amid empire’s fall.  They are awakening to and claiming the powerful truth conveyed in this saying, ‘Tradition is not the worship of ashes but the preservation of fire.’”  (p. xix)

He writes that Christian communities are at a critical junction requiring a decision because of the decline of Christian values in culture. (p. 5)

“Could it be that the best way to fight the flood is to…stop fighting the flood?  That is, to quit piling up sandbags and to build an ark in which to shelter until the water recedes and we can put our feet on dry land again?  Rather than wasting energy and resources fighting unwinnable political battles, we should work instead on building communities, institutions, and networks of resistance that can outwit, outlast, and eventually overcome the occupation.”  (p. 12)

**Essential Element:** Learning to Change the World

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This reading is additive and variant to my understanding of whether the Christian church is called to engage the world for the sake of what Lutherans would call “the left-hand kingdom”. Dreher is advocating for the Christian community to conserve its resources and focus on itself in using its traditions to build a protected culture with strong boundaries that can withstand the onslaught of a post-Christian world. He believes the divorce between mainstream culture and Christianity is irreversible and can only be survived. He is not entirely incorrect when examining the overwhelming power and influence this postmodern turn has had on 21st-century culture and the damage it is doing to the church. But his approach suggests such a degree of isolationism that the Christian church’s ability to be salt and light in the world and even to have a voice for evangelical witness regarding the salvation that comes only from Christ could remain heard only behind the walls of fortress church. With fundamental Christian beliefs being dismissed and criticized as irrelevant to oppressive, his call for strengthening Christian community and identity is valuable; a call heightened when observing how many Christian communities are making shipwreck of their faith through incorporating anti-Christian cultural values in a compatibilist way when they are not compatible according to Scripture. So, to a degree I see value in his observations and suggestions, but to a degree not. For we may need the fortress of well-formed belief systems and traditions to safeguard the faith of so many under assault, extending the metaphor, we may recall that castles under siege often fall. Better to have informed and understanding Christians who can march forth to engage the culture and cast light into the shadow.

**Contextualization:** Dreher’s thesis is something I need to think more about. Within my tradition, I have observed in the past five years or so an intense doubling down on tradition, even an enhancement of tradition toward what we call “high church” within my denomination, which I suspect is a reaction to the forces of a post-Christian culture. I bounce between assessing if Dreher’s position is reactive or possibly proactive. Is it revolutionary or is he simply voicing what many conservative church communities are doing instinctively in reaction to a perceived threat? I think his diagnostic observations are spot on regarding contemporary culture. As for his strategy, I don’t think it can be dismissed out of hand simply because we might like to change the world. Christ commissioned the church to go and make disciples and to teach them to keep/obey/preserve (the Greek is *tayrein*) all that He taught. On this basis, it is difficult to justify withdrawal from the world, but there is also a focus here on the sustainment of the church. And the question lingers, are we called to battle the culture, and if so, why? Is the church called to make life better in this world or to proclaim salvation in the next? Is it both? Can we do both? Do we have the resources to do both? Do we risk compromising the integrity of the Gospel and our effective witness if we seek to change the culture? Or is the risk of our Gospel voice not being heard because we remain behind well-formed defensive walls? Again, these are questions I am pondering as I read for both this course and PHI 815. I wish for my learning and research to help me inform and disciple Christians, so they are strong against the wiles of this fallen world. Does this mean that is our only focus? Dreher calls for the building of intentional Christian communities. I don’t find this revolutionary. This has always been the task of the church. I think the main question here for our work at OGS, is our energy to be directed outward into the post-Christian community or inward to the Christian community. Or is it possible that through our vocations some direct their energy one way, some the other, but all flow out of a well-formed Scripturally founded Christian community?

**Source Five:** *In Christ all things hold together: The Intersection of science & Christian theology*. (2016). LCMS.

**Comment 6:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

A Christian “…may come to see science as simply a threat to their faith, as a rival religion or ideology, and thus as something that must be ignored or completely rejected (Christ against Culture). Or they may come to think that the faith must simply be modified so that it is compatible with what any widely accepted scientific theory claims (Christ of Culture). Or it may be thought that the faith must somehow be united with the science (Christ above Culture) or that Christians must improve on the science so that it properly reflects Christian truth (Christ the Transformer of Culture).  However, in one way or another, all of these approaches represent (or risk) a failure of Christian critical engagement. As Gene Edward Veith argues, there are more constructive ways for Christians to respond to problematic ideas, whether from the sciences or from other disciplines. Before responding in any way to a claim made on behalf of science, we should get some critical distance and ask some questions:

(1) To what extent has a purely scientific theory or observation been combined with non-scientific ideologies or philosophical assumptions?

(2) Can we distinguish and disentangle the science from the ideology and the philosophy, and if so, how much of our disagreement is primarily with the latter and not the former?

(3) Even if we still think that the purely scientific claim is overstated and/or false, is there an element of truth in it?

(4) Can we distinguish domains and applications where the claim is useful (and perhaps true) from others where it is more questionable (perhaps because it is untested, or even untestable, in those areas)?

By considering questions like these, a Christian student can achieve a good balance between several vocational objectives. Students are called into the world to serve their neighbor. One reason they should learn about the world’s theories is that their neighbor will be exposed to them; such learning is therefore necessary to understanding the neighbor’s thinking.” (p.127)

“…the paradox model affirms that science can indeed aid us in loving and serving our neighbor, so that Christians have good reason to explore and employ useful scientific theories and ideas, even if they contain some errors or are misused by others. Rather than wholesale rejection or uncritical embrace, the appropriate Lutheran posture to scientific theories is one of dialogue. One may rightly criticize some aspects or applications of a theory while affirming others. A theory which is false in its universal claims may still be helpful in a limited domain.” (pp. 34-35)

**Essential Element:** Faith-learning integration

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This comment is additive to my understanding of faith-learning integration. I appreciate how Niebuhr’s traditional categories for possible approaches to a Christian engagement with culture are applied to the sciences. Particularly important is the second question which hints that we throw out the baby with the bathwater because a Christian worldview is not fully congruent with ideologies and worldviews informing much of scientific research across the disciplines. Question three raises a key point, “is there an element of truth in it?” As Veith says, we need “critical distance”. We need to remember that here critical is more in line with striving for objective critique rather than as it is often used in contemporary critical theory which claims any sense of objectivity is impossible and critical thinking must result in unquestionable criticism driven by identity-based ideologies.

**Contextualization:**

Within my faith community, which would be considered conservative in its approach to Scripture and doctrine, there is a suspicion of science and contemporary insights from secular disciplines in many circles. For instance, in one congregation when I sought to do a basic information survey to discover existing congregants' views and preferences regarding a practice the elders sought to change, the head elder reacted viciously against this use of “science”. I think part of the problem is simply a degree of illiteracy on the part of many Christians toward formal research. But the CTCR document does make a point, there is often a degree of distance between various ideologies and worldviews informing the structuring of the research question and the approach to it and the Christian worldview. Yet is there “truth” in there somewhere? For instance, I may not agree with one premise of Critical Race Theory that cultural problems are primarily rooted in systems and not individuals. Yet I can recognize from the critical examination of systems the power that systems do indeed hold to shape human interpretations, discourse, and behaviors.

**Source Six:** Guillén, M. F. (2023). *The perennials: The megatrends creating a postgenerational society*. St. Martin’s Publishing Group.

**Comment 7:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“We’re witnessing the coming of a postgenerational society by individuals one can call perennials—people who are not characterized by the decade in which they were born but rather by the way they work, learn, and interact with others.”

(pp. ix-x) The author continues to highlight significant different frameworks that Generation Z is subscribing to that are different from past approaches including the boundaries between work and school becoming more porous, the return of the multi-generational family, and a rewriting of the traditional stages of life from youth to schooling, to work, to retirement, and to a bouncing back and forth throughout a lifetime in these categories. (pp. 194-198) These are only a few of the changes he highlights in his work, but these are key ones.

**Essential Element:** World-view literacy

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of worldview literacy.

**Contextualization:**

This book, and other reading I have been conducting in journals and newspapers dealing with a worldview, whether they are entirely aware that is the topic, has generated a suspicion on my part. I suspect we are seeing the emergence of a new worldview. Much of the contemporary discussion of worldview has been centered on postmodernism and its unfolding into the disciplines of critical theory, which is a form of hyper-postmodernism. Postmodernism itself has been described as hyper-modernism. I am seeing signs that something beyond postmodernism is arising, what I call transmodernism. Postmodernism was largely a critique of the failures of modernity. Transmodernism may critique the failures of postmodernism, but there is the suggestion that this is not the foundational concern for this emerging way of thinking. Transmodernism is more reasonable, more open to common sense, and more focused on real-life problems and solutions than theoretical ones. It is being shaped by real-world pressures such as the cost of higher education and housing leading many adult children to remain home, giving rise to the return of multi-generational households. Advances in technology in the information age are changing not only how we go to school but also when making lifelong learning a reality and a necessity for a wider segment of people. Only in the past few weeks did it dawn on me that I may be researching an emerging worldview, so these thoughts are very new. Thomas Koulopoulos in his book “*The gen z effect*” (2014) argued the emerging Generation Z would be the last generation, not because of the ending of humanity, but the fading of generational borders driven by technology and globalism. I am wondering if this smoothing of borders is a positive reaction to postmodernism’s tendency to tribalize. It may be that there is a new approach, a new worldview emerging that is pulling from modern, postmodern, and new ideas that will provide new potentiality and new challenges for engaging social problems. I’ll likely have more to say on this in my core learning journal. I do include here a very preliminary concept for transmodernism. True, I’m not seeing much of this in formal interdisciplinary research, but these emergences are observable when considering empirical data being processed regarding Generation Z.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Transmodernism |  |  |
| Theology | Spiritual not religious | Skeptical of organized religion  Open to spirituality |
| Philosophy | Reconstruction  Pragmatic | Focus on building rather than tearing down.  Truth reflects real-world experiences of the community understood holistically. |
| Ethics | Communitarian  Cosmopolitan | Importance of community and shared values  Importance of world citizenship |
| Biology | Anti-materialist  Transhumanism  Plastic | The recognition we are more than just biological organisms, there is something “spiritual” to a human being. |
| Psychology | Socio/cultural | Identity shaped by membership in communities |
| Sociology | Multi-generational family  integration of work/school/life  virtual world | Recognizes the role society has in shaping values.  Tolerance for diverse lifestyles and viewpoints is a must.  Individuals are social beings.  We are more alike than different.  Virtual interactions can be more real than face-to-face ones. |
| Law | Still vague on this |  |
| Politics | Communitarianism | The cynicism of existing governmental structures, weariness of polarizing conflict, and desire for unity are driven by the need for the common good. |
| Economics | Humanist/Ecological economics | Work must serve human well-being and serve others.  Economies should also recognize the importance of taking care of our home planet.  Work serves life, not the other way around. |
| History | Still vague on this |  |

**Source Seven:** Gajanová, L., Nadányiová, M., Majerová, J., Kollár, B., & Pražáková, A. (2023). Is gen z so different? An analysis of the impact of comparative advertising. *Communication Today*, *14*(1), 66–84.

**Comment 8:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“Generation Z shows positive attitudes towards advertising, especially online TV advertising and mobile advertising61 and they consider it as a relevant source in the decision-making purchasing process, especially if it provides true information.” (p.13) The study indicates that Gen Z (people born between 1994-2009 for the purposes of this study) are open to advertising that compares products if the data is credible. They are inclined to dismiss such advertising if the comparison appears biased or self-interested.

**Essential Element:** World-view literacy

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of worldview literacy. In considering if a new worldview is emerging, transmodernism, this study suggests a move beyond tribalism, and in the incorporation of a modern viewpoint, that truth exists and can be verified by objective evaluation, as opposed to the hyperpostmodern view that all truth is relative to one’s individual perspective or tribal community.

**Contextualization:**

This may signal an important shift in thinking among younger people. It is possible that people within popular culture at some level desire to move beyond the tribalism of conservative vs. progressive viewpoints and the idea that the answer to social problems is to camp with like-minded people and go to war for power to impose one’s viewpoints on others. This study may indicate a weariness and skepticism toward identity-based power plays to influence values, discourse, and behavior with such being tempered by a return to looking for the reality behind the rhetoric and whether it is grounded in reality or not. This has implications for how Christian communities reach out and engage with younger people and may open doors for Christian voices to gain a wider welcome in the marketplace of ideas.

**Source Eight:** Lasakova, Anna, Vojekova, Monika, & Prochazkova, Lenka. (2023). What (de)motivates gen z women and gen z men at work? Comparative study of gender differences in the young generation’s motivation. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, *24*(4), 771–796.

**Comment 9:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“…results reveal that Gen Z women pay significantly more attention to social aspects of interpersonal relationships at the workplace, intrinsic factors of having a dream job, low levels of routine, experiencing job success, and an extrinsic need to receive recognition for the work done, while Gen Z men are more attentive to the altruistic factor of making a meaningful difference at work, extrinsic factor of benefits, and leisure-related aspects of happy personal life and no stress at work.” (pp. 771)

The authors note that previous studies found that Gen Z prioritizes social and environmental issues, fairness, respect, and personal fulfillment over monetary rewards. Autonomy in work scheduling and location is highly valued for better work-life balance. Gen Z women prioritize social atmosphere more than men, while men may prefer remote work and task-based schedules. (pp. 774-775)

The study examined differences between men and women finding “modest” differences, some related to biological factors such as women having a higher propensity toward self-reflection and emotional processing and social factors such as women experiencing greater instances of gender discrimination and social status disparities. (pp. 782 -785). However, the study largely reinforced previous discoveries.

**Essential Element:** Worldview literacy.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of worldview literacy. Here we find among Gen Z people a focus on social and interpersonal connections and well-lived peaceful lives. This may signal a weariness and desire to move beyond the culture wars and identity-driven politics by focusing on what we have in common rather than on what divides us.

**Contextualization:**

This has implications for how Christians seek to bring Christian insight to this young generation. Putting a stress on social relationships, positive community building, and a reduction in combative approaches could open opportunities for the Christian community to be heard as a partner in building a better society that moves beyond identity politics, tribalism, and polarizing conflict to build on the underlying realities of human nature and life in the real world.

**Source Nine:** Polok, G., & Szromek, A. R. (2024). Religious and moral attitudes of Catholics from generation z. *Religions*, *15*(1), 25. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010025>

**Comment 10:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“An important aspect describing this generation is the fact that its members were born during the Digital Revolution and advanced globalization processes. Hence, this is a generation strongly attached to communication tools developed using a digital approach, including but not limited to using social media, which are considered more important than face-to-face interactions (Szromek et al. 2019). There are also perceptible differences relating to their approach to careers and social life” (p.2)

**Essential Element:** Worldview literacy

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of worldview literacy. Regarding the potential emergence of a new worldview, transmodernism, this study highlights the importance that the virtual world has for young people and how this is reshaping how young people view how life should be lived.

**Contextualization:** This study and others including one examining transhumanism (which I considered in a previous term) suggest that for many young people, the virtual world may not only be as real as the face-to-face world, but even more real through augmented virtual reality. It may have the advantage from a Gen Z perspective of being less conflictual, less threatening, more easily controlled, and molded into a positive life experience. Might GenZ be growing wearing of a real-world torn apart by tribalism and finding relief in a virtually created world? This has a whole other level of conversation regarding the idea of our stewardship of this world as one of co-creation with God. Is this perhaps hypertribalism –a breaking into our smaller communities to such a degree that we can now build virtual spaces in which to live our tribal life without the threat of intrusion by those on the outside? Or will Gen Z and the influence of technology move in the direction of smoothing out boundaries? The digital space is certainly a dominant life space for many Gen Z people. Gen Z has moved beyond consuming digital media to creating it, from partaking of it as a consumer to being a co-creator and interactive. The recent release of the Apple Vision Pro in just the past few weeks and its potential for interactive social encounters as well as interactions with virtual created worlds that feel real may be an extension of this movement. Is this augmented reality? Is it a flight from reality? Is it augmented life or a flight from life? Is it potentially both? How might these advances in technology and how Gen Z prefers to use them shape what it means to be transmodern? Twenge (2017) notes the increasing prevalence of young people dating virtually before meeting physically, often with the relationship being lived out entirely in the digital space. The potential implications of this are fuzzy. It will likely bring its own set of potentialities and limitations to the landscape of human culture and provide both opportunities and pitfalls for engagement by the Christian community.

**Source Ten:** Fraser, J. R., Chung, M., & Cheon, H. J. (2023). Ethical consumption in the digital age: Analyzing benefit types, temporal distance, and normative factors for gen z. *Global Business & Finance Review*, *28*(3), 50–67. <https://doi.org/10.17549/gbfr.2023.28.3.50>

**Comment 11:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

The authors discuss the effectiveness of two types of message appeals, self-benefit and other-benefit appeals, in encouraging prosocial behaviors among consumers, particularly in the contexts of charitable donations and ethical consumption. The research suggested that self-benefit appeals can effectively generate greater intentions for ethical purchases, especially among socially excluded consumers or highly materialistic individuals. The consumers were more inclined to engage in prosocial behaviors when they perceived a personal benefit, even if the benefit was minor or unrelated to the cause itself. When it came to other-benefit appeals, the study found that among consumers who believe their actions can positively impact issues important to them, other-benefit appeals were more effective. (pp. 52-53)

**Essential Element:** Worldview Literacy and Learning to Change the World

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of worldview literacy. This study demonstrates that despite the changes the digital age may bring, we still find the imperfection of human nature at play in our interactions. The sliding scale between self-focus and other-focus remains and the practical implications of that have not changed from the 20th to the 21st century.

**Contextualization:** While some information coming from studies on GenZ focuses on a desire for increased community and less friction, and a concern for social and environmental issues and where the world is inheriting is going if changes in trajectory are not made, it is likely that one motivation remains the same: self-benefit. While our cultures and our worldviews change over time as a particular set of problems is recognized, a particular set of answers are posited and they fail to completely solve problems or generate new problems leading to a reactive response identifying new problems and possible new answers with the cycle continuing, at the root our human nature remains the same, fall in sin, self-oriented, and even when “other-benefit appeals” are effective, they are appeals that harmonize with our values and goals for the world. This has implications for how the Christian community seeks to bring change to the world. More is needed than simply alleviating symptoms as seen in social problems, but at the root is a greater problem and the Christian community must not forget the answer to the problem of sin is the redemption that comes through Jesus Christ, a redemption that is received through faith in His redemptive work on the cross.

**Source 11:** Jensen, S. (2023). Re-considering scholarship again: Knowledge, community, and the work of Christian scholarship. *Christian Scholar’s Review*, *52*(3), 61–77.

**Comment 12:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“The recurrent dream of a scholarly discipline that is intrinsically and systemically inclusive of Christian truth or theology does not adequately consider that academic knowledge is generated at the intersection of a disciplinary practice and a constituent community…Each discipline has a social history that is intertwined with its intellectual formation. Every discipline has won its place at the table by doing work for constituent communities.” (p.75)

“An understanding of academic scholarship based on a communal definition of knowledge, then, suggests three loose categories of scholarship. The first is guild scholarship, which addresses or participates in academic practices and infrastructure. The second is the scholarship of *integration*, which does border work among communities of knowledge. The third is the scholarship of discovery, which creates new knowledge in a constituent community. In this last and most important category, scholarship understands the creation of knowledge to be community-based from its very origin, not merely "applied" in communities.” (p. 77)

“What distinguishes this kind of “integrative” scholarship from more straightforward instances of community-based academic knowledge production is that it takes place at the boundaries, friction points, and overlaps of community knowledge. Its starting point isn’t necessarily the intrinsic, felt needs of community life. Rather, its agendas typically come from external sources, from challenges and opportunities that the community did not seek or anticipate. Its best practitioners are often bi-cultural straddlers of community borders, people who can interpret and mediate the knowledge and practices of more than one community.” (p. 74)

**Essential Element:** Learning to Change the World and Interdisciplinary Research

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is both additive and variant to my understanding regarding interdisciplinary research to bring about social change. The author argues for a “communal definition of knowledge” and suggests three ways in which this may generate knowledge. Her thesis that “every discipline has won its place…by doing work for constituent communities” suggests that knowledge is predominantly a tribal pragmatic production, something certainly true of many contemporary disciplinary approaches, but does not necessarily translate to meaning that there is not a greater reality undergirding all our “constituent communities” In her integrative approach she may find value for knowledge produced when two communities bump up against each other, knowledge produced at the “friction points” that don’t flow out of “felt needs” within on particular community, but her suggestion is they still flow out of the felt needs of some community. While seeking a bigger picture, it is still one generated from subjective experiences. However, the idea of seeking knowledge at the “boundaries, friction points and overlaps of community knowledge” or perhaps better, just community, with practitioners being “bi-cultural straddlers of community borders” provides insight for the Christian social researcher and practical theology as it engages the secular world.

**Contextualization:** In my tradition, Lutherans have understood Christians as “bi-cultural straddlers”. We stand with one foot in what we call the left-hand kingdom, God’s rule over the created world, and the right-hand kingdom, God’s rule over His church. Christian students at Omega Graduate School could well be considered “bi-cultural straddlers of community borders”. Each student comes from their own professional and academic background and the students work in a variety of disciplines, united by a common faith in Jesus Christ. That said, even our faith community is diverse. Thus, there are many possibilities as communities engage one another for new knowledge. The growing appreciation of interdisciplinary research may suggest openings for Christian communities to speak not just “their truth” or “our truth” but to God’s truth, the truth that undergirds all reality. In addition, the Christian researcher, as a bi-cultural straddler, is position to harvest nuggets of truth wherever he or she may find them.

**Source 12:** Myers, Jeff & Noebel, David. (2015). *Understanding the times*. Summit Ministries. <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/3057123/34>

**Comment 13:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“New Spirituality feeds off popular dissatisfaction with organized religion…The purpose of life is overcoming ‘self.’ Although Secularism and New Spirituality both use the term; self,’ they mean something entirely different. To the Secularist, the ‘self,’ or the self-aware individual, is the basic unit of human life. To New Spiritualists from a Buddhist tradition, we must be rid of any sense of the self. The self does not exist. To New Spiritualists from some Hindu traditions, the ‘self” must be lost in the Universal Self (called ‘Brahman’) in order to have meaning.” (Myers & Noebel, 2015, Chapter 6 New Spirituality section)

A white and black chart with black text

Description automatically generated

**Essential Element:** Worldview literacy

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment, and section of his book, are both additive and variant to my understanding. I suspect the main issue is that his information and research are dated and perhaps influenced by the older narrative of the coming of New Age religion. This worldview view as he describes it is still held in the Far East, but its assimilation into the West has morphed into something different, a “spiritual but not religious” orientation.

**Contextualization:**

The chart below captures my brainstorming on this.

A close-up of a questionnaire

Description automatically generated

This is rather preliminary and relates to the earlier entry on my suspicion of a new worldview, transmodernism, emerging, but is focused more on refining the author’s “cosmic humanism” view as expressed within the West. I intend to keep an eye out for this as I engage various sources for more insight into the “nones” and the “spiritual but not religious” folks.

**Works Cited**

Dreher, R. (2018). *The Benedict option: A strategy for Christians in a post-Christian nation*. Penguin.

Fraser, J. R., Chung, M., & Cheon, H. J. (2023). Ethical consumption in the digital age: Analyzing benefit types, temporal distance, and normative factors for gen z. *Global Business & Finance Review*, *28*(3), 50–67. <https://doi.org/10.17549/gbfr.2023.28.3.50>

Gajanová, L., Nadányiová, M., Majerová, J., Kollár, B., & Pražáková, A. (2023). Is gen z so different? An analysis of the impact of comparative advertising. *Communication Today*, *14*(1), 66–84.

Guillén, M. F. (2023). *The perennials: The megatrends creating a postgenerational society*. St. Martin’s Publishing Group.

Harris, Robert. (2004). *The Integration of faith and learning*. Cascade Books. <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/1725161/1>

Howell, B. M., & Paris, J. (2019). *Introducing cultural anthropology: A Christian perspective*. Baker Academic.

*In Christ all things hold together: The intersection of science & Christian theology*. (2016). LCMS.

Jensen, S. (2023). Re-considering scholarship again: Knowledge, community, and the work of Christian scholarship. *Christian Scholar’s Review*, *52*(3), 61–77.

Koulopoulos, Thomas. (2014). *The gen z effect: The six forces shaping the future of business*. Bibliomotion. <https://www.everand.com/book/252846206/The-Gen-Z-Effect-The-Six-Forces-Shaping-the-Future-of-Business>

Lasakova, Anna, Vojekova, Monika, & Prochazkova, Lenka. (2023). What (de)motivates gen z women and gen z men at work? Comparative study of gender differences in the young generation’s motivation. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, *24*(4), 771–796.

Myers, Jeff & Noebel, David. (2015). *Understanding the times*. Summit Ministries. <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/3057123/34>

Polok, G., & Szromek, A. R. (2024). Religious and moral attitudes of Catholics from generation z. *Religions*, *15*(1), 25. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010025>

Twenge, J. M. (2017). *iGen: Why today’s super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy--and completely unprepared for adulthood--and what that means for the rest of us*. Simon and Schuster.

Ward, David. (2014). Interdisciplinary faith-learning integration for social change. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, *26*(1), 29–56.