

From wonder to being: Metaphysical enchantment as an African Ratzingerian rejoinder to empirical reductivism

**Author:**Callum D. Scott¹ **Affiliation:**

¹Department of Philosophy, Practical and Systematic Theology, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Callum Scott,
scottcd@unisa.ac.za

Dates:

Received: 25 Nov. 2024

Accepted: 04 Mar. 2025

Published: 30 Apr. 2025

How to cite this article:

Scott, C.D., 2025, 'From wonder to being: Metaphysical enchantment as an African Ratzingerian rejoinder to empirical reductivism', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 46(1), a3397. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v46i1.3397>

Copyright:

© 2025. The Author. Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

The post and/or modern humanity conceptualise their epistemic ability as providing the singular reliable interlocutor of knowing. However, implicit in this epistemology is modern humanity's turning away from being qua being to a self-referential, relative and reductive modality of understanding. The ever-growing scientific corpus aids this view on post and/or modern epistemology, but by its success, this knowing has lessened other modes of knowing, e.g., metaphysics, indigenous knowledge systems, etc. In the post and/or modern milieu, the exploration of being is consequently not done on being's own complex and irreducible terms but only on those construed by the subject. Inspired by the decolonial turn in the African academy and utilising the paradigm of African Philosophy and the Ratzingerian critique, the case is made that the influence of the seemingly opposing – but significantly coupled – reductive epistemological movements of modern empiricism and postmodern relativism have collaborated to disenchant the human experience. By 'acceptable' knowledge's limitation to knowing relative to and/or measurable by the thinking subject, the post and/or modern subject is detached from being and becomes disenchanting in the divestment of wonder. It is contended that for the human to encounter being, wonder before the cosmos as-it-is, that is, the experience of enchantment, must be reclaimed for the sake of non-reductive and non-self-referential knowledge. By appealing to African decolonised epistemology and Aristotelian-Thomism, a more liberated conceptualisation of 'science' beyond the constraints of post and/or modern epistemology, incorporating the wondrous, is argued for.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: Utilising a multimodal approach as developed from the African context, this research touches on fundamental themes in both theology and philosophy, as the argument is made that for being to be apprehended, the experience of wonder and awe needs to be reclaimed. In this sense, the study touches on psychological dimensions of the human experience, modes of knowing and reframing how 'science' is defined.

Keywords: Catholic intellectual tradition; epistemology; science; modernity; postmodernity; African philosophy.

Introduction

Following the death of Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Alois Ratzinger) on 31 December 2022, it is timely to consider some contemporarily relevant dimensions of his intellectual legacy. Undertaken within the context of the subjugated global South, this research approaches Ratzinger for the metaphysical and epistemological value he brings to the critique of modernity as an oppressive zeitgeist. In Ratzinger's corpus, he unremittingly returns to Western 'relativism' considering it to be a '... tyrannical, brutal, and cruel ...' ideological current which the post and/or modern¹ human births (Ratzinger 1997, 2005b). Herrnstein Smith (2007:277) and Boyarin (2007:315–316) object to this critique (Benedict XVI 2010:50).² But neither these critiques eliminate the modern source, nor the forces of empirical scientism and epistemic relativism by which modernity is

1. The combined form of 'post and/or modern' indicates that modernity is the dominant ideological paradigm in the global hegemony of Western philosophy and knowledge systems. 'Postmodernity', as a negative reaction to modernity, is construed as a continuation of the modern hermeneutic. The chronological and ideological intertwinedness of these philosophical eras and movements will be developed in this work. Given the thrust of the modern scientific revolution that continues to dominate in its practical application through technology, has modernity ever been left behind? The neo-colonial phenomena present upon the African continent among others and by the prevalence of 'Western' privilege worldwide augments this. Ratzinger ([1991] 2010:63) posited this continuity when he enumerated the natural link between the postmodern and the modern: 'Relativism unites easily with positivism ... enduring ... in totalitarian conditions'.

2. Responding to Ratzinger (2005b), Herrnstein Smith (2007:229–230) defends relativism as '... respectable intellectual discourse', because philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger formed part of (or inspired) the post-World War II critique of absolutism, objectivism and universalism that had been prevalent prior to this time. Boyarin (2007:315–316, 336), likewise, argues for relativism to be taken seriously as an 'indecisiveness' to accept theories because of sceptical circumspection. But the problematic of relativism – not adequately considered – is the absolutism of its scepticism, which negates what does not fit into the paradigm.

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

propagated worldwide, with the consequence that the post and/or modern subject is distanced from the essence of being qua being, in its boundedness to epistemically turn inwards and backwards onto and into the self. Indeed, when the absolutism of modernity and its scientific approach is coupled with the subjective turn apparent in some postmodern thought, the human is constrained to her mind as the ultimate epistemological arbiter of what is, even though being – the proper epistemic object – precedes human knowing.

To transcend epistemic self-referentiality, it will be argued that a reawakening of the intuition of being through wonder has the potential to liberate human knowing from modern scientism and postmodern relativism. Being, experienced beyond the existence of only the singular person, beckons to be known as extant (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q.12, a.3). So conceived, a problematic arises in humanity that is simultaneously modern and postmodern, wherein trust is given for the reductive findings of science on one plane, while also constructing their own truth and meaning on another. If through scientism and relativism, humanity disenchant the cosmos by our self-contained knowing, a correlative impact is had upon the desire for wonder, as the search for a more complete understanding of being is eliminated. Herein, a particular problem for Christian philosophy – the broad tradition of this research's embeddedness – is apparent because the Christian seeks to experience and know the causal source of being (Plantinga 1984:254–256). Without access to being, the possibility of knowing causality is impossible. Consequently, the epistemic separation from being needs to be overcome in recapturing wonder, a sense that arises through the beholding of being beyond constructions of being. To accomplish this, the possibility of intuiting the metaphysical is considered, for a relocation of being to the core of knowing that transcends the bounds of the post and/or modern subject.

Modernity's reductionist and disenchanting legacy in scientific empiricism

'Modernity', originating in 16th century Europe, comprises epistemic, metaphysical and value positions rooted in the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution and was carried forward in colonial dominance (Dube & Banerjee-Dube 2019:xii; Mignolo & Walsh 2018:141). It is typified by '... the emergence of the autonomous and rational subject [...] the turn to psychologism and self-reflexivity; and the dominance of secularism, nationalism, capitalism, industrialism, urbanism, consumerism, and scientism' (Saler 2006:694).³

3. It may be perceived as an oversight that this research does not consider the other major influence upon modernity, namely rationalism. The delineated focus of this research problem is the epistemic continuum that stands between the turn to the senses in empiricism and the turn to the subject in anti-metaphysical postmodern thought. In particular, the emergence of scientism, relying upon the methodological spirit of positivism and embracing a thoroughly anti-metaphysical slant, emphasises this. However, it should also be recognised that the post and/or modern turn towards relativism has been historically encouraged through rationalism, too. Feyerabend (1977:9) sees the importance of rationalism to the originating and modern ideologies of the West. Still, other scholars make the case that rationalism stands in opposition to relativism, because of the latter's embracement of monism (Barnes & Bloor 1982:25). Intuitively, I posit that rationalism has been less influential than empiricism in the post and/or modern rise of relativism. Nevertheless,

It is intriguing, however, that in the modern turn to the subject – which will be developed as having contributed to isolating the human from being – a degree of metaphysical commitment has been maintained in modernity. This is discerned in the faith experience and the practice of religion.⁴ While 79% of the South African population identify as 'Christians' and consider their faith to be important, 55% of the faithful attend religious gatherings weekly (Pew Research Center 2018:53, 55).⁵ The same study reveals that South Africans below 39 consider religion as less important in their lives and are less likely to pray (Pew Research Center 2018:37, 48). Another rising phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa are people who do not identify with any religious tradition, that is, the 'nones', who are estimated to comprise 3.2% of the population (i.e. 30 million people) (Gez, Beider & Dickow 2022:51–52). In stark contrast, the Kenyan philosopher-theologian, Mbiti (1969:1) unproblematically asserted five decades ago that 'Africans are notoriously religious'. The contemporary presence of nones, agnostics and non-practising Christians in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that the spectre of the post and/or modern world has encroached upon the holistic onto-epistemological and value systems of the Continent's peoples as colonisation continues to impact (Mignolo & Walsh 2018:137). Surreptitiously, modern Western epistemology – held by the colonisers – propagated '... de-Godding narratives of science [...] through which r]eason displaces God' (Mignolo & Walsh 2018:139), and in this rise of rational individualism, the dislocation of the mystical has come to pass (Paas 2019:31).⁶

Even if faith is held among many Africans, the agency of colonial and neo-colonial liberal influence through '... industrialisation, urbanisation, technology, consumerism and individualism' (Bruce 2011:14) – the products of modernity –

.....
rationalism is a celebration of the human ability to reason without appeal to experience. This may not be the epistemic path of empirical science, but given the subjective origin of rationalism, an influence upon relativism – at least at an initial superficial level – can be argued for. However, this discussion opens into an entirely different area of research, which transcends the limits placed upon this research, namely the emphasis upon relativism in post and/or modern subjectivist and empiricist epistemologies.

4. While faith-based beliefs that suggest metaphysical commitment can be an important factor in religious experience, this is a broad phenomenon, with the particular tradition of the person playing an influential role in determining the origin and nature of religious experience (Webb 2022). Arguments have been developed, for instance by Griffioen (2016:87), that consider that rather than belief, a '... volitional, imaginative commitment' is required for religious experience. Her proposal is that '... religious faith is less about what we believe and more about what we do with what we imagine' (Griffioen 2016:87). Still, I hold that while there are people who subscribe to religion for social or political reasons, and while human imagination has its influence, the commitment to metaphysical belief remains an important motivation behind religion.

5. This implies that 'active' Christians comprise ±43, 45% of the total South African population, and that 45% of Christians do not practice faith formally.

6. 'Secularisation' is implied, which suggests a movement from religion to a worldview that is focused on the temporal (Latré & Vanheeswijck 2015:388). This 'secularization thesis' is not without contention; however, for not all scholars agree that there is a correlation between a rise in secularisation and a decrease in myth and religion (Smith 2008:5). Critical considerations like this aid a more complex understanding of the relationship between secularism and religion. There are degrees of the inclusion or rejection of religion and its experience in secularism; thus, there are various forms of secularism (Balkenhol, Van den Hemel & Stengs 2020). The phenomenon of the secularising West does not occur in an absolutely bivalent manner, nor does it imply a total defeat of faith, for despite the Enlightenment push of the mystical and transcendent religious practice aside – even if diminished – faith remains as a global phenomenon (Berger 1969:119). However, the secularising ideological force away from religion is apparent. The influential European Constitution stands as a documentary exemplar of this (European Union 2020), for despite the deep Christian influence upon Europe in its history and identity, the Constitution makes no specific mention of Christianity (Ratzinger 2005a:348–349).

has been felt by African peoples at least from CE 1500 (Mignolo & Walsh 2018:138; Silva 2019:113). The form and pace of secularising post and/or modernity are unique to each context, but the pressures upon sub-Saharan Africa, animated initially by the modern colonial experiment and continued in postmodernity, cannot be ignored (Mignolo & Walsh 2018:139, 141; Paas 2019:28–30, 38). They exert forces on indigenous peoples through the upkeep of colonial modes of thinking and being (Silva 2019:121), as Maldonado-Torres (2007:243) proposes: ‘... coloniality survives colonialism [...] we breath [sic] coloniality all the time and everyday’. Shang (2017) opines that some responsibility for growing secularisation is to be borne by Africa’s people, though the rise in secularisation in Africa is principally a product of modern colonisation’s attempt at placing Western empirical science as the arbiter of knowledge. Prior to the arrival of the colonial master, African traditional metaphysics and axiology were the sources of worldviews and value systems (Shang 2017). However, the Western severance of faith from reason played out in the European coloniser’s absolute commitment to their successful science and influenced the colonised who were exposed to these negative values through enforced systems of education and other modes of ideational subjugation, which made stepping outside these epistemologies impossible (Shang 2017).

Based on the positivist principle of verification, the empiricist method interpreted a scientific statement’s meaning as ‘... its method of verification’ (Schlick in Ayer 1992:2–3). Consequently, non-empirically verifiable statements – such as those of metaphysics – were deemed untrue and irrational (Ayer 1992:2). At base, any instance must be verifiable for its existence to be asserted (Ayer 1992:10). Modern, anti-metaphysical epistemic reductivism was embraced and propagated by the ‘enlightened’, such that non-empirically verifiable indigenous knowledge was marginalised as mythological, subjective and fanciful, as opposed to the colonisers’ own science, which they believed had the capacity to universally explain (Mignolo & Walsh 2018:140–141; Saler 2006:696; Shang 2017). The assumption of science’s success inferred the conquest and rejection of non-European, non-modern – yet holistic – knowledge systems (Dube & Banerjee-Dube 2019:xii–xiii; Mignolo & Walsh 2018:141), for moderns believed that in science ‘... there are no mysterious incalculable forces [... instead, scientifically] one can [...] master all things by calculation’ (Weber 1989:13–14). With the deindigenisation that occurred through the excision of the empirically unverifiable from knowledge, wonder, spirituality and faith are indifferently lost (Shang 2017).

The rationale behind the embrace of the modern belief system is probably not the epistemology embedded within, as few consider epistemic undergirding. Rather, it seems that the dominant value system present in the social and political milieu furtively encourages the rejection of the transcendent, for closely allied to modernity is materialism (Shang 2017). If onto-epistemologically, matter is all that exists, it follows that former transcendent, metaphysical foundations have no place (Shang 2017). Materialist reductivism’s omnipresence

displays the underlying individualism that is at odds with African values, wherein identity is formed by belonging to and being in community and where meaning is found through communal belonging and not in restricting knowing to what the subject experiences and epistemologically constructs alone (Shang 2017).

But not all ‘Westerners’ are stereotypically materialist, individualist, relativist or reductivist moderns. Within the critical responses to modernity is the ‘Regensburg Address’, wherein Pope Benedict XVI (2006) sharply criticises ‘... the modern self-limitation of reason [... and its method] of verification or falsification through experimentation ...’. He argued that modern empirical science’s narrow, self-constructed definition of ‘science’ led to ‘... a reduction of the radius of science and reason ...’ (Pope Benedict XVI 2006).⁷ This limitation was first articulated and defended in English in 1867 by W.G. Ward (Schindler 2022:235–236), who delimited ‘science’ as ‘... physical and experimental science, to the exclusion of theological and metaphysical [theories]’ (Ward 1867:255). Modern science justifies the boundary by limiting itself to empirical evidence about nature and the construction of laws of nature (Schindler 2022:237). Laws of nature involve an ‘*explanatory reduction*’ of knowledge from the experience of phenomena to the expression of the way that phenomena are (Gallagher et al. 2015:153). Implicit in the praxis of empirical science is also ‘ontological reduction’, entailing that all natural entities can be adequately investigated through the empirical method (Gallagher et al. 2015:154). Methodologically, metaphysics and theology do not conform to empirical science; thus, they are excluded from the ‘science’ category. However, an error lies in modern reductivism’s assumption that scientific theories have the explanatory ability through experimentation and falsification to grasp the fullness of being and consequently to presuppose that no alternative epistemic method leads to acceptable knowledge.

Out of the former colonies, and in contrast to the dogmatic limiting of ‘science’, decolonial epistemology holds that the constructor and bearer of knowledge are privileged because knowledge enables leading and influencing others (Mignolo & Walsh 2018:144). The power of privilege afforded the modern colonials the occasion to do violence and to obliterate the epistemologies of the colonised (Dube & Banerjee-Dube 2019:xv). In response, the decolonial paradigm aims to free being and knowing from the limiting and reductive grasp of the moderns by challenging their epistemology’s underpinnings, including the presupposition that only empirical verification produces reliable knowledge (Mignolo & Walsh 2018:136, 146–147). Methodically, metaphysics was largely set aside in the 20th century by the myth that it was antiquated (Schäfer 2013:1). This lore developed in a few ways: through the modern turn to the subject, the existential rejection of metaphysics as ‘non-philosophical’ and the primacy given to empiricism (Schäfer 2013:3–6). The latter erroneously promoted the disenchantment of knowledge by

⁷This position may more appropriately be characterised as a variety of empiricism in the extreme, namely ‘scientism’.

the method of empiricism to the degree that disenchantment – the absence of the experiences of awe and wonder – became modernity's hallmark (Adorno & Horkheimer [1947] 2003:384; Carroll 2011:120; Dube & Banerjee-Dube 2019:xiii).⁸ This was accomplished through the fabled delegitimisation of metaphysics on the basis that metaphysics is not empirical science. However, if the disenfranchisement of metaphysics is to truthfully be held, an engagement between empirical science and metaphysics should have occurred (Kang 2013:209). However, the content and the method of metaphysics provide empirical science with no point of comparison (Kang 2013:209–210). Hence, it does not follow that empirical science has outmoded metaphysics.⁹ Nevertheless, the increase of rationality and trust in the modern empirical method entailed human separation from the natural world, which was imagined as distinct from the human, a non-enchanted object, studiable and controllable (Carroll 2011:120–121).

Modernity's success through empirical science disenchanters and desacralises, as existence is presupposed to be material because all that can be knowable is empirically measurable and reasonable (Weber 1989:xiii). In the empirical scientific realm, there is no space for the non-empirical transcendent (Saler 2006:695). In the modern disenchantment of being (Adorno & Horkheimer [1947] 2003:384), '... the ultimate, most sublime values ...' have disappeared, occasioning the loss of the contemplation of meaning outside the human's constructed interpretation of scientific knowledge (Weber 1989:27, 30).

Postmodernity's disenchanting legacy in epistemic relativism

Modernity advanced in postmodernity by way of reaction, including through the deepening disenchantment in relativist epistemology's turning away from absolutes and foundations. Although sometimes considered a disconnect from modernity's foundationalist claims to representationalism, correspondence and objectivity, postmodern epistemology is part of a continuous line of reason from the ancient to the present (Dupré 1993:277; Lyotard 1993:80; Prossman 2011:19; Rorty 1991:1–2). Modernity and postmodernity, as a beginning point, share a '... self-referential meaning of language' and voluntarist bases (Dupré 1993:284–285, 294).¹⁰ Where postmodern theories diverge from modernity is in their embrace of '... context dependence, perspectivism,

mind-dependence, [...] the underdetermination of empirical theory by data, the collapse of old certainties [...] the prominence of social-scientific explanations [...] and alethic relativism' (Jankunas 2011:8).¹¹ One of these postmodern hallmarks, 'relativism', predates the reaction to modernity, as it is found in the ancient Greek philosophers Xenophanes (6th C BCE) and Protagoras (5th C BCE) (Jankunas 2011:261).¹² Nonetheless, the term was only coined in 1865 by John Grote in an analysis which interpreted the phenomenon as a deceptive mask that hides the thinking subject from the object, resulting in the disenchantment of being (Grote 1865:228–232; Jankunas 2011:2). By 19th century, the spectre of relativism had been entrenched through the Enlightenment by some significant Western philosophers (Jankunas 2011:262–263): René Descartes, David Hume and Immanuel Kant.¹³

Kant especially encouraged humanity to break free from premodern thinking, viewing this emancipation as establishing the dignity of the human (Kant & Wood [1784] 1996:22, §8:35). In the Kantian ([1784] 1996:17, §8:35) schema, 'enlightenment' is the conscious rejection of dependence upon authority.¹⁴ However, it is noteworthy that rather than emphasising the collective human endeavour of freedom, Kant takes a strongly subjective line. He considers the human as epistemically servile until the Enlightenment, which marked a change from the past, requiring the subject to demonstrate their reasoning, free of social limits (Kantian [1784] 1996:17, §§8:35–37, 41). The Enlightenment subject is, thus, emboldened to responsibility for their own thinking though the ideological turn to the epistemology of the subject and its epistemic limitations follow.

The moderns embraced both Kantian ([1784] 1996:18, §8:37) non-reliance upon epistemic authority and the empirical verification undertaken by subjects (Kant [1783] 2017:8). It is ironic that Kantianism fuelled the postmodern turn away from modern universals and absolutes to a sense of knowledge as relative (Johnson & Duberley 2011). For, in the thinking subject scrutinising reason and knowledge, the modern dependence upon reason and its ability to make universal inferences was doubted (Johnson & Duberley 2011), as the postmodern became '... wary of [...] trust[ing]

11. Not all aspects of relativism are criticised herein, for example, I argue in favour of epistemic pluralism, cultural diversity, etc. However, the absolutism of relativism to the exclusion of epistemologies that do not conform paradigmatically to it is decried. I note that Ratzinger, too, does not analyse relativism without nuance, as he recognises positive aspects, such as those mentioned (Jankunas 2011:113).

12. Because humans have different understandings of God, regardless of whether God changes, Xenophanes considered human understandings to be relative (Jankunas 2011:4; Kirk & Raven 1957:4). A similar conclusion was drawn by the Sophist Protagoras, as he concluded that 'man [sic] is the measure of all things', entailing that the human had become the arbiter of all, and that any thought about an object was justifiable, for all that could be known would be what the human deemed so, in accord with the epistemic mode that the thinker embraced (Diogenes Laërtius 1915:397; Jankunas 2011:3).

13. Descartes saw radical scepticism as the singular means through which certain knowledge was induced (Descartes 2003:21, 23; Jankunas 2011:6). Hume argued that all empirical knowledge was momentary and subjective (Hume 2008:84; Jankunas 2011:6–7). Kant thought that the knowable is mediated by the subject, but the thing itself can never be known (Jankunas 2011:7; Kant [1783] 2017).

14. In 'Was ist Aufklärung?', Kant ([1784] 2004:5) begins: 'Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit'. While Wood translates 'Unmündigkeit' as 'minority' (Kant [1784] 1996:17, §8:35), it can be translated as 'immaturity', which speaks more appropriately to the argument here, as this interpretation gives emphasis to the Kantian spirit of the philosopher breaking free from the analogical chains of childlike, trusting, thought processes.

8. 'Disenchantment' predates modernity's enlightenment in its ancient Judaic origins as the study and observance of the Torah moved the ancient Jewish people away from a magical to a rational world within which the laws of God were determined and observed by believers (Carroll 2011:125).

9. The cause of disenchantment is not science, but the thinking subject's interpretation of empirical science as rational, disenchanted and absolutely successful, that is, the human interpretation of the scientific phenomenon bred reductivism (Artigas 2000:303; Saler 2006:695).

10. Dupré emphasises Jacques Derrida's postulation that being is absent from both modern and postmodern theoretical constructions (Derrida 1997:294), for Derrida, utilising Peirce (1931:58) – who proposed that the human can only think in terms of signs, separate from the objects to which they refer – the emergence of human interpretation and understanding accompanies a turn to the subject and her limited abilities, away from being (Derrida 1997:48). 'From the moment that there is meaning there are nothing but signs. We think only in signs [... Here is] the essence of the transcendental signified ... [i.e.] the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence ...' (Derrida 1997:50).

in the assertive, normative, and expressive capacities of the “rational subject” (Susen 2015:40).

Another Enlightenment figure, Hume (2008:84) critiqued the subject’s ability to adequately capture being and so foreran postmodernity. The postmodern paradigm, in turn, considers modern empirically verifiable fact as constructed fragments of ‘knowledge’, fashioned through the perceiver’s involvement into as many meanings as there are interpreters but not interpreted through reliance on the instruments of measurement and verification (Johnson & Duberley 2011; Screpanti 1994:179, 185). The foundational position of postmodern relativist epistemology is the universal meta-narrative that outside the human construction there is no knowing (Johnson & Duberley 2011; Screpanti 1994:183, 186; Susen 2015:43). Postmodern, therefore, carouses in epistemic relativism’s denigration of truth, in the subjugation of empirical science’s grand narrative and in the uncertainty of the nature of knowledge because of its relativity to particular thinking subjects (Johnson & Duberley 2011).

If knowledge is fashioned by individuals, knowing is anthropocentric, entailing a severing of the postmodern knower and their construed knowledge system from metaphysical, foundational and transcendent insights beyond the self. In its epistemic pluralism, relativism is understood as tolerant of different perspectives; however, the relativist paradigm implies that knowledge is *only* generated from the subjective paradigm (Baghrmain 2004:1; Jankunas 2011:261). Consequently, relativism is partial and limited to what and how the thinking subject can know. In this sense, postmodernity – through the relativist instrument – relates negatively to truth, as it aims to negate truth as a value-free, objective epistemic entity of being, constructing truth as relative to the thinking subject (Jankunas 2011:14). In defining ‘relativism’ as having the ‘... ultimate goal [...] solely of one’s egos and desires’, Ratzinger strongly critiques subject-bound epistemology (Ratzinger in Jankunas 2011:2).

It is not astonishing that Ratzinger would approach postmodern epistemology in this way, for his Catholic intellectual tradition has long identified problems with relativism (Laghi 1997). For Ratzinger, the impetus to consistently take on relativism is its distance between humanity and truth (Ratzinger & Messori 1985:36). He especially criticises ‘total relativism’ by which the opinion of the subject is prioritised over truth, diagnosing what he sees as the malaise of the 20th century, contributed to by postmodernity: ‘... the human faculty for registering comprehensive truth ...’ (Nichols 2007:vii) has vanished in the subjective turn (Jankunas 2011:156; Ratzinger 2002:184). Although science identifies truths, ontological truth is not the object proper of empirical science, and further, in post and/or modernity, the subject refuses to grab hold of truth (Jankunas 2011:113, 156; Ratzinger 2002:184, 186). In this post and/or modern, post-metaphysical milieu, the all-powerful, self-referential ‘I’ is foundational (Habermas 2006:46; Taylor 2007:300), yet it is shut off from being in its ‘dictatorship of relativism’ (Ratzinger 2005b), as the subject bathes in the

obscurity of ‘... untruth and [...] unreality’ (Jankunas 2011:189; Ratzinger [1986] 1990:71). The condition of the relative post-meta-physicist is a consequent abandonment of the dignity of seeking truth (Paul VI 1965, §2), and along with this sacrifice, truth is subjugated by populist individualism’s elevation of opinion to one among many idiosyncratic ‘truths’ (Taylor 2007:299).¹⁵ An avoidance of treading into the epistemic sphere of the other ensues, for fear of quashing ‘their freedom’ and ‘their truth’.¹⁶ In this subjectivity, the absolutised form of an individual’s truth that undermines the possibility of that claim’s falsehood is ignored (Ratzinger 2002:180–181).

Although difficult to determine precisely, it is suggested that Google was visited 139.95 billion times in January 2025 (Semrush 2025); a fact indicative of the deeply rooted human desire to know about phenomena extra to the self. Knowing is at the core of the rationalising and empiricising project of modernity, manifest by the subject utilising their abilities of ‘disengaged reason’, but this has the curious counter-effect that subjective reason ends in construing the cosmos as mechanistic and devoid of enchantment (Taylor 2007:300). The human, in this modern realm, is empowered through her successful rationality to exult self-determined, anthropocentric constructions but not to epistemically reach beyond the bounds of self to being (Taylor 2007:301–302; Warner, VanAntwerpen & Calhoun 2010:13). This is a self-imposed boundary of human understanding on the human’s place in the cosmos and the nature of being’s relationship with humanity. In this way of not relating to being, the human is separated from what is, and yet the subject remains haunted by the fact that by its existence, it is part of being (Taylor 2007:302). This dichotomous state of being or not-being accounts for a feeling of unease at the disenchantment that anthropocentric epistemology has brought about, for the human has ‘... a need for meaning’ yet is found to be subjectively disconnected from the source of meaning, being (Taylor 2007:302). Charles Taylor describes the discomfort as ‘the malaise of immanence’, in which the ‘free’ postmodern thinker has rejected the transcendent, ridding knowledge systems of the irrational non-empirical, but became concomitantly disenchanted by the incompleteness of empiricism (Taylor 2007:309; Warner et al. 2010:9). Arising from the same epistemological trend as modernity, postmodernity also embraced radical scepticism, directing doubt to foundational grand narratives, though not to the subject (Prossman 2011:19–20). Entrenched in these epistemologies, the human beholding of being is disenchanted by its limitation to the human grasp on the real, that is, to the empirically verifiable through the human senses and turned in upon itself in postmodern reason, respectively.

The experiences of wonder and awe as routes to knowledge of being

‘Enchantment’ refers to the mystical, the mysterious or the mythical (Adorno & Horkheimer [1947] 2003:384; Saler

¹⁵Not all postmoderns should be classified as ‘post-’or ‘anti-metaphysics’, as is illustrated in the works of scholars of the ilk of Emmanuel Levinas (1979), Ricoeur (2024) and Desmond (2020).

¹⁶The criticism of an idea held by an individual should not be considered as an attack on the accidentals of that person.

2006:695; St. Hilaire 1995:115–116, 118). But, remaining in the sphere of *epistemic* enchantment, I propose a different definition: if ‘disenchantment’ is knowing only the empirical, it follows that enchantment is its antonym, a mode of knowing that transcends the empirically verifiable by emphasising being beyond human cognition (Maslow 1971:106). Maslow (1971), the humanist psychologist, explains:

... [The ‘*cognition of being*’ is] the cognition that Plato and Socrates were talking about ... of pure excellence, pure truth, pure goodness [... *that extends*] to the perceiving of [...] the ultimate values of being. (pp. 106, 176–177)

Providing a definition by enumeration, Maslow (1971:106) demarcates the ‘cognition of being’ as ‘... truth, beauty, wholeness, dichotomy transcendence, aliveness-process, uniqueness, perfection, necessity, completion, justice, order, simplicity, richness’.¹⁷ These enchanting characteristics point to cognitive experiences that bring the subject to actual moments of beholding aspects of being (Maslow 1971:106). The bond between the experience of enchantment and wonder – as wonder births enchantment – draws out the way in which being leads the thinking subject to enchantment (Saler 2006:695, 702). In ancient and mediaeval philosophy, wonder was considered as the feeling of the philosopher (Plato, *Thaetetus*), the place where philosophical reflection begins (Aristotle, 1975, *Metaphysics*, I, 982b), and the desire to know things as they are, behind the veil of constructed knowledge, which can never represent entities as they are (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 32, a. 8; St. Hilaire 1995:123). Wonder sets the imagination alight and guides the human to reach beyond the confines of the subject’s self-limited thinking in apprehension, serving as the beginning point of the recognition of being qua being, where a real encounter between the subject and being occurs. The content of the subject’s wonder is the source of the ‘cognition of being’ (Maslow 1971:176–177). Through the experience of wonder, being qua being is no longer disenchanting but bears meaning to the subject, which suggests that being is enchanted.¹⁸

Reflecting upon the importance of wonder in the human life, John Paul II (1998, §4) observed:

Driven by the desire to discover the ultimate truth of existence, human beings seek to acquire [...] universal elements of knowledge which [...] spring from the wonder awakened in them by the contemplation of creation ...

Contemporary psychological studies agree, concretised in the Greek and scholastic traditions’ tying together of the desire to know with the cognitive process and emotion of wonder, which serves to expand the human hankering for knowing (Allen 2018:3; Bazhydai & Westermann 2020:1; Paulson et al. 2020:53).¹⁹ The human brain’s employment of

17. I am indebted to Victor Reijs (n.d.) for leading me to consider Maslow and enchantment.

18. Modernity has been described ‘... as enchanted in a disenchanted way’ (Saler, 2006:692, 694). However, if the meaning of ‘enchantment’ implies reference to being qua being, disenchanted modernity cannot be enchanted.

19. ‘Wonder’, because it has both emotive and cognitive dimensions, can be understood in two manifestations: ‘ontological wonder’ which aids the human in

increasingly complex conceptual models – which enable the person to categorise and make sense of the world for survival – accounts for the existence of wonder and its related phenomena in the human experience (Shiota 2021:85–86). However, wonder is more than a conceptual model and, in its nature, transcends mere human curiosity; wonder does not only enter to fill gaps of knowledge. Bazhydai and Westermann (2020:6) allude to the expansive quality of ‘wonder’ as they characterise it as ‘... a quest for truth, achieved by embracing holistic perception and remaining open to uncertainty ...’. In this interpretation, wonder is a psychological disposition towards life-long cognitive situatedness within an ever-evolving world.

Often associated with wonder, awe is an epistemic emotion that deals with perceptions that are beyond the subject’s accustomed experience, reference and knowledge base (Allen 2018:3, 8–9; Bazhydai & Westermann 2020:6; St. Hilaire 1995:123). There is consensus in the psychological research that awe precedes wonder. In the feeling of awe, the ‘... radical presence of “absolutes” within the field of human experience ...’ (Steinbock 2007:14–15) elevates the subject before the depth of nature of a perceived aspect or encounter to a state of non-understanding, from which wonder arises to aid the conceptualisation of what lies beyond the subject’s understanding (Allen 2018:10, 16, 30; Paulson et al. 2020:53; Shiota 2021:86–87). In this sense, the experiences of awe and wonder contribute to lifelong development, as the subject’s knowledge accumulates and intensifies (Bazhydai & Westermann 2020:8–9).

Although rational and scientific modes of knowledge acquisition can be used to explore and construe the awe-inspired, wondrous phenomenon to make up for the explanatory gap experienced (Allen 2018:34), being must be accommodated when it transcends these modes of knowing (Shiota 2021:87). The need for cognitive accommodation of the awe-inspiring implies an independent reality, which demands the beholding subject to develop an alternative conceptual model to make sense thereof. The processes, experiences and emotions of awe and wonder – that lead to a properly ontological experience of being, transcending pre-existing concepts, self-referential modes of understanding and the assumptions held by the subject – are such that in them ‘... we briefly lower the filters of our mental models, seeing the world a bit more as it is, less influenced by cognitive shortcuts and dominant assumptions’ (Shiota 2021:87).

Liberating knowing in expanding ‘science’ to wonder and awe

The positivist- and relativist-dominated scientific narrative of the post and/or modern condition placed definite boundaries on the demarcation of ‘science’. Verily, the type of knowledge generated through the experiences of awe and wonder does not fit into this category marked by reduction to the verifiable.

... knowing her situatedness in the cosmos and ‘cognitive wonder’, a cognitive state that elicits conceptual clarification, expansion, etc. (Gallagher et al. 2015:116–117). The common feature between both rests upon the human directedness toward understanding.

From the perspective of the colonised, this reduction is epistemic violence that needs to be sublimated so that denigrated, colonial indigenous knowledge systems can be liberated from subjugation, to be given recognition as equal epistemologies to those of the coloniser (Silva 2019:127). Moreover, overcoming the colonial, epistemic reduction is a means through which the colonised's own knowledge can be validated as a robust route to knowing, in turn serving to reflect the rational ability of subjugated people (Silva 2019:111).

In contemplating indigenous, non-colonial knowledge systems, African epistemology speaks to the core theme of this study: the struggle for the primacy of being in post and/or modernity. The African epistemological system is focused upon being, but in a dissimilar way to Western ontology; African epistemology does not reduce being to material, formal or perceptual modes, attempting to capture being as an irreducible reality, that is, as being qua being (Lajul 2023:82, 84). Although there are slightly different articulations across pre-colonial sub-Saharan African philosophical understandings of 'being' (Ikhane 2023:21), Lajul (2023:88) argues that African epistemology holds to the general conceptualisation that '[b]eing is the totality of existence ...'. It follows that rooted in the belief systems of Africans, African epistemology subscribes to the idea that knowledge relates to entities that exist and can, thus, be classified as an ontological epistemology (Ikhane 2023:20–21; Lajul 2023:79). The content of this knowledge points to a substantial ontological commitment held by African people in indigenous knowledge systems: knowledge is of an extant ontological unity, to which the thinking subject belongs in an inseparable oneness, wherein no dichotomous distinction can be created between the temporal, sacred, material and immaterial (Ikhane 2023:20). In this form of conceiving being, African epistemology considers '... the rational, the empirical, and the mystical as constitutive of a single mode of knowing' (Lajul 2023:82).

If one were to utilise Western categories – these continue to provide the most widely available explanatory jargon of the discipline, but it must be acknowledged, damagingly dominate in philosophical analysis – African ontological epistemology is 'holistic' (Ikhane 2023:22). But it cannot be classified as a form of realism because the ontological commitment of African ontological epistemology transcends knowledge that is dependent on empirical verification or sensory experience (Ikhane 2023:27). Beliefs in metaphysical and transcendent entities, such as the divine, ancestors, etc., and their causal impact upon the materially extant, circumvent both the reliance on sensory data and the delimitation of knowing to the empirical alone (Ikhane 2023:27). African epistemology must respond to a holistic worldview that grasps the physical and the metaphysical in an inseparable oneness (Ikhane 2023:31). When beholding the cosmos, the subject is immediately faced with ineffable awe and the feeling of wonder, in essence, the fullness of being beyond epistemic reduction, only conceivable through a knowledge system that takes into careful account the fullness of the heterogenous nature of being (Jimoh 2023:41). Though the West may query knowing that is not empirically

verifiable, the African communitarian knowledge system places this epistemic limit aside, as it considers true knowledge as capable of holding being without reduction (Jimoh 2023:42). This does not entail that there is no process of demonstration of the knowledge held in African epistemology, but that demonstration includes empirical, rational and mystical facets of being, too (Jimoh 2023:42, 45).

In this manner, African decolonised, ontological epistemology ruptures the reductive constraints of Western categorisation, liberating knowledge and its constructors. This liberatory epistemology sits well with the critique of modern science made by Benedict XVI (2006): '... a reduction in the radius of science and religion' – both for the elimination of enchantment from science and the metaphysical limitation of a web of complex relations of systems of knowing into positivist empiricism.

Considering the basic model of science espoused within the Catholic intellectual tradition – in particular in the Thomist articulation thereof – one detects synergy with the African metaphysical-epistemological model. Aquinas' development of the definition of 'science' takes inspiration from Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, expanding the definition of '*scientia*' to include theology and the speculative sciences (Sweeney 1986:225). Aristotle understood 'ἐπιστήμη' (in Latin, *scientia*, which is often translated as 'science' in English) (Jenkins 1997:11),²⁰ as a humanly laden experience, as the subject approaches knowledge acquisition with pre-existent knowledge (Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, Book I, Part 1). 'Ἐπιστήμη' is knowledge of a thing and of the causes upon which the thing is dependent (Devon 2014:174; Jenkins 1997:11). As a result of the cause, the epistemic fact could not be different from what it is (Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, Book I, Part 1). Aquinas explains this position:

For the principles of a thing's being are the same as those of truth [...] Therefore, the scientific knower, if he [*sic*] is to know perfectly, must know the cause of the thing known. (Aquinas, *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics of Aristotle*, Lect. 4, 71b10)

In Aquinas' epistemology, the intelligibility of an entity is dependent upon form and not matter (since 'form is contracted by matter'); thus, in complement to Aristotle's more whole, causal epistemology (Aquinas, *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics of Aristotle*, Lect. 4, 71b10; Devon 2014:174), Aquinas directs epistemology away from the study of matter alone to include metaphysics (*Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 14, a. 1). In this manner, in consort with African epistemology, Aristotle and Aquinas challenge contemporary reductive, materialist epistemologies as they conceptualise science as a broader enterprise (Devon 2014:174). Within 'science', Aquinas includes interrelated sciences: physical and natural science, and the disciplines focused upon metaphysics and causality, that is, philosophy and theology (Andrews 2014:2).²¹ This characteristic openness of *scientia*

20. Because of the dominant conceptualisations of 'science', it is not really adequate to translate either the Greek 'ἐπιστήμη' or the Latin '*scientia*' into English (Jenkins 1997:17).

21. The case of Galileo Galilei has emerged as a mythical pivot point around which much discussion and concern around the Church's rejection of empirical science

enables the perceiver to reach beyond the confines of the subject's limits, making an actual grasp for being qua being, which is immediately present to and discoverable by the subject (Knasas 2019:62).²²

It has been considered that through awe and wonder, being's enchantment can be reclaimed contra to reductivism and relativism. As this knowledge would be in relation to being, its nature is metaphysical. However, there are strong arguments that run contrary to the possibility that the subject could have access to being qua being (Hanink 2013:168–169). It is sufficient to note that this sort of opposition arose in the Thomist tradition from both Étienne Gilson and John F.X. Knasas, on the basis that if the philosopher attempts to demonstrate that through the ability of the subject, the embodied being gains access by intuition to knowing that transcends matter, but '... we have no such image of existence as existence' (Hanink 2013:168–169).

Maritain (1953:3), though, argues that the philosophy of nature – that of the extant cosmos – is a preamble to metaphysics because if the metaphysician desires to employ reason to declare the existence of being, she should first have some perceived sense of the nature of existing entities. He proposes that '... metaphysical intuition crowns the process [...] of abstraction which starts from the sensible' (Maritain (1953:3). When the subject beholds an awe-inspiring, wondrous natural vista, for example, the human perceptual capacities lead the subject to judge that what is beheld has being (Hanink 2013:170–171). These sorts of moments of the intuition of being could happen in ways other than wonder, such as through a cognitive realisation in a moment of deep study or contemplation. Regardless of how they come about, however, human capacities are able to direct the subject through these, outwith the strictures of the human to being itself (Hanink 2013:178). In interpreting the point and the argument made herein, it is put forth that the 'act of being itself' (John Paul II 1998, §97) directs the subject in wonder, to an openness in the intuition that being has being, that it can be held on to and considered as being qua being, beyond post and/or modern reductive and relative epistemologies restrained access to being. And, thus, as the African American poetess, Georgia Douglas Johnson expressed of the human drive and desire to experience and comprehend their being and the mystery of apprehended being:

... man [*sic*] seeks evermore [...]

The primal reason why. (Johnson 1997:156)

(footnote 21 continues...)

has come to revolve (John Paul II 1992, §10). The Catholic Intellectual Tradition places great importance upon the philosophical and theological works of mediaeval scholars, among them Augustine, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, etc. And while it is true that some, as in the case of Cardinal Robert Bellarmine SJ with Galileo, sought to suppress aspects of empirical science, it should not be supposed that all scholars of this period held firm to that conviction. St Thomas stands as a case in point, for in the *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 70, a. 5, he appeals to the findings of astronomers, taking their empirical theories seriously and including them into his own work. Thus, while arguing for a dimension of thought that has its origins in the mediaeval period, it should not be supposed that a rejection of empirical science necessarily follows.

22. As the appeal is made for a broadening of 'science' beyond the empiricist definition, the argument is not for a denigration of the standards of empirical science, should the concern arise that these would be eliminated in the proposed enchantment. Rather, these established and positive practices that have resulted in many strong advancements in empirical science by their aiding in the objective ideal should be kept in place but only to the plane of *scientia* wherein they have relevance, namely empirical science. However, when the metaphysical plane is reached, such criteria are less applicable.

Conclusion

This research had its inspiration in Joseph Ratzinger and his critique of post and/or modernity; it is thus not a review of the work of Ratzinger but a contemporary meditation upon a theme that was of importance to him, as developed from and for the embedded perspective of the global South. It is hoped that in this occurrence, a demonstration is made that Ratzinger's intellectual legacy has relevance outside the confines of European debate.

A survey of the epistemologies of modern empiricism and postmodern empirical relativism has been articulated, in which it transpired that for both modernity and postmodernity – which have been argued as forming a continuum – the source of knowledge is rooted in the thinking subject and her abilities rather than grounding knowing in being. It is illustrated, then, that in both modern and postmodern milieus, the centring around the subject is done at the expense of the intuition of being qua being. The consequence of post and/or modern empiricism and relativism is the disenchantment of being, which occasions a distance between the subject and being, as the possibility of ontological truth is sidelined. A further corollary of post and/or modern epistemology is the negation of indigenous knowledge systems, such as African epistemology, precisely because of its metaphysical character, but in this sublimation, the African philosophical directedness to being beyond the subject is lost.

In contemplation of the post and/or modern problematic identified, it has been argued that by repositioning the human experiences of awe and wonder to the heart of apprehension, the subject is provided with a potential route to reclaim the cognition of being, that is, to permit the cosmos to be re-enchanted for the subject in the realisation that being – in its multifarious irreducibility – can be apprehended. It is in the cognitive experience of wonder that the subject is opened beyond her limitations to the capacity of knowing, embodied within the greater context of being, of which the subject is part and encouraged to consider the nature of the wondrous beheld.

With the aim of recentring being, the argument for re-enchantment is proposed and furthered, in positing that the re-enchantment of being can contribute to the expansion of the demarcation of the system of human knowing, that is, science. In this process, the knowledge of being is given primacy and epistemic liberation from the subjectively imposed bounds upon science becomes thinkable.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

Author's contribution

C.D.S. declares that they are the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was made to the University of South Africa of Human Sciences Ethics Committee and ethics consent was received on 24 November 2024. The ethics approval number is 5945.

Funding information

This work is based on the research that was supported in part by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (Grant Number RA201006565740).

Data availability

All data used and in support of the study and findings are publicly available in libraries and online.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The author is responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

References

- Adorno, T. & Horkheimer, M., [1947] 2003, 'The dialectic of enlightenment', in P. Hyland (ed.), *The Enlightenment: A sourcebook and reader*, pp. 384–385, Routledge, London.
- Allen, S., 2018, *The science of awe*, viewed 01 March 2023, from https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Awe_FINAL.pdf.
- Andrews, M., 2014, 'Scientia and radical contingency in Thomas Aquinas', *Philosophia* 43, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-014-9570-6>
- Aquinas, St Thomas, [1920] 2014, *The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, viewed 10 March 2023, Kindle DX e-book, Catholic Way Publishing, s.l.
- Aquinas, St Thomas, n.d., *Commentary on the posterior analytics of Aristotle*, viewed 20 February 2024, from <https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/PostAnalytica.htm>.
- Aristotle, 1975, *Aristotle in Twenty Three Volumes, XVII, The Metaphysics, Books I-IX*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Aristotle, c. 350 BCE, *Posterior analytics*, viewed 28 February 2024, from <https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/posterior.1.i.html>.
- Artigas, M., 2000, *The mind of the universe: Understanding science and religion*, Templeton Foundation Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Ayer, A., 1992, 'A defence of empiricism', in A. Griffiths (ed.), *A.J. Ayer: Memorial essays*, pp. 1–16, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Baghramain, M., 2004, *Relativism*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Balkenhol, M., Van den Hemel, E. & Stengs, I., 2020, *The secular sacred: Emotions of belonging and the perils of nation and religion*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Barnes, B. & Bloor, D., 1982, 'Relativism, rationalism, and the sociology of knowledge', in M. Hollis & S. Lukes (eds.), *Rationality and Relativism*, pp. 21–47, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Bazhydai, M. & Westermann, G., 2020, 'From curiosity, to wonder, to creativity: A cognitive developmental psychology perspective', in A. Schinkel (ed.), *Wonder, education, and human flourishing*, pp. 144–181, VU University Press, Amsterdam.
- Benedict XVI, Pope, 2006, *Meeting with the representatives of Science: Lecture of the Holy Father: Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and reflections (September 12, 2006)*, viewed 01 February 2023, from https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html.
- Benedict XVI, Pope, 2010, *Light of the world: The Pope, the Church, and the signs of the times. A conversation with Peter Seewald*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA.
- Berger, P., 1969, *A rumor of Angels: Modern society and the rediscovery of the supernatural*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Boyarin, D., 2007, 'The Scandal of Sophism: On the epistemological seriousness of relativism', *Common Knowledge* 13(2–3), 315–336. <https://doi.org/10.1215/0961754X-2007-009>
- Bruce, S., 2011, *Secularisation: In defence of an unfashionable theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Carroll, A., 2011, 'Disenchantment, rationality and the modernity of Max Weber', *Forum Philosophicum* 16(1), 117–137. <https://doi.org/10.35765/forphil.2011.1601.08>
- Derrida, J., 1997, *Of grammatology: Corrected edition*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.
- Descartes, R., 2003, *Discourse on method and meditations*, Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola, NY.
- Desmond, W. 2020. *The voiding of being: The doing and undoing of metaphysics in modernity*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC.
- Devon, D., 2014, *The future of faith, the Subaltern Scientia: Lonergan and Aquinas*, in M. Ott (ed.), *The dialectics of the religious and the secular: Studies on the future of religion*, pp. 173–183, Brill, Leiden.
- Diogenes Laërtius, 1915, *The lives and opinions of eminent philosophers*, G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., London.
- Dube, S. & Banerjee-Dube, I., 2019, 'Coloniality, modernity, decoloniality: A new introduction to the second edition', in S. Dube & I. Banerjee-Dube (eds.), *Unbecoming modern: Colonialism, modernity, colonial modernities*, 2nd edn., pp. ix–xxiii, Routledge, London.
- Dupré, L., 1993, 'Postmodernity or late modernity? Ambiguities in Richard Rorty's thought', *The Review of Metaphysics* 47(2), 277–295.
- European Union, 2020, *European Constitution*, viewed 31 January 2024, from <https://europeanconstitution.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/European-Constitution-Full-Text.pdf>.
- Feyerabend, P.K., 1977, 'Rationalism, relativism and scientific method', *Philosophy in Context* 6, 7–19. <https://doi.org/10.5840/philcontext197769>
- Gallagher, S., Reinerman-Jones, L., Janz, B., Bockelman, P. & Trempler, J., 2015, *A neurophenomenology of wonder and awe: Towards a non-reductionist cognitive science*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Gez, Y., Beider, N. & Dickow, H., 2022, 'African and not religious: The state of research on sub-Saharan religious nones and new scholarly horizons', *Africa Spectrum* 57(1), 50–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00020397211052567>
- Griffioen, A.L. 2016. 'Religious experience without belief? Toward an imaginative account of religious engagement', in T. Hardtke, U. Schmiedel & T. Tan (eds.), *Religious experience revisited: Expressing the inexpressible*, pp. 73–88, Brill, Leiden.
- Grote, J., 1865, *Exploratio philosophica: Rough notes on modern intellectual science*, Deighton, Bell, and Co., Cambridge.
- Habermas, J., 2006, 'Pre-political foundations of the democratic constitutional state?', in *The dialectics of secularization: On science and religion*, pp. 19–52, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA.
- Hanink, J., 2013, 'In defense of the intuition of being', in N. Zunic (ed.), *Distinctions of being: Philosophical approaches to reality*, pp. 167–179, American Maritain Association, Washington, DC.
- Herrnstein Smith, J., 2007, 'Relativism, today and yesterday', *Common Knowledge* 13(2–3), 227–249. <https://doi.org/10.1215/0961754X-2007-006>
- Hume, D., 2008, *Enquiry concerning human understanding*, viewed 21 July 2023, from <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hume1748.pdf>.
- Ikhane, P., 2023, 'African epistemology: Knowledge ontologised', in P. Ikhane & I. Ukpokolo (eds.), *African epistemology: Essays on being and knowledge*, pp. 19–33, Routledge, London.
- Jankunas, G., 2011, *The dictatorship of relativism: Pope Benedict XVI's response*, St Pauls, New York, NY.
- Jenkins, J., 1997, *Knowledge and faith in Thomas Aquinas*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Jimoh, A., 2023, 'Knowledge and truth as interaction between the knower and being: Knowing in African Epistemology', in P. Ikhane & I. Ukpokolo (eds.), *African epistemology: Essays on being and knowledge*, pp. 35–47, Routledge, London.
- John Paul II, Pope, 1992, *Speech delivered at the concluding summary presented by the Papal Commission*, viewed 28 February 2025, from <https://inters.org/John-Paul-II-conclusion-galileo-affair>.
- John Paul II, Pope, 1998, *Encyclical letter: Fides et Ratio of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the relationship between faith and reason (September 14, 1998)*, viewed 01 February 2023, from https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html.
- Johnson, G., 1997, *The selected works of George Douglas Johnson*, G.K. Hall, London.
- Johnson, P. & Duberley, J., 2011, *Postmodernist epistemology – Relativism unleashed?*, Sage, London.
- Kang, S.-P., 2013, 'Understanding the dispute between science and metaphysics', in S. Baumgartner, T. Heisenberg & S. Krebs (eds.), *Metaphysics or modernity? Contributions to the Bamberg Summer School 2012*, pp. 205–216, University of Bamberg Press, Bamberg.
- Kant, I., [1783] 2017, *Prolegomena [= Preliminaries] to any future metaphysics that can present itself as a science*, viewed 21 July 2023, from <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/kant1783.pdf>.
- Kant, I., [1784] 2004, 'Was ist Aufklärung?', *UTOPIE kreativ* H 159(S), 5–10.

- Kant, I. & Wood, A., [1784] 1996, 'An answer to the question: What is enlightenment?', in M. Gregory (ed.), *Practical philosophy: The Cambridge edition of the works of Immanuel Kant*, pp. 11–22, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Kirk, G. & Raven, J., 1957, *The presocratic philosophers: A critical history with a selection of texts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Knasas, J., 2019, 'The role of sense realism in the initiation of thomistic metaphysics', in C. Cullen & F. Harkins (eds.), *The discovery of being and Thomas Aquinas: Philosophical and theological perspectives*, pp. 61–83, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC.
- Laghi, P., 1997, *The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium (December 28, 1997)*, viewed 21 July 2023, from https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html.
- Lajul, W., 2023, 'Being as the object of knowledge in African spaces', in P. Khane & I. Ukpokolo (eds.), *African epistemology: Essays on being and knowledge*, pp. 79–90, Routledge, London.
- Latré, S. & Vanheeswijck, G., 2015, 'Secularization: History of the concept', in J.D. Wright (ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences*, 2nd edn., pp. 388–394, Elsevier, viewed 03 March 2025, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780080970868031135>.
- Levinas, E., 1979. *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority*, A. Lingis (transl.), Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, The Hague.
- Lytard, J.-F., 1993, *The postmodern explained: Correspondence, 1982–1985*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- Maldonado-Torres, N., 2007, 'On the coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of a concept', *Cultural Studies* 21(2–3), 240–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548>
- Maritain, J., 1953, *The philosophy of nature*, Philosophical Library, New York, NY.
- Maslow, A., 1971, *The farther reaches of human nature*, The Viking Press, New York, NY.
- Mbiti, J., 1969, *African religions and philosophy*, Heinemann, London.
- Mignolo, W. & Walsh, C., 2018, *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*, Duke University Press, Durham.
- Nichols, A., 2007, *The theology of Pope Benedict XVI: New edition. An introduction to the theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, Burns and Oates, London.
- Paas, S., 2019, 'Notoriously religious' or secularising? Revival and secularisation in sub-Saharan Africa', *Exchange* 48, 26–50. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1572543X-12341508>
- Paul VI, Pope, 1965, *Declaration on religious freedom: Dignitatis humanae: On the right of the person and of communities to social and civil freedom in matters religious (1965, December 7)*, viewed 21 July 2023, from https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html.
- Paulson, S., Gleiser, M., Lambrozo, T. & Francis, G., 2020, 'The enigma of life: Confronting marvels at the edge of science', *Annals of the New York Academy of Science* 1501(1), 48–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14409>
- Peirce, C.S., 1931. *Elements of logic, Book 2: Speculative grammar*, Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Pew Research Center, 2018, *The age gap in religion around the world: By several measures, young adults tend to be less religious than their elders; the opposite is rarely true*, viewed 22 March 2023, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2018/06/ReligiousCommitment-FULL-WEB.pdf>.
- Plantinga, A., 1984, 'Advice to Christian philosophers', *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 1(3), 253–271. <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil19841317>
- Plato, 360 BCE, *Theaetetus*, viewed 28 March 2023, from <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/theatu.html>.
- Prosman, H.-J., 2011, *The postmodern condition and the meaning of secularity: A study on the religious dynamics of postmodernity*, Ars Disputandi, Utrecht.
- Ratzinger, J.A., [1986] 1990, *'In the Beginning...': A Catholic Understanding of the story of creation and the fall*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Ratzinger, J.A., [1991] 2010, *A turning point for Europe? The church in the modern world: Assessment and forecast*, 2nd edn., Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA.
- Ratzinger, J.A., 1997, *Salt of the earth: Christianity and the catholic church at the end of the millenium. An interview with Peter Seewald*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA.
- Ratzinger, J.A., 2002, *God and the world: Believing and living in our time. A conversation with Peter Seewald*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA.
- Ratzinger, J.A., 2005a, 'Europe in the crisis of cultures', *Communio: International Catholic Review* 32(2), 345–356.
- Ratzinger, J.A., 2005b, *Mass 'Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice': Homily of HIS EMINENCE CARD. Joseph Ratzinger, Dean of the College of Cardinals (April 18, 2005)*, viewed 21 July 2023, from https://www.vatican.va/gpll/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html.
- Ratzinger, J.A. & Messori, V., 1985, *The Ratzinger report: An exclusive interview on the state of the church*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA.
- Reijs, V., n.d., *Does the cosmos still have meaning in a disenchanted world*, viewed 15 February 2023, from https://www.academia.edu/33626651/Does_the_Cosmos_still_have_meaning_in_a_Disenchanted_World.
- Ricœur, P., 2024, 'Discourse, metaphysics, and hermeneutics of the self', *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies* 15(2), 193–206. <https://doi.org/10.5195/errs.2024.679>
- Rorty, R., 1991, *Essays on Heidegger and others. Philosophical papers, Vol. 2*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Saler, M., 2006, 'Modernity and enchantment: A historiographic review', *American Historical Review* 111(3), 692–716. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.111.3.692>
- Schäfer, C., 2013, *Modernity, metaphysics, and the re-invention of philosophy – A short historical introduction*, University of Bamberg Press, Bamberg.
- Schindler, D., 2022, 'The problem of the problem of scientism: On expanding the scope of scientific inquiry', in P. Harrison & J. Milbank (eds.), *After science and religion: Fresh perspectives from philosophy and theology*, pp. 232–256, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Screpanti, E., 1994, 'Epistemic relativism, the post-modern turn in philosophy, and the history of economic thought', *History of Economic Ideas* 2(2), 173–205.
- Semrush, 2025, *google.com January 2025 Traffic Stats*, viewed 04 March 2025, from <https://www.semrush.com/website/google.com/overview/>.
- Shang, N., 2017, 'The reality of secularism in Africa and its effects on some African cultural values', in M. Tosam & P. Takov (eds.), *Philosophy in culture: A cross-cultural perspective*, pp. 165–190, Langaa Research Publishing CIG, Bamenda.
- Shiota, M., 2021, 'Awe, wonder, and the human mind', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1501(1), 85–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14588>
- Silva, G., 2019, 'Comparative philosophy and decolonial struggle: The epistemic injustice of colonization and liberation of human reason', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 57(Spindel Supplement), 107–134. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12341>
- Smith, J., 2008, 'Secularity, globalization, and the re-enchantment of the world', in J. Smith (ed.), *After modernity? Secularity, globalization, and the re-enchantment of the world*, pp. 3–13, Baylor University Press, Waco.
- Steinbock, A., 2007, *Phenomenology and mysticism: The verticality of religious experience*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- St. Hilare, R., 1995, 'Aquinas, enchantment, and the wonders of nature', *Logos* 18(1), 113–131. <https://doi.org/10.1353/log.2015.0009>
- Susen, S., 2015, *The postmodern turn in the social sciences*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Sweeney, E., 1986, *Aquinas' notion of science: Its 12th century roots and Aristotelian transformation*, s.n., Austin.
- Taylor, C., 2007, *A secular age*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Ward, W., 1867, 'Science, prayer, free will and miracles', *Dublin Review* VIII(XVI), 255–298.
- Warner, M., VanAntwerpen, J. & Calhoun, C., 2010, *Varieties of secularism in a secular age*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Webb, M., 2022, 'Religious experience', in E.N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (eds.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy (Fall 2022 Edition)*, viewed 03 March 2025, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=religious-experience>.
- Weber, M., 1989, 'Science as a vocation', in P. Lassman & I. Velody (eds.), *Max Weber's 'Science as a vocation'*, pp. 3–31, Unwin Hyman, London.