

On-Line Journaling

On-line Journaling General Requirements

The on-line journal is designed to prepare you for in-class discussions and the two essays. Each journal entry must be at least 200 words and posted the day before the class is scheduled. Specific instructions will accompany each journal task. You must complete at least 5 of the 6 fortnightly journal entries. However, you are strongly encouraged to complete them all as they build towards your essays.

Due date: Before class on the specified week (fortnightly)

Weighting of final grade: 20%

Time allocation: 24 hours

Learning outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4

Grading criteria:

- Engagement with readings and course material: clearly argued idea related to topic; evidence that you are making new connections.
- Clarity of contributions: central idea, hunch or question that structures your reflection; accurate spelling and grammar.
- Timeliness of contributions to forum: deadlines met.

Journal Entry One (due before class Week 3, March 15)

Reflect on what you have learnt so far in class and what you have read so far in Newbigin's *Proper Confidence*.

What are the main things that come to mind as you reflect on what you've been learning?

What concepts are you still struggling to get your head around?

Are there any ideas that have been argued that you disagree with? Why?

Have you thought about the impact the gospel has on your ways of knowing before?

Journal Entry Two (due before class Week 5, March 29)

Popular contemporary atheists Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris have this to say about faith:

"Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence." (Richard Dawkins)

"It is time that we admitted that faith is nothing more than the license religious people give one another to keep believing when reasons fail." (Sam Harris)

In light of your reading of Newbigin so far, how do you think he would respond to these assertions? Would he agree? If not, why not?

What is the relationship between faith and reason according to Newbigin?

Journal Entry Three (due before class Week 6, April 19)

Read C.S. Lewis's essay "Meditations in a Toolshed" ((1970) *God in the Dock*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 212-15) and reflect on Lewis's distinction between looking *at* something and looking *along* something in light of Newbigin's argument that the gospel provides a radically new starting point for thought.

How do their arguments overlap (i.e., are they talking about the same thing)?

Does Newbigin's argument fit with what Lewis is describing? In what ways?

From what you have learnt in Ways of Knowing so far, is Lewis's analogy of the toolshed useful for explaining the effect the gospel has on our ways of knowing? If so, how?

Journal Entry Four (due before class Week 8, May 3)

Re-read Chapter One of John Ralston Saul's *On Equilibrium*, "The Shape of Human Genius".

Outline what you see as Saul's main thesis as it is introduced in this first chapter.

Suggest some ways Saul's thesis fits with what you have been learning so far in class.

Can you identify any connections between Newbigin's argument in *Proper Confidence* and Saul's thesis? Briefly note what they are.

Journal Entry Five (due before class Week 10, May 17)

Read the description of scientist Henri Becquerel's 1896 discovery of radioactivity as told in Giorgio Margaritondo's article "Henri Becquerel: serendipitous brilliance" ((June 2008), *Physics World*, 26-28).

Re-read Newbigin's discussion of Michael Polanyi's description of how scientists make discoveries (*Proper Confidence*, 39-44). Keep in mind Saul's six qualities as you read.

In what ways does Polanyi's description fit with, or not fit with, the description of Becquerel's discovery of radioactivity?

What of Saul's six qualities do we see displayed in Becquerel's discovery? In what ways are they displayed?

Does this description of scientific discovery fit with the understanding of how science works you had before beginning this course? Make one or two comments.

Journal Entry Six (due before class Week 12, May 31)

Read Nicholas Carr's article "Is Google Making us Stupid?" ((July/August 2008), *The Atlantic Monthly*).

According to Carr, what effects is the internet having on our ways of knowing and what we understand knowledge to be?

Has what he describes been your experience?

How would Saul respond to the phenomenon described by Carr? What dangers would Saul see in how the internet is effecting our ways of knowing?

What remedy or remedies would he suggest?