

# A Crash-course on the “field of knowledge” issue through history (**Unified** vs. **Split**)

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## ***Immanent Things***

knowledge we can study  
study or observe

## ***Transcendent Things***

knowledge we can't study or  
observe

The historic Christian understanding of knowledge is that God has revealed knowledge in both realms: **Immanent** (observable things like nature) and **Transcendent** (abstract things like God, philosophy, justice, logic, etc.). Because God has revealed Himself (through Creation, Scripture, direct human contact, and Incarnation) we can truly “know” things in either realm, and our field of knowledge is unified. For example, the facts of photosynthesis are no different than the facts of the Exodus or of the Trinity.

Unified  
Field of  
Knowledge

## ***Immanent Things***

knowledge we can study  
study or observe

## ***Transcendent Things***

knowledge we can't study or  
observe

If the historic understanding of truth (where knowledge is given and accessible in both realms) is abandoned and/or God is removed, we are left with a “split field of knowledge.” We will always emphasize one realm at the expense of the other, since we will see one side as rational/accessible and the other as irrational/inaccessible. Throughout history, this pendulum has shifted from one side to the other.

Split Field of  
Knowledge

## ***Immanent Things***

knowledge we can study  
study or observe

## ***Transcendent Things***

knowledge we can't study or  
observe

At some points in history, humanity has been more certain of **Transcendent** knowledge (like knowledge of God, philosophy, the soul, beauty, justice, etc.) than **Immanent** knowledge (like knowledge of nature and the scientific method). For example, parts of the Middle Ages, where the supernatural world was thought to motivate everything in the physical world, and some postmodern philosophies, where all physical reality is “inaccessible”, fall into this category.

Pendulum to  
the right

## ***Immanent Things***

knowledge we can study  
study or observe

## ***Transcendent Things***

knowledge we can't study or  
observe

At other points in history, the safe haven for knowledge has reversed, where humanity has been more certain of **Immanent** knowledge (like knowledge of nature and the scientific method) than **Transcendent** knowledge (like knowledge of God, philosophy, the soul, beauty, justice, etc.). For example, the Enlightenment (18<sup>th</sup> century) saw a rise in scientific knowledge and a decline in interest for the supernatural. Under this version of a “split field of knowledge,” God is dismissed for lack of evidence, along with real discussions of creationism, objective ethics, etc. Answers are sought and found only in the physical realm.

Pendulum to  
the left