

EXCERPT

IVP Academic

Political Visions & Illusions

A Survey & Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies
Second edition

May 7, 2019 | \$33, 330 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5242-0

In this freshly updated, comprehensive study, political scientist David Koyzis surveys the key political ideologies of our era, unpacking the worldview issues inherent to each and pointing out essential strengths and weaknesses. Writing with broad international perspective, Koyzis is a sensible guide for Christians working in the public square, those who are culture watchers, and all students of modern political thought.

A Fresh Perspective on *Political Visions & Illusions*

Because the first edition of this book was published in 2003, shortly after the start of a new century and millennium, it naturally reflected developments in the closing decades of the last century, especially the collapse of communism and what then appeared to be a dramatic spread of democratic forms of government. As I was putting the finishing touches on the manuscript, the events of September 11, 2001, introduced what many belatedly saw as a “new” reality into the international arena—namely, radical jihadism, from the Arabic word for “holy war,” which supplanted the more inclusive postwar Arab nationalism and socialism as the “latest thing.” Moreover, since the turn of the century we have experienced a further evolution in the ongoing liberal project that has rendered it markedly less hospitable than in the past to the claims of traditional revealed religion. This has necessitated a reworking of especially chapter two, but the recent convergence between late liberalism and what has been labeled “cultural Marxism” has also made it necessary to touch on this in chapter six. What is remarkable about this development is that, as the Western world continues along the path of secularization, a phenomenon thoroughly explored in Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, the remainder of the world seems to be caught up in a religious revival. Christianity in particular is making inroads into sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Asia, as chronicled in Philip Jenkins’s books, beginning with *The Next Christendom*. The evidence indicates that much of what has come under the label of modernity has failed to still the restless heart seeking fulfillment in something or someone beyond itself.

A new edition is warranted not only by the need for a general update of the material but also by developments in my own thinking since 2003. Following the first edition’s publication, I began to become aware that each of the ideologies I had explored was not a static set of principles but told a story that mirrors and imitates in some fashion the biblical redemptive narrative. Each of these stories has a counterpart to creation, fall into sin, redemption, and consummation, along with the expectation that someone or some group will play the part of messiah, ushering in the happy ending to the tale. As Taylor puts it, “the narrative is not an optional extra,” meaning that stories are integral to our understanding both of ourselves and of the larger world. Consequently, in this new edition I have brought into the foreground something that was already present in the first but not overtly discussed—namely, the narrative structure of the ideologies. Along with this new emphasis, I have added several diagrams to illustrate this structure.

Somewhat to my surprise—albeit a pleasant one—the first edition has been used profitably in theological seminaries throughout North America and possibly elsewhere. My target audience was the larger body of Christ insofar as its members are citizens caught up in the ordinary drama of life, including politics. This covers ministers in training, of course. However, recognizing that I had not overtly addressed the situation of pastors in the church, I decided, with the encouragement of a few of my readers, to include something more immediately relevant to those whose principal calling is to responsibility within the institutional church. Thus I have appended a “Concluding Ecclesiological Postscript,” which, while not pretending to settle the issue definitively, nevertheless offers broad guidelines and three historical examples for how the institutional church—as distinct from the larger body of Christ—might legitimately address political matters.

—Taken from the preface

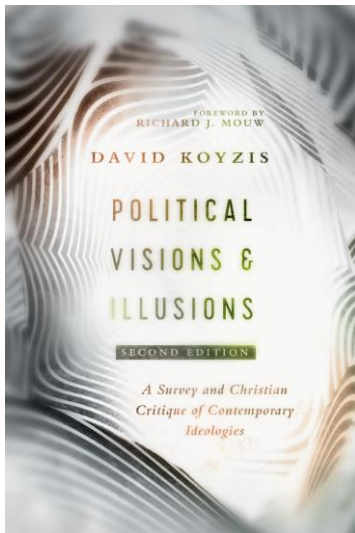


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David T. Koyzis holds a PhD in government and international studies from the University of Notre Dame. He taught undergraduate political science for thirty years.

How Politics Has Changed in Sixteen Years

“This second edition of David’s great book is a gem. The brighter light he now shines on his assessment of modern ideologies comes from an in-depth assessment of the story each tells and the idolatry exhibited in each one. This also pushes Christians to examine the extent to which we may be compromising our dedication to God by bowing (even unconsciously) to other gods for political guidance. In this day of heightening nationalism, racism, terrorism, and sheer ignorance, the message of this book could not be more urgent or important. Read and discuss it carefully even if it takes weeks to do so. The multiple forces at work in our homelands and around the world will not be thwarted or redirected by one election or one major event. Christian love of God and neighbor demands responsible civic service and that requires the kind of understanding provided by *Political Visions and Illusions*.”

—**James W. Skillen, president (now retired) of the Center for Public Justice**

“Politics involves the acquisition and use of power. It always has a moral dimension, always offers a chance to do good, and always carries the risk of idolatry. Updating his original work in this second edition, Koyzis has written a superb overview of modern politics, ideologies and the state, and their intersection with Christian faith. Rich in scholarship, perceptive and engaging in its analysis, and ‘merely Christian’ in its importance for all followers of Jesus Christ regardless of their tradition, it’s an indispensable resource.”

—**Charles J. Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia**

“David Koyzis introduces readers to the range of political theories that have emerged and competed for dominance since classical times. He carefully and respectfully separates wheat from chaff in each of them in terms of a Christian worldview, and in a style that is clear, irenic, and persuasive. The second edition helpfully updates the first in terms of major political events of the past two decades. In an increasingly polarized world, this kind of book is essential reading for concerned citizens of all political and religious leanings.”

—**Mary S. Van Leeuwen, professor emerita of psychology and philosophy, Eastern University**

“*Political Visions and Illusions* is an absolutely indispensable text written by the most significant evangelical political theorist of our day. In it, Koyzis skillfully unmasks the idolatry in modern political ideologies before offering a compelling nonideological vision for politics and public life. Its relevance extends beyond political science to the disciplines of public theology, ethics, and philosophy—highly recommended.”

—**Bruce Riley Ashford, provost/dean of the faculty, professor of theology and culture, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary**

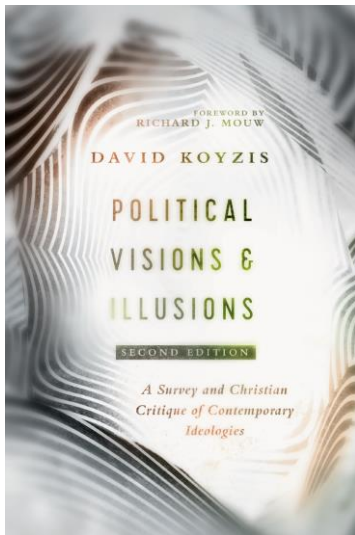


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"Few could have anticipated the major political upheavals witnessed since this book first came out in 2003. Yet Koyzis's book has stood the test of time, ranking, in my opinion, as the best introduction to modern political thought from a Christian perspective. This updated edition is welcome in its inclusion both of newer literature and fresh examples to recent political developments. As a politically engaged theologian, I'm especially thrilled to see the addition of the 'Concluding Ecclesiological Postscript' that could very well serve as kind of theo-political compass for church leaders wanting navigational guidance on how churches should—and should not—engage in political action."

—David Guretzki, executive vice president and resident theologian, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

"Koyzis offers an accessible, compelling, and deeply researched introduction to the major political ideologies at work in the world today. Throughout the book Koyzis serves the reader as a faithful and thoughtful Christian guide through the many competing political voices active in the public square. I've been assigning *Political Visions and Illusions* in my courses on faith and politics for years now, and I'm so grateful for a new and updated edition. It is a true gift."

—Matthew Kaemingk, assistant professor of Christian ethics, associate dean, Fuller Theological Seminary, Texas

"The first edition of this excellent book showed in lively and erudite prose how biblical insights into idolatry illuminate our political life. This expanded edition increases its scope and delineates the newer challenges we face. It is indispensable reading."

—Paul Marshall, Jerry and Susie Wilson Professor of Religious Freedom, Baylor University

"Although the first edition of *Political Visions and Illusions* has already been praised in Brazil as an invaluable tool of Christian political formation, from young students and clergy to federal prosecutors and career politicians, the new edition confirms itself as a classic. The author deepens the conversation of ideology and idolatry, recovering the central role of narrative for ideology. He greatly enhances his explanation and extracts the equivalents of the biblical creation/fall/redemption/consummation narrative ingrained within the core stories of liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, democratism, and socialism. Dr. Koyzis also updates his approach by engaging novel critiques of those ideologies, such as Patrick Deneen's on liberalism; listening to relevant Christian political thinkers, such as David L. Schindler; and introducing new insights of his own, such as his theory of authority. The new edition of *Political Visions and Illusions* carries the promise to be an even greater blessing for the Christian political mind. I hope we will have it in Portuguese soon."

—Guilherme de Carvalho, L'Abri Fellowship Brazil



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