THE BATTLE FOR THE 20TH CENTURY MIND

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Reading List
Introduction

2002. What a time to chronicle the philosophical struggles of the twentieth century! What tragic heroes our popes and saints have been, valiantly striving to hold the walls of a fortress of faith amidst a sea of blood from wars, revolutions, and abortions. And so they strove that even a remnant of the faithful might survive to lead the renewal of the faith! So dramatic was the battle for the mind of mankind between the dates of 1900-1999 that one might label those years “the age of ideologies.”

It seems to me, one whose life has so far spanned 1937-2002, that there were eleven major themes of philosophical battle characteristic of 20th century thought. The issues are outlined on the contents’ page that follows. As you scan the list of themes and thinkers, you might come up with this question: “Why should a Christian read the erroneous and often evil ideas of some of the leaders represented in The Battle for the 20th Century Mind?” Why steep oneself in the reflections of people like Hitler or Mao?

In reply, let me share an insight that sustained my courage while wading through such writings. For each proponent of a false ideology, it appears that the Holy Spirit raised up one or more champions of true philosophy. And these truths in are powerful enough to provide a permanent antidote to false thinking. Read on and see for yourself!
(This page is not part of the text, but is what I, Dr. Ronda, uses in classes, to give the students a sense of the overall span of 20th Century philosophy.)

Main 20th Century Philosophical Schools

Pragmatism: James, Dewey

Phenomenology: Husserl, Scheler, Von Hildebrand, Stein, Wojtyla

Logical Positivism and Linguistic Analysis: Wittgenstein, Ayer, Russell

Marxism: Marx, Engels

Existentialism: Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Marcel, Buber, Camus, Sartre

Neo-Thomism: Maritain, Gilson, Lonergan, Wojtyla, Philippe

Structuralism: Derrida, Foucault
Theme 1

Religion of Experience vs. Religion of Doctrine

James vs. Chesterton

Introduction

Our first theme concerns a change of emphasis at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in the West. Previously most believers thought of the doctrine of their faith as primary in religion. Due to the currents we will be examining in this chapter, there was a shift in the twentieth century to thinking of religion more in terms of individual experience.

Before going into concepts on either side of this controversy, it will be well to remind ourselves of the mood of flamboyant optimism that characterized the turn of the century. People were amazed at advances in medicine, helpful inventions such as railroads, automobiles, gramophones, telegraph, and telephones. Against the backdrop of evolutionary theories about biological process, such inventions led to a belief in almost inevitable progress for mankind. It was not
until the horrors of the first World War hit Europe that this mood of hope would begin to give way to fear and horror.

For some the sense of progress was linked to abandonment of seemingly gloomy religious dogmas of traditional Christian churches such as original sin, predestination, the desperate need for salvation and, especially, the doctrine of hell. Many American thinkers of the nineteenth century, especially the Transcendentalists were keen on inviting their followers to a more joyful spirituality based on feeling the presence of God in the beauty of nature. Delight in God was to supplant fear of him. William James, one of our key thinkers about the theme of experience vs. doctrine in religion, inherited some of his presuppositions from the Transcendentalists.

By contrast, other thinkers of the nineteenth century were recapturing the emphasis on doctrine of the past, precisely past as an antidote to religious liberalism. In the view of leaders such as John Henry Cardinal Newman, true joy and hope in God could only come from a response to the God whose revelations were enshrined in dogma. Reliance on subjective feelings about God detached from objective truth could only destroy the grounds for faith. G.K. Chesterton, one of the key thinkers whose ideas we will be exploring in this chapter, was keen on reliance on experience with an objective doctrinal analysis of religion. A clear definition of what subjectivity and objectivity means in general, may help you to begin your evaluation of the ideas of those fighting in this arena of the battlefield during the twentieth century. The word “subjectivity” is sometimes used in a good way to contrast an individual with a general perspective. For example, a general statement would be that: “Most people in the United States favor freedom over coercion.” A more subjective matter would be the reasons why you, as an individual, happen to have a special love of freedom such that dying for it would seem axiomatic to you.

The word “subjectivism,” in its philosophical meaning is more pointed. Subjectivism is the theory that all we can know about reality is our subjective experience of it. According to subjectivism there is no way we can make valid statements about reality in general. No one could make the claim, for example, that freedom is always to be chosen above obedience to authority. The only statement that could be advanced in favor of freedom would be a subjective one such as: “When someone has his foot on my neck, I know I’d rather be free!”

What does the word “objectivity” mean? In a general way it refers to a correct assessment of the nature of the real world “out there” vs. the subjective erroneous views of an individual about that same reality. The claim that: “You view the world with rose colored glasses because you are afraid to look at how it really is objectively,” is an example of a contrast an objectivist would make. Objectivism would be the theory that what can be shown to be real in the external world around us is more valid than any subjective impressions of an individual.

What do subjectivity and objectivity mean in the context of experience and doctrine in religion? Subjectivity refers to the interior experience of the divine within the individual person; objectivity refers to what comes to us from the “other side,” thoughts, or acts of divine beings
believed to have impact upon us as subjects. Before dealing with the thought of opposing thinkers on this matter, I want to make this battle more vivid to you by the consideration of some common experiences.

You are spending some time alone at the beach when suddenly the ocean impresses you as so beautiful that you shout out praise of the God who created the sea. You are so glad to be alive to enjoy the sublime sight of the ocean that your doubts about God disappear.

Compare such an experience with the usual manner in which some Catholics might recite the Creed at the appointed time between the homily and the offertory! Even if you don’t agree with them, Can you understand why some philosophers might think that doctrinal statements, such as those in the Creed, are not as important as the personal experience of individuals?

On the other hand, consider the conversion of a materialistic atheist. After reading the New Testament for the first time, he or she becomes convinced that Jesus was truly resurrected from the dead and is able also to open the gates of heaven to his followers. Attending a Mass one Sunday with a friend, our new believer might speak forth the Creed for the first time with trembling lips: “I believe in Jesus Christ, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father...who was crucified...for us men and for our salvation....” How much more real to him or her is this Jesus of the Creed than any glowing sentiments of the past he or she might have experienced before conversion in the presence of natural beauty!

Do we have to choose between experience and doctrine in religion? Why did so many 20th century thinkers believe that such a choice was necessary? As you read the words of our contenders - subjectivist vs. objectivist - see whether you want to choose sides or form a synthesis of the best in each writer’s philosophy.
William James (1842-1910)

The first thinker we will consider on the theme of experience vs. doctrine in philosophy of religion is William James. The subjectivism of William James was to have a remarkably powerful influence on the rest of the 20th century.

A bit about the life of William James. William came from one of the most famous families of intellectuals in American history. Henry James, Sr. was a notable religious leader. Henry James, the brother of William, became one of the foremost literary figures of the English language. William was one of the founding fathers of pragmatism, a philosophy emphasizing experience as the test of all ideas.

Henry James Sr., the father of William and Henry, was greatly influenced in his convictions by the Swedish Christian mystic, Swedenborg (1688-1772). The writings of Swedenborg swept England and the United States during the nineteenth century. From Swedenborg, William’s father took the conviction that God is not over against man as someone to bargain with or beg from. Instead, according to Henry, Sr., God wants us to open ourselves to His love and then share that love with all mankind.

William James, our philosopher, graduated from Harvard University with a degree in medicine. During his long life he taught anatomy, studied art, and then branched out to psychology, philosophy and religious studies. It is important to know that as a young adult William James suffered greatly from suicidal depression. A conversion experience, marriage and fatherhood liberated him eventually from these agonies. William James was a leading light as a Harvard professor of psychology and philosophy. Toward the end of his life he was influential in promoting the professional study of psychic phenomena.

In the study of James’ philosophy of religion, it is good to start with an essay called “The Will to Believe.”(1) In almost every anthology of American philosophy you will find this article. James directed it against the idea that the truths of science precluded belief in a personal, loving God. Since James had been saved from severe melancholia by his conversion, he was eager to defend religious belief. In the essay “The Will to Believe” he showed that far from being an ignorant, superstitious idea, religious belief could be justified on the basis of evidence. Whereas atheistic scientists pride
themselves on their open-mindedness, James retorted that it is those who rule out believe in God who are not being open-minded.

Here is the gist of James’ argument in the essay, “The Will to Believe”:

Of the many questions a person might occupy his or her mind with resolving, one should first consider these polarities:

“live vs. dead issues
momentous vs. trivial options
forced vs. open choices”(2)

To use an example from James, a dead issue is probably one such as “How do I know there isn’t an elf in the room?” It is a dead issue because nobody much worries about such a thing these days. Whereas in the pagan era people thought they saw elves, it is rare that any but the Irish still think so.

A trivial option, I would offer is whether to choose Coke or Pepsi. It just doesn’t matter much. Deciding whether or not to have an abortion, however, will make one think of as trivial.

An open choice might be whether to use one long distance telephone service or another since you can go back and forth a long time on such a matter. This contrasts with a forced choice such as whether or not to take a pain-killer right now with strong side-effects.

What about the issue of whether there is a God or not? This is not a dead issue but a live one, since everyone has to face it eventually. It is momentous, not trivial, because right now it is claimed that belief in God will change your life for the better. And it is forced rather than open because to sit on the fence is really to choose against God. (3)

Why did James think that you can’t sit on the fence about God? The agnostic, who thinks that we can’t know if God exists or not, thinks he or she can sit on the fence forever. James compares this stance with that of a man who would hesitate all his life to marry the woman he loves in case he would later be disappointed. He should realize that his option is live, momentous and forced because failing to decide is really deciding not to marry her. In the same way, failing to decide if you believe in God or not is really deciding for not believing since you will act much like an unbeliever in your daily life.

In “The Will to Believe,” James further argued that in the case of a live, momentous and forced option which cannot be decided by reason alone:

“The open-minded person should not think that it is better to be a sceptic for life. The sceptic likes to make it seem as if he or she is being intellectually honest, whereas the believer is making an
illegitimate leap,”(4) but this scepticism is not really a matter of intellect but more about will and emotion. The sceptic thinks that it is ridiculous to be duped by hope and then find out one day there is no God. But, James argues, it is just as bad to be duped by fear of being ridiculous into not believing in God if there is a God.

(This command by the sceptic) “that we shall put a stopper to our heart, instincts, and courage and wait - acting of course meanwhile more or less as if religion were not true - till doomsday, or till such time as our intellect and senses working together may have raked in evidence enough....is a sort of idol.”(5) The idol would be of being a pure dispassionate mind instead of your real self which is passionately needy.

James further pointed out that scientists themselves have to reach out with insufficient evidence in order to test a hypothesis. If they could never act when there was some adverse evidence, there could be no science at all.

The reasoning in James’ essay “The Will to Believe” opened the door to considering that in matters which didn’t seem to yield a clear objective answer, it was valid to go with the will and the emotions.

The main text of James concerning subjectivity in religious belief is The Varieties of Religious Experience: The Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Edinburgh 1901-1902(6) In the introduction to Varieties...Joseph Ratner - a Jamesian philosopher, says that the key to the book is the idea that individual experience alone has value in religion. The objective question as to whether God actually exists, James thought could only come from the analysis of lived experience, not from the doctrines of the religions. Experience, James thought, establishes a presumption in favor of the reality of the divine. Reason does not exactly prove that the divine is real in the way people would like it to.

The mentality of William James concerning religion is popular even today at the beginning of the twenty first century. For this reason I will present here some quotations from Varieties of Religious Experience so that you can see for yourself the persuasiveness of his view and also its limitations.

James insisted that he was only interested in personal religion not in institutional religion; only in what people report of their personal experiences of the divine, especially how religion overcomes unhappiness.

“Religion, therefore, as I now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.” (7)

Note how subjective is James’ way of defining religion. The fact that the majority of mankind has always joined in communal religious practices does not count for James since he, himself, preferred a solitary way of connecting with the divine. He thought that the belief that there are
unseen realities comes not from what is learned in church, but rather from a sense of presence of something other than the human. This explanation, though true in part, by-passes revelation and religious traditions based on such alleged revelation. For instance, most Catholics would say that they were taught to believe in invisible divine realities such as God, Jesus, Mary, angels, the saints. True, some can remember distinct moments of sensing the presence of these beings around them but certainly not all believers base their conviction on striking mystical experiences.

Just the same, one of the reasons for the acceptance of the experiential approach is the inspiration that comes with hearing accounts of extraordinary conversion experiences of others. Here is one of James’ illustrations of the power of such moments of personal revelation:

“I remember the night, and almost the very spot on the hilltop, where my soul opened out, as it were, into the Infinite, and there was a rushing together of the two worlds, the inner and the outer...I stood alone with Him who had made me, and all the beauty of the world, and love, and sorrow, and... I did not seek Him, but felt the perfect unison of my spirit with His...for the moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exaltation remained...My highest faith in God and truest idea of him were then born in me.” (8)

The Varieties of Religious Experience is full of insightful chapters concerning religious experience. One that I find helpful is a contrast he made between what he called the religion of healthy-mindedness and that of “the sick soul.” What he called the religion on healthy-mindedness comes from gratitude for the gifts of life. (9) It is characteristic of people who not only usually feel enthusiasm, freedom and happiness but who

“when unhappiness is offered or proposed to them, positively refuse to feel it, as if it were something mean and wrong. We find such persons in every age, passionately flinging themselves upon their sense of the goodness of life, in spite of the hardships of their own condition...from the outset their religion is one of union with the divine...their souls are in affinity rather with flowers and birds and all enchanting innocences than with dark human passion, who can think no ill of man or God, and in whom religious gladness, being in possession from the outset, needs no deliverance from any antecedent burden.”

On the contrary, sickness of soul, James believed, comes from reflection on the insecurity of natural goods, failure, pessimism, hopelessness. Sick souls are greatly in touch with the problem of evil and are often melancholy. Sick souls have a great need for supernatural comfort. (10)

“There are others for whom evil is no mere relation of the subject to particular outer things, but something more radical and general, a wrongness or vice in his essential nature, ...which requires a supernatural remedy. .. There are men who seem to have started in life with a bottle or two of champagne inscribed to their credit; whilst others seem to have been born close to the pain-threshold, which the slightest irritants fatally send them over.”
Those with sick souls are much prone to depression and despair. For such people changes in their natural condition do not suffice to bring about happiness. Often the self is divided as was Augustine before his conversion. Some conversions are sudden but others are slow. The value of conversion depends not on the process but on the fruits. Intellectual beliefs become full of power after conversion experiences. The world appears new. Here is a description of a man who had become a total alcoholic and finally a homeless person:

“As I sat there thinking, I seemed to feel some great and mighty presence. I did not know then what it was. I did learn afterwards that it was Jesus, the sinner’s friend...He said ‘Pray.’ I did pray. (He went to the Mission and heard the witness stories of others saved from drink.) When the invitation was given, I knelt down with a crowd of drunkards...Oh, what a conflict was going on for my poor soul! A blessed whisper said, ‘Come; the devil said, ‘Be careful.’ I halted but a moment, and then, with a breaking heart, I said, ‘Dear Jesus, can you help me?’ Never with mortal tongue can I describe that moment. Although up to that moment my soul had been filled with indescribable gloom, I felt the glorious brightness of the noonday sun shine into my heart. I felt I was a free man. O, the precious feeling of safety, of freedom, of resting on Jesus ...From that moment till now I have never wanted a drink of whiskey, and I have never seen money enough to make me take one. I promised God that night that if he would take away my appetite for strong drink, I would work for him all my life. He has done his part, and I have been trying to do mine.” (11)

It seems to me much to the credit of William James, and very American, to be, as far as I know, the only philosopher, to publish such homey and heartfelt narratives. It shows a positive side of the subjective approach. By honoring religious experience, it enables the listener or reader to be kindled by another’s witness.

William James believed that it was a proof of how good an experiential approach was that you could then understand such phenomena as holiness as a proof that religion works. In his chapters on holiness, he offered the reader beautiful examples of permanent alteration of character through deepened religious experience. He described the sense of the reality of the higher power, peace of mind, charity, equanimity, fortitude, purity of life, asceticism, obedience, and the poverty of the saints in a remarkable way for a non-Catholic. Among many men and women from different religions whom he deemed to be saints, he included John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila.

In a memorable passage about the ascetical way, James pointed out that the Western world had become too soft.

“Some men and women, indeed, there are who can live on smiles and the word ‘yes’ forever. But for others (indeed for most), this is too tepid and relaxed a moral climate. Passive happiness is slack and insipid, and soon grows mawkish and intolerable. Some austerity and wintry negativity, some roughness, danger, stringency, and effort, some ‘no! no!’ must be mixed in, to produce the sense of an existence with character and texture and power.” (12)
Without religious asceticism or the military, people will invent new ways of experiencing challenge. I find it fascinating that people who don't have time for daily Mass use the very same time period for jogging or weight lifting.

To return to the question of holiness as a validation of religion, one could ask whether the value of saintliness can be judged without prior consideration of whether God really exists? It has to be, according to James. You have to start with the values you cherish and judge the saints accordingly. He lauds the saints for their:

“...steadfastness of soul with which no other can compare. In social relations his serviceability is exemplary; he abounds in impulses to help. His help is inward as well as outward...instead of placing happiness where common men place it, in comfort, he places it in a higher kind of inner excitement, which converts discomforts into sources of cheer and annuls unhappiness. So he turns his back upon no duty, however thankless; and when we are in need of assistance, we can count upon the saint lending his hand with more certainty than we can count upon any other. Finally, his humble-mindedness and his ascetic tendencies save him from the petty personal pretensions which so obstruct our ordinary social intercourse, and his purity gives us in him a clean man for a companion.”

Perhaps you have detected a paradox involved in James’ experiential approach. The saint believes that the accomplishment of heroic virtue comes directly from the grace of a real God. But James wants to say that whether there really is such a God outside of consciousness is not certain. Since being in contact with what one takes to be God has a luminous quality, is philosophically reasonable and morally helpful, James thinks everyone should hope that it is true. Apparently, if you were as unsure as James claims you ought to be about the object of adoring worship, you could not be the kind of person he thinks is the noblest.

What Catholics would call private revelations, according to James, have authority for the one who experiences them if not for sceptical observers. Mystical experience strengthens hope. Qualities of the mystical are ineffability, a sense of illumination, transiency, passivity. The great part is that they open us up to a consciousness different than the purely rational. It is experience which leads us to believe. We can never, according to James get to God through logical reason or metaphysical proofs.

About arguments from the philosophy of St. Thomas for God’s existence, James insisted that since the critique of Kant’s critique of such proofs was devastating. (14)

James:

“Causation is indeed too obscure a principle to bear the weight of the whole structure of theology. As for the argument from design, see how Darwinian ideas have revolutionized it.” We have just as much disorder as order in the universe - considering earthquakes, etc. (15)
Naturally given his subjectivism, James cannot accept the idea of one true faith, as willed by God. Concerning the plurality of religions, James writes not about truth but rather about such secondary matters as individual taste, the need for beauty, and the desire for companionship as the main reasons for religious institutions. He thought that even though Protestantism was more spiritually profound, the Catholic Church would win out because of its appeal to human nature with “all its sensory childlike aspects.”

In spite of James’ patronizing attitude to some Catholic practices, as a psychologist, James had a good word to say for confession.

“It is part of the general system of purgation and cleansing which one feels oneself in need of, in order to be in right relation to one’s deity. For him who confesses, shams are over and realities have begun; he has exteriorized his rottenness. If he has not actually got rid of it, he at least no longer smears it over with a hypocritical show of virtue -- he lives at least upon a basis of veracity...We English-speaking Protestants, in the general self-reliance and unsociability of our nature, seem to find it enough if we take God alone into our confidence.” (16)

In the final chapters of The Varieties of Religious Experience, James sums up his experiential subjectivist attitude: “Does God really exist? How does he exist? What is he? are so many irrelevant questions. Not God, but life, more life, a larger, richer, more satisfying life, is, in the last analysis, the end of religion. The love of life, at any and every level of development, is the religious impulse.” (17)

In what he calls his “over-belief” James says that he personally thinks there is a region outside the sensible. He even writes that we belong to this region more than to the seen region. Since we are changed by forces from that region:

“We have no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal...God is the natural appellation, for us Christians at least, for the supreme reality, so I will call this higher part of the universe by the name of God...the universe, at those parts of it which our personal being constitutes, takes a turn genuinely for the worse or for the better in proportion as each one of us fulfills or evades God’s demands...God is real since he produces real effects.” (18)

James admitted that most religious people went further than he did concerning belief. Such believers have a positive conviction about salvation in the sense of another realm where the good will be victorious. And in his over-belief James made his personal venture that such an eternal life does exist. He also believed that the supernatural can intervene in this world. He was open to immortality.

I would now like to offer you my critique of the experiential approach of William James.

In his philosophy of religion William James makes many fine points. This famous American philosopher had a beautiful reverence for the experience of others. He was truly open-minded in that way. In fact, the reading of his books has often been a bridge between atheism and belief in an objective doctrinal religion. When I was a college student at a secular university, The Variety of
Religious Experience was the only book I read that gave me hope that religious belief might be justified. In my subsequent conversion powerful religious experiences played a large role, to be followed by a more reasoned conversion to the objective doctrines of the Catholic faith.

Some aspects of James’ philosophy of religion will be indirectly countered when you read about the thought of G.K. Chesterton in the second half of this chapter. For now, here are some of the main errors and limitations intrinsic to his way of thinking.

It seems as if James failed to understand that a person cannot pray in a personal manner or be holy in the traditional way, except if he or she truly believes that God exists apart from the self and subjective experience. Most devout Jews, Moslems and Christians do not pray not to a vague divine energy, but to the same personal God who created us and the world. Isn’t it inconsistent to accept the description of someone’s experience, but deny that person a hearing for his or her dogmatic convictions?

Furthermore, there is a need for and objective metaphysical basis for religion. How can James hold that some religious experience is objectively good, and then deny a source for that goodness equally objective? To refute James’ objections to proofs for God’s existence as having no validity since Kant, would go beyond the scope of this chapter. More about this will be discussed in the next one about doubt and conviction. For now it is enough to state that Kant’s dismissal of the proofs on the basis of the denial of knowledge of causality involves basic contradictions.

Critics of James find his dismissal of revelation arbitrary in the extreme. How strange it is to find him delighting in Christian conversions of others yet never addressing why he cannot accept Christian doctrine himself.

To conclude this part of the chapter on the experiential vs. the doctrinal approach to religion, I would like to point out why the study of James’ philosophy is relevant for our times.

In the United States there is a tendency to downgrade doctrine and dogma in favor of just the kind of individualistic spirituality affirmed by William James. New Agers tend to base their spirituality on experience exclusive or reason or faith. Such an approach to religion is obviously attractive to many.

From the standpoint of evangelization, it is essential to show appreciation for the personal religious experience of a person one wishes to bring further. This can be followed by advancing the objective claims of the God of Revelation. The second part of this chapter will sharpen the contrast.

End Notes on William James:


2. See Ibid.
3. See Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.


7. Ibid., p. 31

8. Ibid., p. 66

9. Ibid., see p. 79ff.

10. Ibid., p. 134ff.

11. Ibid., p. 201

12. Ibid., p. 299

13. Ibid., p. 369-370

14. See Ibid., p. 433

15. See Ibid., p. 435, 437

16. Ibid., pp. 462-463

17. Ibid., pp. 506-507

18. Ibid., p. 516

**G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936)**

G. K. Chesterton was probably the most influential Catholic apologist - defender of the faith, for 20th Century English speaking peoples. (1) Chesterton was baptized in the Anglican Church of England. He earned his living primarily as a journalist and speaker. By 1914 Chesterton wanted to become a Catholic but waited until 1922, trying to bring his wife into the Church with him. Before his conversion Chesterton was a rebel and a sceptic. He disliked authority because he thought it necessary to think everything through by himself. Eventually he deserted subjectivism when he found that Christianity espoused the real truth about the meaning of life.

Always one to shock his opponents with unexpected answers to their sceptical questions, Chesterton reported that his motive for becoming a Catholic was to get rid of his sins. (2)

In 1908 Chesterton wrote the most famous of his books entitled *Orthodoxy*. (3) Chesterton’s forte was the presentation of eternal truths in a fresh way. As you will see, his writing was full of
surprise, paradox and metaphor. In the introductory chapter of *Orthodoxy* Chesterton said that many people would not like his book. About this sad prediction he quipped: “I have written the book, and nothing on earth would induce me to read it!”

The excerpts from Orthodoxy that follow are either exact quotations or paraphrases. They will demonstrate Chesterton’s transition from an individualistic mind-set to an objective approach to reality and to religion. Since Chesterton’s objectivism is so witty and humorous, his ideas may at first seem obscure. If you read them slowly, however, you will soon find yourself part of an exciting intellectual adventure.

“I have discovered of my truths not that they weren’t true but that they were not mine. When I fancied that I stood alone I was really in the ridiculous position of being backed by all Christendom. It may be, Heaven forgive me, that I did try to be original; but I only succeeded in working out a dim copy of Christian traditions.” (4)

To understand what Chesterton means about originality in the above passage a contemporary reader might consider films such as Star Wars or E.T. In many ways the “original” characters in these movies are weak renditions of God or the incarnate God-man, Jesus.

When Chesterton found Christianity to be the doctrinal truth about reality he realized that it was a misnomer to talk about “my philosophy.” “…I did not make it. God and humanity made it; and it made me.”(5)

One of the most intriguing concepts of Chesterton was that the modern belief in one’s own self, so characteristic of the experiential subjective approach, was not only foolish but crazy.

“Most people think that believing in oneself is what is most important. I think that only those in mental institutions completely believe in themselves, as in thinking they are sure they are Napoleon. Instead what is a sign of sanity is believing in what is outside the self: the objective world.

“Complete self-confidence is not merely a sin; complete self-confidence is a weakness.… Modern masters of science are much impressed with the need of beginning all inquiry with a fact. The ancient masters of religion were quite equally impressed with that necessity. They began with the fact of sin – whether or not man could be washed in miraculous waters, there was no doubt at any rate that he wanted washing…but certain religious leaders in London, not mere materialists, have begun in our day not to deny the highly disputable water, but to deny the indisputable dirt. Certain new theologians dispute original sin, which is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved....” (6)

Chesterton explains further how certain seemingly persuasive philosophical theories of the twentieth century are really insane. Determinism is one of these. It is the conviction that since every
finite effect has a cause, nothing we do can be free. It must have a compelling cause which we could isolate if only we had the time to figure it out. If I say I choose this man because I loved certain traits in his character, the determinist would claim he or she could show that I had to choose this man because of things in my past that forced me to, such as a desire to compensate for missing love from a father who had similar traits. We will have a chapter about this theory later. For now, here is Chesterton’s original response:

“Determinism is such a theory of logical madmen. An ordinary man sees that whistling or rubbing ones hands is a free act. Only lunatics think that everything has a (paranoid) cause. The madman thinks that whistling is a signal to a murder. Madmen advance unanswerable arguments for their manias, such as no one thinks I am the King of England because there is an imposter on the throne. What the madman needs is to come out of his tiny world into the larger cosmos where everything doesn’t revolve around him.” (7)

Note that it is a quest for objectivity vs. subjective experience, as in the philosophy of religion of James, that characterized the revival of Catholic thought in the first half of the 20th century. As Chesterton put it:

“A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed. Nowadays the part of a man that a man does assert is exactly the part he ought not to assert - himself. The part he doubts is exactly the part he ought not to doubt – the Divine Reason.”(8)

Scepticism denies all reason as well as authority. We are on the verge of denying all possibility of arriving at any truth. Authority in religion is for the sake of avoiding this terrible outcome.

“The pragmatist tells a man to think what he must think and never mind the Absolute. But precisely one of the things that he must think is the Absolute. This philosophy, indeed, is a kind of verbal paradox. Pragmatism is a matter of human needs; and one of the first of human needs is to be something more than a pragmatist…” (9)

Notice that a subjectivist like James cannot come up with real answers to our most burning questions about the meaning of life. This depends on a belief in truth and, ultimately, in a God whose absolute being is the source of all truth.

Many subjectivists also deny that there can be any perennial truth, that is truth that is valid for every century. Here is how Chesterton ridicules the subjectivist belief that Christianity might have been good in the past but must be outdated in the forward looking 20th century:

“You might as well say that a certain philosophy can be believed on Mondays, but cannot be believed on Tuesdays. You might as well say of a view of the cosmos that it was suitable to half-past three, but not suitable to half-past four. What a man can believe depends upon his philosophy, not
upon the clock or the century. If a man believes in unalterable natural law, he cannot believe any miracle in any age. If a man believes in a will behind law, he can believe any miracle in any age.” (10)

And here are some of the most often quoted passages from Chesterton to counteract the idea that the creativity of individualism is more important than the solidity of doctrine:

“This is the thrilling romance of orthodoxy. People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. It was the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stoop this way and to saw that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic.

“The Church in its early days went fierce and fast with any warhorse; yet it is utterly unhistoric to say that she merely went mad along one idea, like a vulgar fanaticism. She swerved to left and right, so as exactly to avoid enormous obstacles. She left on one hand the huge bulk of Arianism, buttressed by all the worldly powers to make Christianity too worldly. The next instant she was swerving to avoid an orientalism, which would have made it too unworldly. The orthodox Church never took the tame course or accepted the conventions; the orthodox church was never respectable.

“...it is always easy to be modernist...To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom - that would have been simple. It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.” (11)

What did Chesterton have to say about the temptation to dispense with the institutional Church in favor of following the inner light as James’ philosophy can sometimes influence readers to do?

“Of all horrible religions the most horrible is the worship of the god within. Anyone who knows anybody knows how it would work; ...That Jones shall worship the god within turns out ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon, anything rather than the Inner Light; ...let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if he can find any in the street, but not the god within. Christianity came into the world firstly in order to assert with violence that a man had not only to look inwards, but to look outwards, to behold with astonishment and enthusiasm a divine company and a divine captain. The only fun of being a Christian was that a man was not left alone with the Inner Light, but definitely recognized an outer light, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners.” (12)
If Orthodoxy is the most famous non-fictional book by Chesterton, the concepts to be found in *The Everlasting Man* (13) are equally important for the defense of doctrinal religion over against experience as the main criteria for belief.

For example, a great puzzle to sceptics about doctrinal religion is how it could be that one of them makes a claim to truth when obviously peoples of the past believed in what we now know to have been myths. Replies Chesterton:

“But he who has most sympathy with myths will most fully realize that they are not and never were a religion, in the sense that Christianity or even Islam is a religion. They satisfy some of the needs satisfied by a religion; and notably the need for doing certain things at certain dates; the need of the twin ideas of festivity and formality. But though they provide a man with a calendar they do not provide him with a creed. A man did not stand up and say ‘I believe in Jupiter and Juno and Neptune, etc.,’ as he stands up and says ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty; and the rest of the Apostles Creed.’” (14)

“Certainly the pagan does not disbelieve like an atheist, any more than he believes like a Christian. He feels the presence of powers about which he guesses and invents. St. Paul said that the Greeks had one altar to an unknown god. But in truth all their gods were unknown gods. And the real break in history did come when St. Paul declared to them whom they had ignorantly worshiped.

“The substance of all such paganism may be summarized thus. It is an attempt to reach the divine reality through the imagination alone; in its own field reason does not restrain it at all.” (15)

“Only as the whole society grew in age and experience, there began to appear that weakness in all mythology... This religion was not quite a religion. In other words, this religion was not quite a reality. It was the young world’s riot with wine or love-making; it was not so much immoral as irresponsible; it had no foresight of the final test of time. Because it was creative to any extent it was credulous to any extent.” (16)

“Theology is thought, whether we agree with it or not. Mythology was never thought, and nobody could really agree with it or disagree with it.” (17)

At a later point in his argument in defense of Christian doctrine, Chesterton explains that:

“The Church Militant is thus unique because it is an army marching to effect a universal deliverance... What that universal yet fighting faith brought into the world was hope. Perhaps the one thing common to mythology and philosophy was that both were really sad; in the sense that they had not this hope even if they had touches of faith or charity.” (18)
Having regaled you with characteristic quotations from the writings of Chesterton, it is now time to turn to evaluation. Chesterton’s philosophy of objective doctrine in religion is one of the most brilliant defenses of orthodox religion ever propounded. The style of Chesterton’s writings can sometimes strike people as more humorous than profound. There is no comparison with the systematic philosophical teachings of thinkers as St. Augustine or St. Thomas. Yet Chesterton’s many books influenced some 20th century people more than the classics because of the brilliance of his mind and the freshness of his rhetoric.

Chesterton’s debunking of rationalism, the theory that only what the mind can prove clearly and distinctly is real, and scepticism, the theory that we can’t know anything for certain, were important to Catholics in the academic world whose faith could otherwise be undermined by those currents of thought predominating well into the 1960’s. His descriptions of his conversion from an individualistic subjective viewpoint to universal dogma is a permanent antidote to a purely experiential approach.

End Notes on Chesterton

1. Most of the biographical details in this chapter are taken from Michael Ffinch, G.K. Chesterton (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986)

2. Ibid., p. 287


4. Ibid., p. 12

5. Ibid., p. 9

6. Ibid., p. 14

7. Ibid., see p. 19

8. Ibid., p. 31

9. Ibid., p. 36

10. Ffinch, G.K. Chesterton, p. 167

11. Ibid., p. 167-168

12. Ibid., p. 168-169

13. The Everlasting Man (N.Y.: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1925)
14. Ibid., p. 119
15. Ibid., p. 121
16. Ibid., p. 188
17. Ibid., pp. 190-191
18. Ibid., pp. 298-299

Conclusion

It will be obvious to the reader that the author of The Battle for the 20th Century Mind considers objectivity to be the theory with the most truth on its side. I believe that even to appreciate subjective experience, it is necessary to see it as a response to a reality outside the subject. What would we think of a person who sat on a sofa dreaming about the beauty of the experience of love but didn’t think it important to ever love anyone definite outside him/herself?

On the other hand, belief in and admiration of the objectively existing transcendent divine need not lead to lack of interest in the human experience of God. Ideally the subjective and objective elements in religion form not a contrast but a pair.
Theme 2

Doubt of God vs. Conviction of God

Russell vs. Gilson

Introduction

Most intellectuals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries believed in God but had doubts about specific teachings of their rabbis, priests, and pastors. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, many young people of the educated classes had become either atheists or agnostics.

On the front lines of the battle for the 20th century mind was scientific materialism, the growth of which was greatly stimulated by Darwinist speculations. What was the young person to make of the apparent discrepancy between the Biblical view of creation and evolutionary theory?

From another direction, there was the influence of militant Marxists who taught that religion was “the opium of the people,” a sort of drug to keep them content in spite of the horrific injustices they suffered. Most people thought Marxist dreams of a perfect society based on waking up the poor
to the benefits of shaking off oppression through violence were off base. Just the same, they were often shaken by communist rhetoric about religion. Could it possibly be true the faith of their fathers was naive? Could religion actually be a brake on the progress of the human race, deflecting energy from the alleviation of poverty with soothing thoughts of the after-life?

Such difficulties with belief in God gained strength at a time when philosophical doubt about God was rampant at the universities. In previous centuries the traditional proofs for God’s existence were presented as wisdom. In the twentieth century institutions of higher learning those proofs were mostly presented as quaint notions of the Middle Ages. As a result of the influence of enlightenment philosophers such as Hume and Kant, there was scepticism about any but scientific knowledge. Faith was relegated to the private sector.

A highly influential philosopher directing the 20th century mind toward skepticism about God was Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951). Wittgenstein was an Austrian Jewish philosopher who was the leading light of what came to be called the Vienna Circle. He later was a professor of philosophy in England. Described by Bertrand Russell as "the most perfect example I have known of genius as traditionally conceived, passionate, profound, intense, and dominating," Wittgenstein inspired the philosophy called **logical positivism** and one of the foremost figures in the tradition of **analytic philosophy**. His most famous works were the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations* (1953).

What came down through the 20th century as the key concept of the logical positivists and the analytic philosophers is that the only knowledge that is certain is to be found in propositions that can be scientifically verified. Wittgenstein himself was rather agnostic based on the idea that since God’s existence cannot be scientifically verified, it is fruitless to get involved in trying to prove or disprove His existence.

**Alfred Jules Ayer**

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Another philosopher of the 20th century associated with skepticism was A.J. Ayer (1910–1989) author of the famous book *Language, Truth, and Logic* published in 1936. He was the leading English proponent of Logical Positivism. Philosophy should get away from metaphysics and high-floved theories of all of reality such as those of Hegel, and concern itself, instead, with the analysis of the meaning of key terms, such as ‘causality’, ‘truth’, ‘knowledge’, ‘freedom.’ In Ethics he is famous for his emotivist theory of ethics. In this he claims that rather than asserting truths about absolute ethical norms, the asserting that something is good or evil, right or wrong, merely expresses one’s emotions about those actions. Since proofs for the existence of God are based on metaphysical absolutes, philosophy should not waste time debating them. The very terms of the debate are meaningless, according to Ayer.
Most prominent in debates about God in the Battle for the 20th Century Mind was Bertrand Russell, one of the major intellectual forces on the side of atheism of the 20th century. Brought up as a Christian, he would come to the conviction that the only things we can be sure even exist are those that can be known through the senses. Accordingly God, being by definition non-sensate could not be proven or disproven. Among Russell’s peers, God and the soul were considered mere figments of the imagination. It was thought that the only future for philosophers was to give up speculating about the meaning of the life and the universe and confine themselves to engendering criteria for evaluating scientific theories or problems stemming from language. A famous example is the way that the twentieth century English philosopher of the school of linguistic analysis, Gilbert Ryle, tried to explain away the reality of our immaterial minds. Suppose someone had never seen a university. He visits. You show him the auditorium, the labs, the gym, etc., and he then says: ‘all well and good, but where is the university?’ He is making what Ryle called a category mistake in language, thinking the university is something different from its parts. Similarly, if you describe what the brain does, the mind is not something separate, as traditional philosophers thought, but just, according to Ryle, an overall word for the parts of the brain in action!

What were the theists doing about this frontal attack on the foundations of all religious belief? Often thrust into a defensive position in academe, believers were challenged to meet the arguments of atheists and agnostics in a new, creative manner. A huge impetus was the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, Aeterni Patris (1879) concerning the renewal of Catholic philosophy. This renewal was to be an antidote to the atheistic teachings flooding the universities. Catholic philosophers and theologians got to work reviving the perennial metaphysics, philosophy of being, of St. Thomas Aquinas. Foremost among such philosophers were the Frenchman, Jacques Maritain, and the French Canadian Etienne Gilson. With the revival of metaphysics traditional proofs for God’s existence could be defended effectively to refute the objections of contemporary atheists. You will read more of Maritain later in this book. On the topic of skepticism and God, I have chosen f some writings by Etienne Gilson, a foremost representative of what was called Neo-Thomism.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

Bertrand Russell was the author of some forty books on philosophy and also on political issues of his day such as the ethics of war, colonialism, and nuclear disarmament. He was probably the most influential non-theistic English-speaking philosopher of the 20th century. In 1950 Russell won the Nobel Prize for literature.

Here is some autobiographical data (1) of interest:

Bertrand was an orphan whose mother died when he was two and whose father died when he was three and a half. In his youth he experienced great loneliness. He and his brother were brought up by his grandmother. I mention this fact because some psychologists such as Karl Stern and Paul Vitz
have noticed that quite a number of atheistic thinkers have been orphaned or otherwise separated from loving maternal influence.

In his autobiography Russell claims that there were three passions that governed his life, longing for love, seeking knowledge, and compassion for the sufferings of others. You might not expect the last phrase from an atheist!

Bertrand’s father was a free-thinker. His mother ran a philosophical salon. When Bertrand’s father died he left two tutors for his sons who were instructed to be sure to protect the lads from harmful religious belief! After the death of that father, against his stated wishes, the court awarded Bertrand to his religious grandparents because they were part of the English nobility. The boy moved to a large castle-like house and grew up not remembering what his parents were like. His grandmother, who loved him deeply, was a Presbyterian who became a Unitarian at the age of seventy. She was liberal in politics but extremely strict in morality. Her fearlessness, public spirit, contempt for convention, and indifference to the opinion of the majority influenced Bertrand to be willing to belong to small minorities.

Bertrand grew up very lonely since his brother was older and was away in boarding school. Bertrand was very fearful he might never meet anyone he could talk to. He spent his youth less with people than with nature, books and mathematics.

Russell loved Euclid and found mathematics ecstatic! But he disliked the fact that you had to agree to axioms to proceed vs. questioning the axioms as well. Such thorough critique he would later accomplish himself in his famous book Principia Mathematica written with Alfred North Whitehead. In this book he proved that mathematics is reducible to formal logic.

Bertrand’s grandparents took him to church, but by about fifteen he started studying arguments for God, freedom and immortality, and fell into scepticism. The first widely held belief he doubted was the existence of free will. He thought that if everything is caused by matter, then the will, which cannot be matter, could not have any influence on the body as in the will deciding to move your hand. The human body is a machine. Still he didn’t see himself as a pure materialist since he thought that consciousness itself was not material. By age seventeen he doubted immortality as well.

He still believed in God since he thought that the Thomistic argument from causality was valid. Roughly that argument is that since every effect has a cause so must the entire world and that cause would be God. Later on, thinking about the question of who made God led him to become an atheist. This process from doubt to atheism, the notion that there is certainly not a God took Russell a long time and initially made him unhappy, but eventually he was glad to be done with the whole matter. Russell thought that since religious philosophy doesn’t involve the type of evidence you have in science, theological ideas should not even come up for evaluation.
As a young adult, Russell’s scepticism led him into despair. The only reason he didn’t commit suicide in his loneliness was because he wished to know more of mathematics and didn’t want to hurt his grandmother. Many years later Russell wrote that society is in chaos primarily because there is so little Christian virtue left.

Going back to Russell’s entrance into the life of the university, he soon realized that scepticism has consequences. What he had been taught to abhor as a Christian boy, now seemed virtuous. He saw he was being led into sin. Evolutionary ideas about having been descended from apes lowered his idea about human behavior. For a while he thought it better not to spread his sceptical ideas. Here is a famous philosophical joke that was circulated in those days concerning abstract metaphysical subjects: “What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind.”

Another story which illustrates the academic mind of this period is an answer Russell got to a question he used to ask his friends: “If you had the power to destroy the world, would you do so?” This was to see how pessimistic people were. One of his friends answered in the presence of his wife and child “What? Destroy my library? – Never!”

As a professor, Russell fell in love with an American girl whose family moved to England. You must not think that there is a straight line from disbelief in God, or free-thinking as it was then called, and sexual sin. Russell reports that even though deeply in love he felt no conscious desire for physical relations. He proposed without ever kissing her or even holding her hand. Both husband the wife were virgins. She was a suffragette and total abstinence speaker. Her mother was so radical a feminist even in those times that it is reported she disliked the Deity for being called “He!”

In 1901 after seven years of marriage, Russell fell out of love with his wife. For nine years after that they still lived together. He fell in love with another man’s wife and had an affair with her for many years.

A great theme for discussion at that time was whether one could be good without believing in God. Russell insisted one could. A list for how to be good in this way included tithing the poor, abstinence from liquor, diet, reading poetry or spiritual reading every day, punctuality, tidiness. He believed in inner discipline vs. exterior discipline or total spontaneity.

Russell had a huge crisis when the wife of his great philosophical comrade, Whitehead, had a heart attack in his presence. Until then he had kept to matters of the intellect and had avoided deeper issues such as the meaning of death. Witnessing the heart attack Russell reported that within five minutes he decided that loneliness was terrible, and that only a higher type of love such as religions preach could alleviate it. He became convinced that any action not motivated by love was wrong such as war in the world and bullying in school. These reflections were followed by a longing to help children. When Russell did have his own children with his wife Dora, the couple opened their own private school. It did not succeed largely because of discipline problems. (2)
During World War I, Russell was a pacifist. In 1916 he was convicted and fined for anti-war activities and spent 6 months in prison. He was always an individual thinker. It would be erroneous to imagine that he followed a liberal political line uncritically. For example, when communism was all the rage he rejected the socialist belief that the State was the answer to social problems. He saw how social theory led people to tolerate Soviet Russia, and predicted the horrors of Bolshevism.

Russell thought that the eradication of suffering would have to come not from State programs, but from changing men and women to be more rational, cooperative and kind. (3) In spite of general pacifistic attitudes, during World War II Russell thought war was justified since living under Hitler would be hell.

Russell married four times and had many affairs. Always interested in political matters, he ran unsuccessfully for parliament several times. He taught in the United States in the late 1930’s at City College until his appointment was revoked on the basis that he was morally unfit because of his behavior with women.

Russell won the Nobel Prize in 1950. During the 50’s and 60’s Russell was involved in anti-war protests and anti-nuclear protests and was imprisoned in 1961 for nuclear disarmament protests. He died at 97.

Here are some quotations from various works of Bertrand Russell:

(Russell described himself as a “rational sceptic” defined as

“withholding judgment where the evidence is not sufficient, or, even more so, when there is contrary evidence” (4)

Russell considered religion to be in the main harmful. He was especially against religious objections to contraceptives, since he thought that world poverty and war could never be eliminated without contraception. Another remedy he favored was the killing of the sacred cows for food to reduce hunger in India.

In 1927 in an article entitled “Why I am Not a Christian,”(5) Russell tried to refute the traditional arguments from First Cause and from Design in these ways:

If you ask who made the world then you would have to ask, who made God?

“If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause. If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God, so that there cannot be any validity in that argument...There is no reason why the world could not have come into being without a cause; nor, on the other hand, is there any reason why it should not have always existed. There is no reason to suppose that the world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is really due
to the poverty of our imagination. Therefore, perhaps, I need not waste any more time upon the argument from the First Cause.

“You all know the argument from design: everything in the world is made just so that we can manage to live in the world, and if the world was ever so little different we could not manage to live in it. That is the argument from design. It sometimes takes rather a curious form; for instance, it is argued that rabbits have white tails in order to be easy to shoot. I do not know how rabbits would view that application. It is an easy argument to parody. You all now Voltaire’s remark, that obviously the nose was designed to be such as to fit spectacles...since the time of Darwin we understand much better why living creatures are adapted to their environment. It is not that their environment was made to be suitable to them, but that they grew to be suitable to it, and that is the basis of adaptation. There is no evidence of design about it. (6)

“When you come to look into this argument from design, it is a most astonishing thing that people can believe that this world, with all the things that are in it, with all its defects, should be the best that omnipotence and omniscience has been able to produce in millions of years. I really cannot believe it. Do you think that, if you were granted omnipotence and omniscience and millions of years in which to perfect your world, you could produce nothing better than the Klu Klux Klan, the Fascisti, and Mr. Winston Churchill.”

In the selections from Gilson that follow you will see how theists show what is false in Russell’s reasonings. Concerning the problem of evil and suffering in the world as an argument against the existence of a God of love, for an answer see the last theme in this book.

In Russell’s History of Western Philosophy (7) he has this to say about Thomas’ Five Ways. After the briefest of summaries, Russell lauds Thomas for the fairness of his way of presenting arguments of opponents.

“These merits, however, seem scarcely sufficient to justify his immense reputation. The appeal to reason is, in a sense, insincere, since the conclusion to be reached is fixed in advance.” (8)

I wonder if Russell would want to universalize such an observation. Would he think that belief that England is an island makes the evidence of the geography insincere?

Russell thought that only those who accept Aristotle’s metaphysics will accept the Thomas’ proofs.

“All of these, except from the teleology of lifeless things, depend upon the supposed impossibility of a series having no first term. Every mathematician knows that there is no such impossibility; the series of negative integers ending with minus one is an instance to the contrary. But here again NO Catholic is likely to abandon belief in God even if he becomes convinced that Saint Thomas’s arguments are bad; he will invent other arguments, or take refuge in revelation.”(9)
Russell’s critique illustrates that if one gets eliminates metaphysics, of course, one cannot evaluate metaphysical arguments. Such arguments purport to be about realities, not about mathematical symbols for them. For example, numbers such as two and four can be seen as mere symbols. As words they are surely symbols. But having two children or four children is not a matter of mere mathematics! There is a real (metaphysical) difference!

What did Russell think about Christ? In the article “Why I am Not a Christian,” he has some intriguing things to say, such as:

“... teachings such as turn the other cheek, give all you have to the poor, and judge not, were excellent, but these were the precepts least popular among Christians! (10)

Here are some more observations of Russell about atheism, taken from “A radio program on the Existence of God” with Fr. Frederick Copleston, S.J., the famous Thomistic philosopher, on the BBC radio in 1948 (11)

Copleston:

Would you say that the non-existence of God can be proved?

Russell:

No, I should not say that: my position is agnostic.

During this radio talk, Copleston used a version of the argument from contingency to a necessary being. Roughly this proof insists that if everything in the world is dependent on something else, there could be no foundation for being without one absolutely necessary being: God. When Russell replied that the world could just be there without the need for a cause, Copleston responded:

“Well, the series of events is either caused or it’s not caused. If it is caused, there must obviously be a cause outside the series. If it’s not caused then its sufficient to itself, and if it’s sufficient to itself it is what I call necessary. But it can’t be necessary since each member is contingent (dependent) ...the proposition that the world is simply there and is inexplicable can’t be proven by logical analysis. (12)

Very quickly in the debate it was clear that Russell did not accept metaphysical statements at all, believing only in truths of fact and analytical propositions. (13)

What, then, do atheistic-agnostics like Russell do about fear of death? He replied, that whereas young men may be justified in feeling oppressed by the thought of an early death, being cheated of the best things in life, an older person would be ignoble to fear the end. His ego should be receding so that he is merged with the universal life around him, happy to think that his life goals will be carried on by others.
Asked what he would do if he had to meet God after denying His existence all his life, he replied:

“Why, I should say, ‘God, you gave us insufficient evidence.’” (14)

In evaluating the thought of Russell, it is important to note the his rejection of the existence of God and of Christian truth did not mean the rejection of all Christian values. Russell held onto the theistic legacy by insisting on some trans-cultural moral values such as social justice, concern for the poor, and desire to eliminate the horrors of war.

On the other hand, Russell’s rejection of metaphysics and consequent rejection of a First Cause leaves his philosophy in limbo. Yes there are moral values but how significant can these be if the universe and all human beings will die with no hope of eternal life? Without a source of perfect love from God, how can human beings love each other with the fidelity necessary for family stability?

End Notes on Russell

1. Most of the information here is taken from Bertrand Russell on God and Religion edited by Al Seckel (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books: 1986) Some information is taken 3 from Internet and from The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1951)
2. See Seckel, Bertrand Russell on God and Religion, p. 27)
3. Ibid., p. 22
4. Ibid., p.10
5. Ibid., p. 57
6. Ibid., p. 61
7. History of Western Philosophy (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1945)
8. Ibid., p. 455 ff.
9. Ibid., p. 462
10. Bertrand Russell on God..., p. 65
11. Ibid., pp. 123-146
12. Ibid., pp. 131-132

13. Ibid., see p. 33

14. Ibid., p. 11
Etienne Gilson (1884-1978)

Gilson, pronounced with a soft “Gi,” (as in Jill) was a Canadian layman. He taught at the Medieval Institute at the University of Toronto and then at Notre Dame University from 1948 until 1977. Gilson came to love the philosophy of St. Thomas while researching Descartes’ intellectual antecedents. He was considered to be one of the greatest of the neo-Thomists to revive Catholic philosophy in the 20th century. Among Gilson’s greatest books are *Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* and *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*.

For the purpose of juxtaposing Gilson against Russell in *The Battle for the 20th Century Mind* I will excerpt from Gilson’s incisive commentary on Medieval philosophy. This would likely be dismissed by atheistic and agnostic philosophers as too antiquated to have any relevance to 20th century scientific perspectives. Instead I will quote from a chapter of Gilson’s, “God and Contemporary Thought,”(1) which takes on exactly the limitations of that scientific mentality when it comes to the issue of God’s existence.

In that chapter, Gilson noted that many contemporary philosophers take for granted that the only real knowledge comes from science rather than from reasoning:

“Since (according to them) God is not an object of empirical knowledge, we have no concept of him. Consequently God is no object of knowledge, and what we call natural theology (that is, philosophy of God) is just idle talking.” (2)

Behind the rejection of metaphysics, philosophy of being, according to Gilson, is the elimination of the concept of real causality in the sense of knowing why anything exists in the first place. In order to get to a philosophical understanding of the real God, it is necessary to go back to Aquinas.

Here is my summary of the causal argument for God’s existence:

“All around us we see an orderly world of effects springing from previous causes. Nothing just happens for no reason whatsoever. What seven-year-old child can convince his mother that the milk spilled over the kitchen floor because it just ‘happened’ to go there without any cause!

“Nothing can just cause itself, because it would have to exist before itself, which is a contradiction.

“You may think that causes might go back and back infinitely with no beginning. To this Aquinas argued that such an imaginary backward look explains nothing. Unless there is one First Cause, which we call God, nothing can take place, for each of the subsequent causes dependent on
some original cause to start the whole train of causality going. (The word “infinite” is a description, not a cause. Infinity is not a substantial reality that can cause things just a word for things.)

“You might ask now: ‘If everything has to have a cause, who caused God?’ The basic answer Aquinas would give is simple. The types of beings that need causes are of the kind that are destructible, that come to be and pass away. God is by definition an absolute being. He has no beginning or end, so He doesn’t need a cause.” (3)

You might think that the whole cosmos is eternal, without beginning or end. Of that we certainly have no scientific proof and many scientists nowadays think in terms of a Big Bang that started the universe with an absolute beginning 15-20 billion years ago. (4)

Before referring to other proofs for God’s existence, I want to quote this interesting comment by Gilson:

“Quite apart from any philosophical demonstration of the existence of God, there is such a thing as a spontaneous natural theology. A quasi-instinctive tendency, observable in most men, seems to invite them to wonder from time to time if, after all, there is not such an unseen being as the one we call God...God spontaneously offers himself to most of us, more as a confusedly felt presence than an answer to any problem, when we find ourselves confronted with the vastness of the ocean, the still purity of mountains, or the mysterious life of a midsummer starry sky... There is no more solitary solitude than that of a man in deep sorrow or confronted with the tragic perspective of his own impending end. ‘One dies alone,’ Pascal says. That is perhaps the reason why so many men finally meet God waiting for them on the threshold of death.

“What do such feelings prove? Absolutely nothing. They are not proofs but facts, the very facts which give philosophers occasion to ask themselves precise questions concerning the possible existence of God.”(5)

“...the only problem is for us to determine the truth value of this notion. At first sight, the shortest way to test it seems to judge it from the point of view of scientific knowledge. But the shortest way might not be the safest one. This method rests upon the assumption that nothing can be rationally known unless it be scientifically known, which is far from being an evident proposition...the simple truth may be that while human reason remains one and the same in dealing with different orders of problems, it nevertheless must approach these various orders of problems in as many different ways.

“If, speaking in the order of pure natural knowledge, the proposition ‘God exists’ makes any sense at all, it must be for its rational value as a philosophical answer to a metaphysical question.

“...Why nature exists is not a scientific problem, because its answer is not susceptible of empirical verification....”(6)
If a scientist, such as Sir James Jeans, decides that it is more rational to think of the universe not as an eternally existing system but rather as a creation of an intelligent God, this is not because he is doing science but because he has started dealing with the metaphysical question of why the universe exists at all.

A typical example is the notion of design at the root of the fifth argument for the existence of God of St. Thomas. Here is my summary:

“All around us we see order and purpose in nature. To use an example most of us would consider fairly awesome, take the human eye, so intricately ordered in its myriad parts to make it possible to see. Can order such as this come about by coincidence? Thomas uses the example of an arrow hitting a target. Since arrows are not intelligent conscious beings, it cannot hit the target by figuring it out. It requires the intelligent archer to get it there. If you saw an archery competition and the arrow hitting the target hundreds of times, would you accept the idea that it all happened by chance? If you add up all the examples of purposeful design in the universe wouldn’t an intelligent designer seem more likely than chance as the reason behind it all?

Yet, according to Gilson, some scientists “…deliberately prefer to the simple notions of design, or purposiveness, in nature, the arbitrary notions of blind force, chance, emergence, sudden variation, …because they much prefer a complete absence of intelligibility to the presence of a nonscientific intelligibility.” (7)

“…To reject metaphysical answers to a problem just because they are not scientific is deliberately to maim the knowing power of the human mind. If the only intelligible way to explain the existence of organized bodies is to admit that there is design, purposiveness, at their origin, then let us admit it, if not as scientists, at least as metaphysicians. And since the notions of design and purpose are for us inseparable from the notion of thought, to posit the existence of a thought as cause of the purposiveness of organized bodies is also to posit an end of all ends, or an ultimate end, that is, God.”(8)

In the absence of the metaphysically conceived God, we have instead gods such as blind evolution and benevolent progress. What we need is to come back to Leibniz’s question – “Why should there be something rather than nothing?”

“…the only conceivable answer is that each and every particular existential energy, each and every particular existing thing, depends for its existence upon a pure existence. In order to be the ultimate answer to all existential problems, this supreme cause has to be absolute existence. Being absolute, such a cause is self-sufficient; if it creates, its creative act must be free. Since it creates not only being, but order, it must be something which at least eminently contains the only principle of order known to us in experience, namely, thought.” (9)

The quotations given here will give you an idea of the richness of the mind of Gilson.
The precision of Gilson’s thought and the truth of his proofs of God’s existence leave no room for critique. One might, however, suggest that for use in evangelization Gilson’s work needs to be supplemented. The philosophical apologetics of thinkers such as Peter Kreeft explain the same truths in a manner more accessible to intelligent but less scholarly readers. Books such as The Intellectuals Speak Out About God (10) and The New Story of Science (11) provide excellent quotations from theistic scientists refuting seeming objections to the arguments given above by evolutionists. Sometimes such books go out of print but you can easily find them in the public library through inter-library loan.

End Notes to Gilson

1. See “God and Contemporary Thought,” from Etienne Gilson, God and Philosophy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941)

2. Ibid., p. 109

3. Ronda Chervin, “A Contemporary Look At Old Arguments for God’s Existence” (New Hope, Kentucky: Faith Guild pamphlet #4004)

4. For more about science and proofs for the existence of God, see Ibid.

5. Gilson, pp. 115-116

6. Ibid., p. 119

7. Ibid., p. 130

8. Ibid., p. 131-132

9. Ibid., pp.139-140


Conclusion

It is important for evangelists to be aware of how plausible atheism or agnosticism can seem to a person with an inadequate background in metaphysics. The seeds of scepticism were already deeply
planted in the academic culture of the English university where Russell studied. In spite of the logical bent of his mind, this young man, like many in our times was not able to work his way out of the labyrinth of scepticism about foundational matters concerning being and cause.

Christian evangelists need to study the refutations of such doubt in detail. True philosophical principles which underlie the proofs for God’s existence of the tradition can be found in books written by believing philosophers on the subjects of metaphysics and natural theology. (See the Appendix for recommendations). Such writings usually include answers to objections made by those who erroneously believe that science and belief are contradictory.
By the middle of the 20th century in Europe and a bit later in the rest of the world, it was common to hear people making judgments about the “authenticity” of others. Talk about “the good guys vs. the bad guys” was gradually being replaced by contrasting labels such as non-conformist vs. conformist and real people vs. phonies.

The category of “authenticity” came largely from the writings of Martin Heidegger, a German phenomenologist. Heidegger refused to affirm or deny the reality of God. His philosophy of the human person proposed an authenticity to be judged only in terms of life on earth. The authentic
individual Heidegger introduced was one who confronted reality head-on without denial of its tragic elements. The authentic person was one free from illusions and pretensions. He or she was free from the sort of self-deceit that sets in with conformity to the mores of society. For example, in our culture the word “death” is used as infrequently as possible in connection with the self. It is as if we think everyone will die but ourselves. Such a way of talking is inauthentic because untrue.

Even though Heidegger did not use the term, his perspective is called agnostic since it leaves open the question of God’s existence rather than affirm it (theism) or deny it (atheism). However, the second half of the century was much influenced by theistic proponents of wholeness, integration, relatedness and the healing love of others. It was out of the depth of the encounter with the personal God of love that a hopeful personal life was to emerge. A key figure in theistic existentialism, an umbrella name for philosophies interested in the way crises in human existence lead to insight, was the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. I will excerpt in this chapter from his writings.

In spite of stark contrasts between agnostic and theistic concepts of the person, there are also points of agreement. All human beings, whether doubters or believers, have to experience the full gamut of human emotions from hope to despair, from joy to anguish. Still, the reality of God and hope for life after death makes a great difference in a person’s reaction to those emotions.

You might consider this analogy. Imagine two similar men standing in a room. There are mirrors on each of two opposite walls of the room. One mirror is dark reflecting an image that is murky and depressing. The other mirror is illumined by a projecting light in such a way that the image of this man is bright and clear. Such is the difference between the agnostic view of the person and the theistic view
Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Martin Heidegger, born in 1889, came from German peasant stock. (1) This is reflected in the earthy images that embellish his writings. “Thinkers trace furrows across the field,” is an example. Martin was brought up a Catholic. He studied the classics and medieval philosophy and went to the seminary. His thesis was on Duns Scotus. Losing his faith in God led Heidegger out of the seminary into the study of contemporary philosophy. It was the philosophy of Husserl, the phenomenologist, that most influenced Heidegger away from sceptical ideas about reality to a fascination with being.

Heidegger would eventually become a writer and a university professor. Throughout World War II Heidegger was a member of the Nazi party. His involvement with the party and his support of its worldview are undisputed. Even more disturbing than his active participation in Nazism, Heidegger never attempted to account for his support of the Nazis outside of calling his involvement with them “a blunder.” (2)

Eventually, Heidegger retired to the Black Forest region of Southern Germany. His masterpiece is Being and Time (1927), a huge tome with the issue of time as the center of man’s self-definition. Heidegger died in 1976.

Heidegger thought of man as earthbound, time bound, radically finite, limited. Man lives in a world where God is “absent.” According to Heidegger, man is estranged from Being itself. What is this mysterious “Being” Heidegger talks about? He doesn’t mean some neutral sense of is-ness but rather the “to-be” of what is. You might understand this in terms of those precious moments where you emerge from the business of coping with life and just drink in the marvel of the fact that something is, such as a flower or a tree. William Barrett whose books about existentialism (3) introduced this movement to the United States, says that Being = the is of what-is. (4) It is sheer presence, as the poet and artist experience it. In poetry we surrender to the wonder of being. Another commentator says that the Being of which Heidegger speaks is not an abstract concept but rather the ultimate ground in which all entities share, in virtue of which they are all beings.” (5)

Instead of approaching metaphysics in a Thomistic manner, Heidegger wants to approach it phenomenologically - that is receiving the nature of realities without preconceptions. In this way he hopes to get to what human existence is, in itself. We must let things be and let them reveal themselves. In this he follows the word in Greek for truth, which is “ a-lethia”: revelation or unhiddenness. Heidegger contrasts this way of seeing truth about being from the Platonic way of seeing truth as a quality of the intellectual judgment. The Platonic way of seeing truth helps us to master reality but it takes away from the poetic grasp of the things themselves.
Heidegger uses the word “Dasein” meaning being-there, to describe the nature of the human being. A few direct quotations from the philosopher himself will give you an idea of the strange but evocative way Heidegger expressed the truth as he saw it:

“The entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term “Dasein” (being-there).” (6)

More simply, beings other than man such as animals or plants or rocks are not aware of being where they are. They do not inquire about the meaning of their existence.

“Absolute mystery, mystery as such, pervades the whole of man’s Dasein....”(7) (Lemay, p. 109)

According to Heidegger, the key to the understanding of the being of man is the way we are haunted by “nothing.” If I didn’t exist I would be nothing and so would the others around me should they not have existed. It is against the background of the nothingness that could have been, instead of the presences of ourselves and others, that we enter into wonder about the fact that we exist.

“Only because Nothing is revealed in the very basis of our Dasein (human way of existing) that is it possible for the utter strangeness of what-is to dawn on us. Only when the strangeness of what-is forces itself upon us does it awaken and invite our wonder. Only because of wonder, that is to say, the revelation of the Nothing, does the “Why?” spring to our lips. Only because this ‘Why?’ is possible as such can we seek for reasons and proofs in a definite way.”(8)

Man is not essentially pure ego but being-in-the-world. To be is to stand outside oneself in the world of my care and concern, as in the phrase my heart goes out to you. This field of being is called Dasein, being-there. Being-there is receptivity, for example, going on a vacation and taking in the beauty around one vs. going on vacation and just playing cards.

Another characteristic of Dasein’s (human’s) being is the “thrownness” of this entity into its “there.” (9) We have no control over whether we will be born an Eskimo or a Puerto Rican or a Pakistani or a German or an American. Given the fact that we are thrown into existence vs. choosing to be and where we shall be brought up, etc., we don’t understand why we are here and where we are going.

Authenticity has to do with being who I am vs. submerging myself as part of the group. Inauthenticity is a lot like the idea of “denial.” I should not be in denial of the fact that I can die at any moment. That means accepting radical contingency, dependency. Without water I will die in very short order. The knowledge that I may die at any moment forces me to decide who I am and what I need to do as an essential project. This is called resoluteness. It is related to what Heidegger calls Care with a capital “c,” - that is, being responsible for the world I am in.
Our life is made up of mood or feeling, understanding, and speech. Mood equals attunement to where we are: joy, sadness, or dread. It leavens and permeates our whole existence. According to Heidegger, our fundamental mood is anxiety, because of our contingency. Anxiety doesn’t come from a specific fear about something but simply from finitude and contingency, that is the fact we are not necessary, absolute, beings, as the concept of God must be if such a being exists. Where such a God is eternal, timeless; the “not yet” of the future and the “no longer” of the past permeate our existence.

Time is in us. The present is what divides the past and the future. Heidegger gives priority to the future. It is into the future that we project our being. We orient ourselves toward the future by what we take out of the past. Heidegger thinks that there are special aspects of human life that take their meaning from a relation to time such as death, care, anxiety, guilt.

The philosophy of Heidegger is full of interesting formulations, such as that speech is communing with one another through language. The house of Being is how Heidegger defines language. By means of speech we become the guardians of Being.

Critiquing Heidegger is important since his influence was so great on philosophy and theology of the second half of the twentieth century. Barrett wrote in The Irrational Man that Heidegger was a pure thinker whereas he needed to be more of a whole man who needed to be saved. Since we are actually full of self-deceit, we always need mercy. Part of being authentic is to realize this, but since Heidegger does not let God enter the picture, where is the mercy to come from?

Lemay, at the end of his book on the German philosopher says, “Heidegger stands as a great embarrassment for philosophers. The key focus of recent years, however, has been to decide whether or not his philosophy somehow reflects his political ideology, to see if Being and Nazism are somehow related. The most evident place that supports a connection is his account of human beings. “If humans are Dasein, meaning they have no common essence, then there is no reason to expect that a particular group of Dasein will respect the rights of another. The only sense of security a Dasein has comes from (his/her) given society. Consequently, Heidegger’s account of Dasein can lead to absolute nationalism. “I’m a German, and you’re not; therefore you are a threat.” Here we see how such a view easily lent itself to the Nazi platform, which stated that Germans are a unique race, a superior people...

“Heidegger was a nasty character, or as one prominent American philosopher put it, a German red neck. At this point we can only wait to see if Heidegger the philosopher can be rescued from Heidegger the political figure.”(10)

To turn to the question of contemporary relevance, I believe Heidegger’s emphasis on authenticity as related to the truth of the human condition is still valid. Of course it is usually good to
avoid drifting with the crowd and instead to exercise one’s own freedom to choose what really counts. Heidegger’s way of describing truth as openness to being is inspiring as an antidote to pragmatism and work-a-holism. His philosophy can open people to a more contemplative attitude toward life. At the same time, Heidegger’s seeming denial of our need for salvation is crippling. Ultimately Heidegger is self-redemptive. We can especially understand this as we move to a different theistic European approach, that of Martin Buber.

End Notes to Heidegger


2) See *Heidegger for Beginners*, about Heidegger’s Nazi involvement.


4) Ibid., p. 137


6. *Heidegger for Beginners*, p. 110

7. Ibid., p. 109

8. Ibid., p. 110

9. Ibid., p. 111

10. Ibid., p. 110?

Martin Buber (1878-1965)

Martin Buber was a Jewish philosopher, born in Vienna. (1) He studied philosophy and art in Austria and Germany. Although steeped in Jewish thought, he also studied German literature, some
Christian philosophy and the mystical tradition of the Church. As a young man, Buber became a
Zionist. Unlike some Zionist leaders, Buber wanted the richness of Jewish culture to have an influence
of all mankind. He was against the type of nationalism characteristic of most countries in the world.
Instead he thought in terms of the collaboration of all mankind under God. Buber was much
interested in reviving the Chasidic tradition of Jewish mysticism and also devoted an enormous
amount of time to a new translation into German of the Old Testament. When forced out of his
university post in Frankfurt, Germany by the Nazis, he left for Israel where he taught philosophy at
Hebrew University from 1938-1951.

I and Thou, was Buber’s most famous book (published originally in the 1920’s and then in
English as a second edition by Charles Scribner’s Sons in 1958. (2) An impetus for I and Thou was an
incident that happened to Buber in his role as professor. A student came to his office. He responded
to the student’s questions in a courteous professional manner. Right afterwards the student
committed suicide. Shocked, Buber realized that more was required in his encounters with others
than a courteous professional manner. The young man might have been saved had he seen the
student not just as a student but as a unique person worthy of love, so that he might have sensed the
emotions lying behind the questions.

Moving from the incident to a generalization about relationships, Buber came to clarify the
difference between what he called the I-it and the I-Thou.

Here are some excerpts from I and Thou which introduce this distinction:

“I perceive something. I am sensible of something. I imagine something. I will something. I
feel something. I think something. The life of human beings does not consist of all this and the like
alone. This and the like together establish the realm of it.”(3)

“If a man lets it have the mastery, the continually growing world of it overruns him and robs
him of the reality of his own I...”(4)

“But the realm of thou has a different basis. When thou is spoken, the speaker has no thing
for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every it is bounded by others; it
exists only through being bounded by others. But when thou is spoken, there is no thing. Thou has
no bounds. When thou is spoken, the speaker has no thing; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his
stand in relation.”(5)

The distinction between the I-it and the I-Thou is not precisely identical with closeness and
distance in relationships. I can have people I call friends who are fairly close but who I relate to
primarily for the sake of avoiding loneliness or to have someone to do things with. In the case of a
deep I-Thou love, at least at its highest moments, there is no question of using the other for a
purpose. To be with this person is the purpose. Presence is more important than what is being done
or said. As Buber insists, such a relationship calls from me an “I” that is different from the ordinary
daily person of myself who interacts with other persons and things in a more casual manner. Whereas Heidegger’s authentic individual is defined by his choices, in Buber’s view it is the relation of loving and being loved that draws out the authentic self. In this way, relationship is essential to being.

In *What is Existentialism*, Barrett contrasts Heidegger and Buber in an interesting manner:

“...the primacy of the “is” for Heidegger over verbal forms like “I am” and “thou art” inevitably suggests a comparison with Martin Buber’s famous concept of the I-Thou relation. According to Buber, I find reality only when I am able to say Thou to another person, and in so saying my own I is really born. For Heidegger, the I can meet the thou only because There is --i.e., can meet only within some encompassing region of Being. After all, I have to meet thee somewhere; in relation to someone; in relation to something, and in some context. Buber speaks from a strictly human and personal point of view, Heidegger from the neutral point of view of the ontologist, the philosopher of Being.” (6)

What Buber calls the Thou a gift. I cannot just will to have a Thou in my life or make a relationship into an I-Thou. But when it comes toward me I can refuse it or speak the word Thou to it. And this is a deep act of my being. In fact it is the deepest act. The primary word I-Thou can be spoken only with the whole being...I become through my relation to the Thou; as I become I, I say Thou. (7)

All real living is meeting. “Feelings are “entertained”: love comes to pass. Feelings dwell in man; but man dwells in his love. ..love does not cling to the I in such a way as to have the Thou only for its “content,” its object; but love is between I and Thou.”(8)

Man, Buber thought, has a need to be confirmed by other humans. An animal does not need to be confirmed, for it is what it is without accountability based on freedom of choice. By contrast a human hopes that others will confirm him or her “secretly and bashfully watching for a Yes which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another. It is from one man to another that the heavenly bread of self-being is passed.”

What we now call personalism, influenced by Buber’s philosophy, is reflected in the way John Paul II defines love as the sincere gift of self, as will be seen in later portions of this book.

Already you may be wondering whether it is possible for a human being to dwell in this I-Thou level given the necessities of daily life among impersonal things and people who are mostly strangers.

“(Man) knows that his mortal life swings by nature between Thou and It, and he is aware of the significance of this. It suffices him to be able to cross again and again the threshold of the holy place wherein he was not able to remain; the very fact that he must leave it again and again is inwardly bound up for him with the meaning and character of this life. There, on the threshold, the
response, the spirit, is kindled ever new within him; here, in an unholy and needy country, this spark is to be proved. What is called necessity here cannot frighten him, for he has recognized there true necessity, namely destiny."(9)

Ultimately the possibility of man’s personhood being defined as a relation of love depends upon the God of love. In love man finds God. Finding God does not mean ceasing to relate to other humans. Instead, God leads us out again to the others, helping us to relate to them as Thou’s rather than its.

“Men do not find God if they stay in the world. They do not find Him if they leave the world. He who goes out with his whole being to meet his Thou and carries to it all being that is in the world, finds Him who cannot be sought.” (10)

Buber’s concept of I and Thou is beautiful and inspiring. It can cause a real conversion both in religious practice and in love of others. In some readers, however, Buber’s concept of I-Thou can produce an unfruitful straining after what can only come as a gift. Such an exalted view of the possibilities of the deepest love can sometimes lead us to devalue the gift of more ordinary friendship and the comfort of the help of others less intimate. For some the vision of mystical ecstatic friendship can make for restlessness in marriage and family life.

The concept of the I-Thou relationship has enormous relevance for our times. The tendency to see people as obstacle courses or people to be manipulated and processed is an illustration of I-it attitudes. Even people with good objectives can wind up treating people in an I-it manner because of activism and workaholism. In periods of spiritual stagnancy, some believers may go for years relating to God as if he were a thing, perhaps a dispenser of blessings, but not one to relate to intimately. It is necessary to pray for the grace to overcome obstacles to a true experience of God’s personal love for oneself as an individual person.

End Notes to Buber:

1. For biographical information about Buber see Werner Manheim, Martin Buber (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1974)


3. Ibid., p. 4
Conclusion

It is impossible for the Christian evangelist to try to bring others to the true faith without any reference to the concept of the person held by the other and by oneself. Many agnostics are trying to “tough it out” by being authentic without the help of God or the vista of an eternal life of union with God. The mentality of such an agnostic differs radically from that of your lay-back pleasure-seeker who doesn’t want to be bothered to get up early on Sunday morning to go to Church! Agnostics will only be willing to talk to you, a Christian, if they first perceive that you are as serious about life and as authentic in your decisions as they are. Through love of friendship and sacrificial deeds of love you may help them to see how much richer personal life is for a Christian.

Many cannot believe in the Person of Christ and his promises because they think all this is too good to be true. They need to be healed of cynicism by the depth of the I-Thou love you extend them. You can deeply wound a seeker if he or she thinks of you as simply wanting to rack up merit through evangelization, and I-it attitude. By contrast, your I-Thou love will draw from them the hidden "I" that is longing for the closeness that true believers in Christ can offer. Never must an on-looker think that your prayer is mechanical, as if God were the ultimate It to be manipulated or given lip service to, rather than a God deserving of ultimate reverence, filial devotion, and self-donation.
Theme 4

Modern vs. Traditional Education

Dewey vs. Lewis

Introduction

By the late 1940’s in the larger cities of the United States it was clear to many parents that a quiet revolution had taken place in public education. Children were still learning penmanship and their sums. Spelling bees were still the highlight of the week, but everything else was changing rapidly. In the briefcase the ten year old brought home from school one would no longer find pretty “paint by number” pictures of cows in fields. Instead there might be some abstract design representing no known entity at all! Gone were Latin primers or stories from the Greek myths. Instead there might be a textbook on problems of American democracy. There would still be a column of simple grades such as A,B,C or, God forbid, D or F, on the report card next to subjects such as math, science, English, or home economics. But there would also be notations of S for satisfactory, U for unsatisfactory or E for excellent under headings such as “adaptability,” or “cooperation”!

Under the proud title of progressive education, a gradual shift was taking place from education conceived as the learning of basic skills, facts, and, hopefully, a little wisdom. The new
education was, instead, to be a preparation for an ever-changing world destined to replace the static expectations of previous generations. It was thought that what was needed was not young people chock full of out-datable information, but rather imaginative, flexible minds able to operate under constantly developing new conditions of life. Method was to replace truth. The genius behind the philosophy of the shiny new textbooks and fascinating new methods was the influential philosopher, John Dewey, of the pragmatic school of American thought. As you will see, his educational revolution flowed directly from his rejection of any absolute claim to unchanging truth.

Across the Atlantic, however, there was a mind that was working to reverse the trend set into motion by thinkers such as John Dewey. The mind belonged to the person of C. S. Lewis. Tutored by a brilliant progressive atheist, Lewis, once converted to what he called “mere Christianity,” was to spearhead the return to the principles of traditional education. A classicist by trade, as well as a philosopher, apologist and author of popular theological novels, C. S. Lewis wrote a small book entitled The Abolition of Man de bunking the premises of progressive education. He claimed that the substitution of subjective experience, experimentation, and pragmatic motives, for the traditional ideal of heroic nobility would be the ruin of future generations. There is probably no single writer who more greatly influenced, after his death, the flight from the public schools into home-schooling at the end of the 20th century than C. S. Lewis. On the other hand, a student commented after reading this chapter in draft form that perhaps it was Dewey who indirectly led to home-schooling. His thinking led to a curriculum so vapid that parents reacted by devising their own!

On what side will you come down in this field of the Battle for the 20th Century Mind?
John Dewey (1859-1952)

Born in Vermont, New England, John Dewey lived to become the foremost American philosopher of the pragmatist school. Influential as he was as a philosopher, he was equally so in the sphere of education. (1)

The small booklets that I will be referring to about education published by John Dewey in the early 1900’s were reprinted in 1956 after some twenty-five printings. In the introduction the editor, Leonard Carmichael, points out that it was characteristic of John Dewey not to be a “cloistered academician” but a man of influence on real people in society. He has been called the father of progressive education. (2)

Carmichael also calls him an instrumentalist and defines this position as meaning that “Truth was a dynamic series of ideas, beliefs and other processes which were the instruments by means of which the purposes of life can be achieved...His conclusions stand or fall on his theory of human nature. (3)

Before the time of Dewey, education was thought to provide the building blocks of fixed knowledge. Dewey thought it was static to hand on to each new generation a definite body of subject matter. Instead he wanted what was called a more child-centered school - the emphasis being on the real interests of the child and learning through doing. Key words were experimentation and naturalism. He was against the idea of strengthening the mind through disciplines unrelated to life. Carmichael says that nowadays it is better seen that the study of language and math does strengthen the mind and therefore contribute to the ideal of a flexible intellect.

With great significance, Carmichael notes that after two World Wars and the menace of communist dictatorship we understand better than Dewey did what happens when instrumentalism is used by dictators to try to get rid of any fixed values.

Here are some ideas and quotations from the booklets compiled from lectures originally given by Dewey in the early 1900’s. Note, often in these excerpts we see Dewey evaluating the theories and practices of others in order, later, to come to his own more moderate conclusions. As you read you might relate these theories to what you experienced in your education.

From The Child and the Curriculum:

“The fundamental factors in the educative process are an immature, undeveloped being; and certain social aims, meanings, values incarnate in the matured experience of the adult. The educative process is the due interaction of these forces. Such a conception of each in relation to the other as facilitates completest and freest interaction is the essence of educational theory.” (4)
“...the narrow but personal world of the child against the impersonal but infinitely extended world of space and time; second, the unity, the single wholeheartedness of the child’s life, and the specialization and divisions of the curriculum; third, an abstract principle of logical classification and arrangement, and the practical and emotional bonds of child life.

“From these elements of conflict grow up different educational sects. One school fixes its attention upon the importance of the subject-matter of the curriculum as compared with the contents of the child’s own experience. It is as if they said: Is life petty, narrow, and crude? Then studies reveal the great, wide universe with all its fullness and complexity of meaning. Is the life of the child egoistic, self-centered, impulsive? Then in these studies is found an objective universe of truth, law, and order. Is his experience unfocused, vague, uncertain, at the mercy of the moment’s caprice and circumstance? Then studies introduce a world arranged on the basis of eternal and general truth; a world where all is measured and defined. Hence the moral: ignore and minimize the child’s individual peculiarities, whims, and experience. They are what we need to get away from. (5)

This theory leads to an ideal of maximum information and facts conveyed in an orderly manner without reference to the child’s lived experience. By contrast, the other sect of opinion says that

“The child is the starting-point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal. It alone furnishes the standard...Personality, character, is more than subject-matter. Not knowledge or information, but self-realization, is the goal. To possess all the world of knowledge and lose one’s own self is as awful a fate in education as in religion. Moreover, subject-matter never can be got into the children from without. Learning is active. It involves reaching out of the mind. It involves organic assimilation starting from within...The source of whatever is dead, mechanical, and formal in schools is found precisely in the subordination of the life and experience of the child to the curriculum. It is because of this that “study” has become a synonym for what is irksome, and a lesson identical with a task.”(6)

The purport of the booklet by Dewey is that both these theories are limited. What is needed instead is that experience and facts become integrated (7) by moving from the child’s experience into what he is studying seen as the experience of the race.

We should not think of the child’s experience as fixed, but rather as in motion day by day. Neither should we think of the subject-matter as fixed. Instead we should be thinking of mutual interaction. (8)

In this harmless seeming paragraph we get to the heart of Dewey’s educational revolution:

“There is, then, nothing final about a logical rendering of experience. Its value is not contained in itself; its significance is that of standpoint, outlook, method. It intervenes between the more casual, tentative, and roundabout experiences of the past, and more controlled and orderly experiences of
the future. It gives past experience in that net form which renders it most available and most significant, most fecund for future experience.”

Can you see that this theory eliminates the notion of absolute truths to be understood and explored in favor of method and skills? Of course Dewey doesn’t deny all content or truth with a small “t,” but he presupposes that such truth is always changing. (9)

On the other hand, Dewey could have been right to react against a type of education of the past so formal that it lacked

“Any organic connection with what the child has already seen and felt and loved...A symbol which is induced from without, which has not been led up to in preliminary activities, is, as we say, a bare or mere symbol; it is dead and barren.” (10)

“The second evil in this external presentation is lack of motivation...there is no craving, no need, no demand.” (11) This is in contrast to education based on real needs of the child for clarification because the facts presented relate to his actual daily experience.

“...when material is directly supplied in the form of a lesson to be learned as a lesson, the connecting links of need and aim are conspicuous for their absence.” (12) Thirdly, the material is often so sifted that there is no actual inquiry, only dead facts to be memorized.

From The School and Society:

Dewey begins by stating that important as it is to view education from the standpoint of how a particular beloved child is developing, it is equally important for a democratic country to be concerned with the impact of education on society. (13)

“Here individualism and socialism are at one. Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself.” (14)

The new education, as it was then called, should be seen as part of social evolution. Dewey points to industrialism, world markets, move to the cities, shift from the home as the center of most activities with children participating in character-building work and knowledge of animals and farming to most of these activities taking place outside the home. On the other hand we have the advantages for the city child of

“Increase in toleration, in breadth of social judgment...greater accuracy of adaptation to differing personalities, contact with greater commercial activities.” (p. 12)

Schools try to combine the best of both these worlds by classes in shop-work, sewing, cooking, etc. These should be taught not just to render the pupil more efficient, but to build the idea of community, team-work as happens so spontaneously with group sports. Cooking and shop work
are more lively because the children do it together as a team vs. at individual desks where selfishness and competitiveness is almost encouraged. (p. 15)

“...a comparison of results in the recitation or in the examination to see which child has succeeded in getting ahead of others in storing up, in accumulating, the maximum of information. So thoroughly is this the prevailing atmosphere that for one child to help another in his task has become a school crime.” (p. 15-16)

By contrast, with group activities the students are expected to help each other and want to encourage each other to contribute to the project.

“Of course, order is simply a thing which is relative to an end. If you have the end in view of forty or fifty children learning certain set lessons, to be recited to the teacher, your discipline must be devoted to securing that result. But if the end in view is the development of a spirit of social co-operation and community life, discipline must grow out of and be relative to such an aim.” (p. 16-17)

Plato says that a slave is one whose actions do not express his own ideas, but those of some other man. Education - should not just be rote. (p. 23)

The old type of education “appeals for the most part simply to the intellectual aspect of our natures, our desire to learn, to accumulate information, and to get control of the symbols of learning; not to our impulses and tendencies to make, to do, to create, to produce, whether the form of utility or of art.” (p. 26)

“When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious.” (p. 29)

In critique of Dewey’s basic philosophy of education, I rate his concern for the whole person, the experience of the child, and his interest in experimentation as positive. His ideal of flexibility also has merits. I, myself, was educated in public schools devoted to Dewey’s concepts. On the positive side, those merits of his philosophy resulted in a boundless joy in creativity and self-expression, these traits benefiting me as a teacher, speaker and writer. Friends and colleagues brought up under strict rote learning ask me how I manage to be so prolific. I reply that it comes from an early de-emphasis on perfection in style or speech. I just say or write what I think is true without much care about correctness. They find themselves paralyzed by the inculcation of the idea that if you don’t want to do something perfectly don’t do it at all!

Negative would be Dewey’s atheism, his denial of moral absolutes, and his lack of interest in many Christian virtues. These problems had vast consequences for education in the rest of the 20th
century. Can we not see springing from progressive education a system where children learn to be efficient and proficient without any goal for their skills in terms of unchanging human or religious values? Dewey’s optimism about the future of society, leaving out of account the effects of original sin, contributed greatly to failure to deal adequately with evil tendencies. Such a philosophy can be seen as coming to root eventually in unbridled hedonism and its consequences in an addictive culture with the abandonment of sexual responsibility and eventually the wholesale killing of unwanted babies.

The result of pragmatic methods of education has certainly been a loss in the area of knowledge of the past. Most students in the United States have less background in the area of liberal arts than students of former centuries. At the same time, education has become almost an idol in our culture. Instead of strengthening a theological world view, education is often a substitute, with the reward being not heaven but success in the world. So much is this upward mobility sought that even religious parents send their children to schools they know will tear down the belief of the young people, if only success in the world is guaranteed.

End Notes for Dewey


2. The Child and the Curriculum, p. vi.

3. Ibid., p. vii

4. Ibid., p. 4

5. Ibid., pp. 7-8

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Lewis was brought up in an Irish Protestant home but without much religious training. He was tutored by an atheistic logician. In young adulthood he converted to what he called “Mere Christianity,” though he attended Anglican services. Lewis was an Oxford and later Cambridge professor of classics as well as a popular writer of fiction and of apologetics. Famous books of C. S. Lewis include Mere Christianity, Problem of Pain, The Screwtape Letters, The Chronicles of Narnia, Great Divorce, The Abolition of Man, Miracles, Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, That Hideous Strength, Till We Have Faces. His unusual late marriage to an American woman became the subject of a popular film Shadowlands made many years after his death.
Some of the main themes of the philosophy of life of C. S. Lewis were the objectivity of truth and the importance of nobility of character and heroic virtue. A famous way Lewis formulated the case for Christianity was that it was illogical to think of Jesus as a wonderful human being, a wisdom figure, etc. Since Jesus clearly claims divinity, he is either a liar, a madman, or the real thing. Since no one thinks he was a liar or a madman he has to have been what he said he was, the divine son the God.

In Lewis’ book *The Abolition of Man* written in 1947 (1) he critiqued the philosophical presuppositions behind modern education. Lewis began his book with an analysis of an ordinary text used in schools for young people of around high school age. He noticed that the authors of this primer had what we would call today a hidden agenda. They were interested in shifting the students interest from the real objective world to subjective emotions. They thought that when someone makes a statement that seems objective it is really subjective. For example, if someone says that sunset is sublime, they are not reporting about the sunset, but rather about their own feelings. Presumably there are no such things as sublime realities, only “sublime feelings.”

The textbook is echoing certain popular philosophical theories such as emotivism which claim that there are no ethical absolutes. Take pre-marital sex. If someone claims that this is objective wrong, according to emotivists, they are really only expressing their own distaste for sex. Lewis showed how absurd this seemingly innocuous theory really was. In the presence of what someone thinks is sublime, Lewis argued, he doesn’t have sublime feelings but rather humble feelings and a desire to venerate. Those feelings of humility and veneration refer to an objective reality that is sublime.

“If I say ‘you are contemptible, I don’t mean that I have contemptible feelings, but rather that I have angry feelings...Making all values subjective...makes them trivial.”

You see, if you tell someone he or she is contemptible then you must give a good reason based on intrinsic values, such as your having committed a mean act. But if all it means to blame someone is that I have mean feelings, there is more moral issue, only a psychological question about why I might be over-reacting.

According to Lewis, education bent on debunking noble sentiments ends in making the students into cynics instead of people capable of noble emotions. If someone is lauding goodness and you say he or she is just naive, that is cynical. We ought to laud true goodness, not debunk it. Of course there is such a thing as thinking someone is generous, for example, when this person is just looking for tax write-offs. But, as Lewis expresses it, critiquing bathos (sentimental drivel) the book winds up leaving only shrewdness. (2) The authors of the textbook Lewis critiques think that their students are too naive and sentimental whereas most of them are cold and vulgar. In any case, Lewis thought that “The right defense against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments.” (3)
As in the philosophy of Von Hildebrand, which we will study later, Lewis emphasized the idea that there really are attitudes and deeds that merit our admiration. Plato and Aristotle insisted that young people had to be taught to love what is good and hate the evil. People who do not realize these differences are like color-blind people.

Getting back to the nature of education, whereas the old traditional kind initiated people into the world of true values, the new education just programs people.

“The old dealt with its pupils as grown birds deal with young birds when they teach them to fly: the new deals with them more as the poultry-keeper deals with young birds - making them thus and thus for purposes of which the birds know nothing.”(4)

In the type of progressive education influenced by Dewey, in many ways falls under Lewis’ critique. Public school students often lost the idea of the heroic and were molded to be flexible open-minded citizens able to express our opinions, irrespective of any true values. The mentality became sophistic as they learned to debate successfully on any side, no matter how false or loathsome. For the traditional virtue of love was substituted democratic tolerance.

Lewis asked in The Abolition of Man whether anyone could be asked to sacrifice his life for his country on the basis of the new kind of debunking education? One might reply that the protests against the war in Vietnam answered that question. Young men were asked to sacrifice not because of some absolute value of patriotism but because it is useful for the country to have soldiers. How natural that they would ask why, and then, why me?

In the past, by contrast, ethical norms crossing over many different cultures are self-evident premises rather than conclusions to be proven. You have to see that it is better to do good, to love your neighbor as yourself, etc. Without such values, education easily becomes a conditioner or programmer of whatever values the most powerful wish to wield. (5)

In his novel, That Hideous Strength, (6) Lewis fleshes out this concept depicting in horrible detail the types of manipulative individuals who will fill the void created by subjectivism at the university level. With no set of absolute values you have education as a programmer of whatever values the most powerful wish to wield.

“...critics may ask ‘Why should you suppose they (the future programmers) will be such bad men?’ But I am not supposing them to be bad men. They are, rather, not men (in the old sense) at all. They are, if you like, men who have sacrificed their own share in traditional humanity in order to devote themselves to the task of deciding what ‘Humanity’ shall henceforth mean. ‘Good’ and ‘bad,’ applied to them, are words without content: for it is from them that the content of these words is henceforward to be derived...Man’s final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man.”(7)

In the absence of acknowledged good all we have is “I want.” (8) Only an absolute rule that is above us can overarch rulers and ruled alike to prevent tyranny. The new educational programmers
will liquidate unsocial elements and laud only integration and dynamism vs. nobility and diligence. Traditional virtues such as thrift will be viewed only as sales-resistance. (9)

It must be obvious that I think that Lewis’ ideas about the defects of progressive education with its scepticism, relativism, and abandonment of objective truth and value, are excellent.

In his effort to defend traditional education, however, I wonder how well he saw how a certain kind of defense of patriotism led into English colonial exploitation. And, for all the creative teachers of the classics, such as Lewis, himself, what of those who taught students to learn by rote with no ostensible result but boredom and eventual rebellion?

End Notes for Lewis:


2. Ibid., p. 15

3. Ibid., p. 24

4. Ibid., p. 32

5. See p. 72 ff

6. Th at Hi d eou s Stren g th (New Yo rk: S cri b n e r’s, 1 99 6)

7. Abolition, pp. 76-77

8. Ibid., p. 78

9. See Ibid., pp. 84-85

Conclusion

After finishing the chapter about education for The Battle for the 20th Century Mind I was left with some questions that might be in your minds as well: What can be salvaged from progressive educational ideals? Is there a trend today in public schools to return to some of the classical ideals Lewis thought so important? In what ways does home-schooling, as generally practiced, exemplify ideals both of Dewey and of Lewis?
Theme 5

The Independent vs. the Religious Woman

De Beauvoir vs. Stein

Introduction

“Women's Lib!” Can you remember the first time you heard those words? Probably not, if you are younger than fifty. That’s because, a few decades after its founding in the early sixties, the term “women's liberation,” evolved into the now more familiar “feminism.”

I was in my thirties when I first heard that a women’s lib movement, similar to the black liberation movement, was gaining momentum. I recall women and men laughed their heads off - that is how absurd the notion first seemed. Little could we imagine at its inception that women’s lib would revolutionize the relationship between many women and men of future generations!
To consider changes in the United States since the onset of 1950's feminism, just think about how rare it was before that time to see a father change a diaper or to walk up to the desk of a woman banker. On the negative side, could abortion on demand have won the day without underlying feminist premises?

The mother of feminism in the United States was undoubtedly Betty Friedan whose book, The Feminine Mystique, became an instant best-seller. A sharp observer and participant in the middle class suburban life-style of the forties and fifties, Friedan exploded the myth that all women would be happy if only they had a nice house, a garden, and a few children to raise. If her diagnosis of the miseries of isolated nuclear family life in the suburbs was astute, her remedies were more controversial. Going for career first, with pre-marital sex and contraception as part of the package, emotionally bankrupted many enthusiastic women’s libbers.

The grandmother of feminism was acknowledged to be the French woman existentialist philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir. Her study, The Second Sex, provided an exhaustive treatment of the historical and philosophical roots of oppression of women. Reading The Second Sex, with its wealth of factual data and fascinating anecdotal material, left most women scholars both stunned and furious. Examples would be reading direct quotations from male philosophers about the inferiority of women, or peasant husbands in some cultures routinely beating up their wives every night to let out the frustrations of the day.

When abortion was legalized and became a vital part of the agenda of most feminist organizations, there was a backlash. It took the form of vehement espousal of traditional feminine roles among conservative women and male authority figures. Some conservative religious groups, Jewish and Christian, urged mothers to stay at home even if it meant going on welfare. Strict interpretations of Pauline “headship” of males over females were taught by some Christian churches as absolutely necessary to combat emasculation of men and masculinization of women.

Those women and men, who wanted to avoid extremes, often became confused. Consider the plight of a businessman in his fifties. He had always called “the girls” in the office “honey” or “sweetheart” and gotten a smile in return. Suddenly his secretaries demanded to be called “women,” and regarded the word “honey” as an affront, something to document for their sexual harassment suits as the first demeanor of their “male chauvinist bosses! On the other side, how was a wife who had always jumped to satisfy the most trivial demands of her husband, suddenly to become an assertive modern woman with her own goals outside the home?

Comic relief came from watching the old-fashioned Archie and Edith Bunker and the younger Gloria and “Meathead” live out these conflicts in exaggerated caricature each week on All in the Family. Tragically, however, those spouses who failed to arrive at compromise often found themselves divorced over issues involving legitimate and, sometimes, illegitimate assertion of feminine rights.
Catholics who were neither fundamentalist about traditional roles nor revolutionary were looking around for some kind of middle ground. They found insight and wisdom in the many books, lectures, and workshops based on Christian principles offered from the 70’s onward about how women and men should relate to each other. Among these, I believe that the writings of St. Edith Stein stand at the top of the list. Based on lectures given in Europe before World War II, the writings of Stein helped women to understand how devotion to Christ could transfigure the relations of women and men so marred by original sin. Available before feminism became popular among English speaking peoples, these writings were reprinted again as an antidote to the prevailing confusion.

Our study of the theme of atheistic and Christian philosophy of woman will focus on De Beauvoir and Stein but will also include thoughts taken from the writings of their activist counterparts: Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood will be contrasted with those of Joan Andrews, foremost woman leader of the pro-life group Operation Rescue.

Reading first the article by me: “Philosophical Reflections on the Feminine and Masculine and Human Nature” will help you understand where the other writers fit in the broader picture.
Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986)

Born in Paris, De Beauvoir was a strong Catholic as a youth because her mother was devout. Her father, however, was pagan in his morals. Simone gradually lost her faith during her teen years. After studying with Jean Paul Sartre, the atheistic French existentialist, her doubts were augmented. Since they did not believe in marriage, they life-time companions, instead, though each had other relationships. De Beauvoir taught and wrote about philosophy. She also wrote novels. As early as 1936, De Beauvoir became interested in studying the nature of woman. She did voluminous research both in Europe and the United States for her book, The Second Sex, which includes biological, historical viewpoints, psychological and sociological data and theories, as well as chapters about prostitution and religion.

The Second Sex is an important book, full of interesting insights and speculations even if it is basically flawed by a false philosophy of the meaning of life.

Here are just a very few summaries and excerpts from The Second Sex, translated and edited by H. M. Parshley (N.Y.: Random House, 1989) - originally published in English in 1952):

In the introduction, De Beauvoir points out that the sexes are not symmetrical because man is the paradigm of the human person and woman is the second sex, or, the other.

“She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other.” (p. xxii)

As such, oppression of all sorts is justified. One reason women do not rise up against oppression is because they don’t define themselves as a “we” with other women, but instead define themselves as daughter, sister, wife, mother, of fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. (see p. xxv) The main reason women do this is existential - that is, on De Beauvoir’s theory, because in this way they can enjoy dependence and avoid economic risk. They also can avoid the pain of having to make free choices about their lives. (see p. xxvii) Through the economic independence coming with the industrial revolution, there was a chance to break free of this oppressive nexus.

By contrast, De Beauvoir’s goal is to change the ideas of society in such a way as to promote comradely equality. Men would ultimately gain by losing the slave and gaining a companion. (see p. xxxi)

A key factor is realizing that there is no such thing as an essence - woman. It is up to women to create who woman will be. Ideas such as the eternal feminine are concocted by men to make women think that the domesticity which serves them, is beautiful.

“Men have presumed to create a feminine domain - the kingdom of life, of immanence - only in order to lock up women therein.” (p. 65)
De Beauvoir thinks that women’s reproductive role ties her to life vs. transcendence of life through significant projects. In sexuality the woman is receptive, waiting, passive, and this contributes to his dominance.

Pregnancy is like having a parasite living inside followed by the baby nourishing itself at the expense of the body of the mother when nursing, She describes the pregnant mothers as having within themselves: “A hostile element - it is the species gnawing at their vitals.” (p. 30)

By contrast, the male’s sexuality is not enslaving: “...the male seems infinitely favored: his sexual life is not in opposition to his existence as a person.” (p. 32)

De Beauvoir presupposes that it is better to avoid loving inter-dependence in favor of independence. The closeness of the babe in the womb to the mother is demeaned in favor of work-projects.

Historical chapters in The Second Sex chronicle the oppression of women in detail. While someone might question her conclusions, others might need to be enlightened about prevalence of female infanticide in some cultures, extreme penalties for infidelity. De Beauvoir admits that there was some amelioration of women’s plight in Christian countries. (see p. 99 ff.) After the French revolution key issues became the vote and independent employment, largely because machines enabled the weaker sex to work side by side with men without a discrepancy of physical strength. (see p. 113) De Beauvoir writes with regret that because of her enslavement to reproductive functions woman still worked for the family rather than for herself and the progress of mankind. She is delighted that in the 20th century, through contraception women are

“Protected in large part from the slavery of reproduction, she is in a position to assume the economic role that is offered her and will assure her of complete independence.” (p. 121)

Simone De Beauvoir has many good insights. Concerning the comment by a psychologist that little girls climb trees to compete with boys: nonsense, De Beauvoir replies. Little girls climb trees because it is fun.

De Beauvoir has interesting descriptions about negative relationships. Following Jean Paul Sartre, her mentor, De Beauvoir thinks that many so-called love relationships actually involve destructive appropriation of the other person’s freedom. (What Buber would call the I-it.) There are men who, indeed, seek in a woman a combination of prostitute and slave.

Or, to treat of feminine distortions, De Beauvoir writes this about the relationship of some mothers to their sons:

“She would have him be of unlimited power, yet held in the palm of her hand, dominating the world, yet on his knees before her” (p. 517)
Concerning the smothering mother, she writes:

“...the mother makes herself the slave of her offspring to compensate for the emptiness of her heart and to punish herself for her unavowed hostility. Such a mother is morbidly anxious, not allowing her child out of her sight; she gives up all diversion, all personal life, thus assuming the role of victim; and she derives from these sacrifices the right to deny her child all independence.”(p. 514)

Here is how De Beauvoir reacts to the theory that women who are ambitious are really only substituting work for a child. De Beauvoir claims that such a theory is as prejudiced as to think necessarily that a woman who has a child is substituting this for an important work she could otherwise do. It ignores the fundamental freedom to define oneself. (see p. 523)

De Beauvoir’s idea I believe to be a distortion. It presupposes that any kind of work is equally important as children are. There is false metaphysics here. Not that work is not important but it is usually a means to and end; whereas a child is an end.

In a prophesy of day-care, De Beauvoir states that the answer to women working outside of the home at interesting occupations but not neglecting their children is to have care for the children outside the home. (see p. 525)

De Beauvoir thinks of marriage as a trap. Men and women should always feel free to break off a relationship. Otherwise they are unfree and insincere.

“...sentiment is free when it depends upon no constraint from outside, when it is experienced in fearless sincerity. The constraint of ‘conjugal love’ leads, on the other hand, to all kinds of repressions and lies.” (p. 473)

She seems to be blind to the reality of true love in real marriage.

In the concluding chapter of The Second Sex, De Beauvoir states that whereas in the past woman wanted to entrap man into her little domestic world,

“Today that combat takes a different shape; instead of wishing to put man in a prison, woman endeavors to escape from one; she no longer seeks to drag him into the realms of immanence but to emerge, herself, into the light of transcendence. Now the attitude of the males creates a new conflict: it is with a bad grace that the man lets her go. He is very well pleased to remain the sovereign subject, the absolute superior, the essential being; he refuses to accept his own companion as an equal in any concrete way. She replies to his lack of confidence in her by assuming an aggressive attitude...each free being wishes to dominate the other.” (p. 717-718)

Note that the final lines of the book reinforce the male as the paradigm just by the use of the word “brotherhood”:
“It is for man to establish the reign of liberty in the midst of the world of the given. To gain the supreme victory, it is necessary, for one thing, that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood.” (p. 732)

Not “sisterhood”?

In critique of the basic ideas of Simone de Beauvoir I would say that her descriptions of the life of men and women do, indeed, mirror the distortion of all relationships after the fall. Bad relationships between men and women do involve oppression, from both sides. But De Beauvoir’s philosophy is cold. Having lost a God of love, there is no metaphysical center of reality such as could make self-giving beautiful. By making the masculine the paradigm, unwittingly the woman can only be worthy by becoming masculine which is really anti-woman. Because there is no creation by God, therefore the worth of a person is not in pro-creating new human beings, destined for eternity, but in productivity for the earth.

St. Edith Stein (1891-1942)

A daughter in a large devoutly Jewish business family in Germany, Edith Stein became an atheist as a student. Study of philosophy led her into the circle of Catholic students and eventually to a conversion. As soon as she was baptized Edith wanted to become a Carmelite nun, but her director insisted she continue as a teacher and lecturer. When the Nazi persecution of Jewish people, including converts, made it impossible for Edith to retain her teaching job, her director suggested that she enter the convent. Eventually the Nazis sent all Jewish converts they could find in Holland where she had fled to the concentration camps. She died in Auschwitz. She was canonized recently.

Edith Stein wrote her thesis on the phenomenon of empathy. She also wrote a large book on metaphysics and wrote on spirituality. However, she is most famous for lectures later published on the subject of woman. The following excerpts are from her Essays on Woman compiled from lectures given before she entered Carmel. This excerpt is here with permission and is translated from the German by Freda Mary Oben, Ph.D. Copyright© 1987, 1996 Washington Province of Discalced Carmelites ICS Publications 2131 Lincoln Road, N.E. Washington, DC 20002-1199 U.S.A.

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ON THE NATURE OF WOMAN

“The vocation of man and woman is not quite the same in the original order, the order of fallen nature and the order of redemption. Originally they were both required to preserve their own similarity to god, their dominion over the earth and the preservation of the race....After their fall their relationship is changed from a pure communion of love to one of governing and subordination tainted
by lust. The hard struggle for existence has been assigned primarily to man, the labour of birth to woman. But there is a promise of redemption, because woman is to fight evil, and the male sex will be exalted in the Son of Man who is to come. The Redemption will restore the original order. The superiority of man is revealed in the fact that the Saviour came into the world as man. The feminine sex is honoured in that he was born of a human mother. A woman becomes the gate through which God entered into the human race. Adam was the human type that pointed to the future divine-human king of creation....

“If we attempt to describe the nature of man and woman on the basis of natural knowledge, we shall receive a vivid interpretation of what the Word of God has suggested to us...

“Man’s body and mind are equipped for fight and conquest, in accordance with his original vocation to subject the world and be its king and master. Thus there is a threefold urge in him: he wants to subdue it by knowledge and thus make it his own, but also to possess it with all the enjoyments it offers, and lastly to make it his own creation by forming it. It is due to the limitation of human nature, which it shares with every created thing, but even more to the deterioration of all his powers in the state of original sin, that man is unable to achieve in equal measure all that is implied in his dominion over the earth. If the desire for knowledge is strong in him and he uses all his energy to satisfy it, he will to a great extent be forced to renounce the possession and enjoyment of the good things of life as well as creative work. But if he is wholly intent on making a small world of his own creation, whether as a farmer, an artist or a politician etc...pure knowledge and the enjoyment of the good things of life will have to take the second place. And in each of these spheres the single achievement will be the more perfect, the more restricted the field of activity. Thus just the desire to produce as perfect a work as possible will lead to onesidedness and cause the other talents to atrophy...

(Man can also become tyrannical.) “This change of kingship into brutal tyranny shows itself also in man’s relation to woman. According to the original order she was given him as a companion and helpmate. Hence she is equipped in the same way as he in order to assist him in dominating the earth: she, too, is capable of knowledge, enjoyment and creative work...This indicates a form of co-operation in which the woman could develop her gifts by the side of man in their common tasks, while he would be preserved from becoming inordinately one-sided by the harmonious development of her gifts. But in the state of punishment after the fall this companionship was changed into a state of domination which is often brutally enforced. The natural gifts of a woman and their best possible development are irrelevant, and she is exploited as a means to an end in the service of work or for the satisfaction of a man’s desire. So it may easily come about that the tyrant becomes the slave of lust, and thus the slave of the slave who is to satisfy it.

“The perversion of the relations between man and woman is connected with that of the attitude towards posterity. Procreation was originally meant to be the task of both. Since, owing to their differences, both depend on completing each other, this dependence is even more emphasized
in their relationship to their children. On the one hand their undeveloped nature of the child makes it necessary to nurse and protect it and to guide its growth. Owing to the close physical relationship between mother and child and woman’s special capacity for sharing and devoting herself to another’s life, she will have the principal part in its education, which will also be helped by her stronger instinct for the harmonious development of human talents. On the other hand, the demands of motherhood make it imperative that man should protect and care for mother and child. Moreover, because he is more energetic and gifted for outstanding achievements, ha has also a duty to instruct. And finally, because he is king of all creation, he has also to care for the noblest of all earthly creatures...The vocation of the father may be abused in many ways. On the one hand he may shun his duties, in the lowest form by abusing sexual intercourse for the mere satisfaction of his instincts, without giving any thought to his descendants, perhaps even at their cost. On a higher level he may indeed shoulder his material responsibilities, but neglect his share in their education. On the other hand there is the danger that a father will perform his duties brutally, restricting the mother’s responsibilities to the merely physical sphere and depriving her of her higher tasks, while he himself violently represses all the legitimate aspirations of the new generation.

“All weaknesses in man’s nature that cause him to miss his original vocation are rooted in the perversion of his relation to God. He can only fulfill his principal task of being the image of God, if he seeks to develop his powers in humble submission to his guidance. He must seek knowledge in the form and within the limits sanctioned by God; he must enjoy God’s creatures reverently and gratefully for his glory; he must do creative work in order to complete creation in the way God has assigned to man’s free action. This would mean truly to be a finite image of the divine wisdom, goodness and power. If man says to God ‘I will not serve,’ his relation to all other creatures will be perverted. We have the exact parallel in the nature of woman. According to the original order her place is by the side of man to subdue the earth and bring up posterity. But her body and soul are less suited for fight and conquest, but rather for nursing, protecting and preserving. Of the threefold attitude to the world that consists in knowing, enjoying and creatively shaping, the second is usually best suited to her. She seems more capable than man of reverently enjoying creatures...This is evidently connected with her function of preserving and fostering posterity. It is a sense of the importance of the organic whole, of specific values and of individuals. This renders her sensitive and clear-sighted for whatever wants to grow and develop and requires individual understanding. This sense of what is organic benefits not only her posterity but all other creatures, especially the opposite sex; it makes her an understanding companion and help in the enterprises of another. Hence, according to the original order of nature, man and woman evidently complement each other in this way: man’s vocation is primarily to govern; his fatherhood is not subordinated to or co-ordinated with this, but included in it; whereas woman is primarily called to be a mother, her share in the government of the world being in some way implied in that.

“Just as a woman’s knowledge, enjoyment and action do not differ in principle from those of a man, the same forms of perversion appear in both. They are rooted in the desire to gain possession of things by violence and thus to spoil or even destroy them...Since women are less gifted for abstract
thought and creative action than for the possession and enjoyment of good things, there is the danger that they may become completely absorbed in these. If now the reverent joy in things is perverted into greed, a woman on the one hand anxiously collect and preserve useless things, on the other sink into a life of sloth and self-indulgence. This in its turn will tend to corrupt her relationship with man. If their free companionship is threatened by his tendency to brutal despotism, she will become even more his slave by surrendering herself to her own instincts. On the other hand, her anxiety to preserve her property may also lead to a domineering attitude towards man. Her relation to her children shows similar characteristics. If a woman leads a merely sensual life she will seek to escape the duties of motherhood as much as the man those of fatherhood, unless she is preserved from this by an instinctive desire for children and an equally distinctive attachment. If a woman anxiously seeks to retain her children as if they were her property, she will try in every way to tie them to herself (also by curtailing as far as possible the rights of their father), and thus prevent their free development. By refusing to serve her husband, her children and all creatures in loving reverence, and so to further their natural development for God’s honour and their natural happiness, she will prevent development and destroy happiness.

“Again the root of the evil is the perversion of her relation to God. In the fall woman rebelled against God and exalted herself above man by corrupting him, therefore she was punished by being subjected to him...

“We have this indicated how nature, and hence the original vocation of man and woman, can be realized: this is possible only if both once more become children of God. The redemptive work of Christ assures our adoption if we ourselves do what is in our power. The Israelites of the Old Covenant did what they were asked to do by faithfully following the Law and awaiting the Messiah. For women this meant that they were humbly to be subject to men, to preserve their purity and to discipline their sensuality more strictly than men. They were to long for children in order to see in them God’s salvation, and to bring them up faithfully in the fear of the Lord. Man, on the other hand, had to carry out the prescribed services of prayer and sacrifice, he had to obey the moral and social commandments, look after the well-being of his family and honour his wife as the mother of his children.

“In the New Covenant man takes part in the work of redemption by the most intimate personal union with Christ; he clings to him by faith, because he is the way of salvation who has revealed the truth and offered the means to attain beatitude; by hope which confidently expects the life promised by him; and by love which seeks to approach him. This love will try to know him ever more clearly; it will contemplate his life and meditate his words and want to be united to him most intimately in the holy Eucharist. It will share his mystical life by following the Church’s Year and its liturgy. This way of salvation is the same for both sexes; it redeems both, as well as their mutual relationship.
“Redemption did not restore fallen nature to its original purity by one stroke. Christ has placed salvation into the soil of mankind like a seed that must grow with the inner and outer growth of the Church and in every individual soul. Being “on the way” like pilgrims bound for the heavenly Jerusalem, we experience in ourselves the fight of corrupt nature with the germ of grace that wants to grow in us and strives and is able to expel whatever is unhealthy. All around us we see the fruits of original sin in its most frightening forms, especially in the relationship of the sexes. Every trace of their high vocation seems to be lost in a life of unfettered licentiousness; the sexes are fighting each other for their rights, deaf to the voice of nature and of God. Yet we also see that things can be different where grace is efficacious. In Christian marriage man sees his task of being the head of his small community in his duty to ensure as well as he can their material well-being and progress; he will contribute his share so that each member may become the best that nature and grace can make it. This means that he will at times have to come forward and give a lead, at others to remain in the background, or again to intervene and oppose. If inclinations and talents stir spontaneously in his wife and children, he will allow them to develop and give them all the help he can. If he has to do with weaker natures and gifts, if he notices a lack in courage and self-confidence, he will try to bring out the hidden talents. It is one of his duties to develop the intellectual and spiritual side of his wife, and not to let her be immersed in a mere life of the instincts. He may do this by permitting her to share in his own work, or by encouraging obvious tendencies to independent activity. If he takes both possibilities away from her, seeking to confine her to a circle that is too narrow for her gifts, or even only to a life of the instincts, he will have a large share in the consequences that will result from this. He will be responsible for the fact that her higher life will atrophy, for pathological disturbances and her tendency to become too strongly attached to her husband and children, which will be a burden to them, and, moreover, for the dreariness of her life once she is left to face it alone. The same holds good for her relation to her children. On the other hand it belongs to his duties as master of the house to look after the order and harmony of family life. It is part of his duty to exhort each member not only to look after the development of his own personality, but according to his position in the household, to practice consideration to others and the self-denial that his duties entail. And, finally, his concern for the well-ordered natural life of the individuals and the family should not lead him to neglect their supernatural life. A man is meant to imitate Christ as the Head of the Church in his own small circle. Therefore he should regard it as his highest duty to set them an example in following Christ and to further, to the best of his ability, the life of grace that is stirring in them. This he will achieve the better the more closely he himself is united to the Lord.

“The domestic burden which these demands place on a man in addition to his professional duties outside his home would be too heavy for him if he were not assisted by the companion who is called to shoulder more than half of it. She wants not only to develop her own personality without hindrance, but desires the same for those around her. Thus her husband will find in her his best adviser not merely for the guidance of herself and their children, but also for his own life. Indeed, he will often be best able to fulfill his duties in this respect if he lets her do things in her own way and submits to her leadership. Care for the order and beauty of the whole household is also among the
natural feminine duties, since all need a harmonious atmosphere for their proper development. The feminine nature is particularly receptive to what is morally good and loathes everything that is mean and vulgar. It is thus protected against the danger of temptation and of being submerged in a wholly sensual life; this is in harmony with the mysterious prophecy of a victorious fight of the woman against the serpent, which was fulfilled by the victory which the queen of all women had won on behalf of all mankind.

“Closely connected with this is the feminine receptivity to divine things. A woman desires to be personally united to the Lord and to be wholly filled and guided by his love. In a rightly ordered family life, therefore, the moral and religious education will mostly be the task of the woman. If her life is completely anchored in the life of Jesus, this will be her best protection against the danger of losing the right measure in her love for her family and her surroundings; she will not cut the ground from under her feet, on which she has to stand to be a support for others. Independent objective interests of her own would in the natural sphere counterbalance this dangerous tendency to lose herself in another’s life; but these alone would lead to the opposite danger of her being unfaithful to her feminine vocation. Only if she entrusts herself wholly to the guidance of the Lord will she be sure to be led safely between Scylla and Charybdis. For whatever is given to him is not lost, but will be preserved, purified, elevated and given the right measure.

“These last suggestions lead to the question of a non-domestic profession and to the relationship of man and woman in the professional life. In view of the events of the last decades we may regard as closed that period of history which assigned to women only domestic duties, and to men the struggle of existence outside the home. Today it is not too difficult for us to see how this development could actually come about. The scientific and technical achievements which progressively replaced human labour by the work of the machine relieved women of many burdens, so that they desired to use the energies that had been released in other spheres....Eventually the (German) revolution (1918) brought about a sudden reversal also in this sphere, and the economic depression forced even those to take up a job who had until then given no thought to a professional training.

“In connexion with our former discussions we shall first have to ask whether women’s professional activities outside the home are opposed to the orders of nature and grace as such. I think the answer is No. It seems to me that the original order provided for a common activity of man and woman in all spheres....The fact that the original order was changed after the fall does not mean that it was completely abolished, just as the human nature had not become wholly depraved, but preserved its original powers, though they were weakened and liable to error. All man’s powers exist also in the feminine nature, even though they normally appear differently apportioned. This is surely a sign that they would be used in an occupation suited to them. It is only reasonable and in accordance with nature to transcend the circle of domestic duties where this is too narrow to allow of a full development of one’s gifts. The limit beyond which we may not go, however, seems to me to be reached if the professional activities endanger the domestic life, that is the educational community of
parents and children. Even in the case of man I think the divine order is violated if his professional work absorbs him to such a degree that he is completely cut off from his family life. This will even be more so in the case of a woman. Therefore we must consider as unhealthy a state of affairs in which married women are normally forced to take up work outside the home which makes it impossible for them to attend to their domestic duties. In a time when the average woman would marry and be wholly absorbed in her household duties it could be considered normal that she should be restricted to the domestic sphere.

“Owing to the fall the destiny of woman has changed. First, her powers were largely restricted by the difficulties of providing even for the most primitive needs of life. In this respect the technical developments have brought a change for the better. Secondly, she was subjected to man, the scope and kind of her actions were made dependent on his will; but this was not necessarily ion accordance with reason, because his intelligence and will are not infallible. Moreover, the harmony between the sexes being disturbed by the fall and both male and female natures corrupted, the subjection necessarily became the occasion for a struggle to be given opportunities for action.

“The redemptive order restored the original state of things. The more it is realized in human beings, the more harmoniously will the sexes work together also in regulating their professional life. Moreover, the redemptive order brings about a fundamental change in the position of women by setting up the ideal of virginity. This breaks with the Old Testament principle that a woman can work out her salvation only by bringing forth children. Indeed, even in the Old Dispensation this principle has been set aside in the case of certain individuals called to extraordinary deeds for the people of God, such as Deborah and Judith. Now this is made into a normal way, so that women may consecrate themselves to God alone and engage in manifold activities in his service. The same St. Paul in whose writings we have sometimes found such strong evidence of Old Testament views has also said quite clearly (I Cor 6) that in his opinion it is good for men and women to marry, but that it is better for both to remain unmarried; and he has frequently praised the achievement of women in the first Christian Churches.

“Before passing on to examine the vocation of men and women to the service of God, we would consider whether, according to the order of nature, professions should be distributed between the sexes in such a way that some would be reserved to men, others to women (and still others might be open to both). In my view this question, too, has to be answered in the negative. For there are strong individual differences, so that some women closely approach the masculine, and some men the feminine type. Hence every “masculine” profession may also be very satisfactorily filled by certain women, and every “feminine” one by certain men. Therefore I do not think legal barriers should be erected in this matter, but adequate educational and vocational guidance should aim at a suitable choice of profession and eliminate undesirable elements by insisting on the necessary qualifications. For the average man and woman a division between the professions will come about quite normally, since evidently, owing to their natural differences, they will be suited for different kinds of work. Physical strength, predominantly abstract reasoning or independent creative work will be required in
the “masculine” professions, that is in heavy manual work, industry, agriculture; in the exact sciences such as mathematics, physics and technology; further in mechanical offices and administrative work, and in certain—not in all—branches of art. A sphere for genuinely feminine work exists wherever sensibility, intuition and adaptability are needed, and where the whole human being needs attention, whether it has to be nursed or educated or helped in any other way, perhaps by understanding it and assisting it to express itself. This means that a woman will find congenial work in the teaching and the medical professions, in all kinds of social work, in those branches of scholarship whose object is man and his activities, and in the arts that represent men; but also in business, in national and communal administration insofar as these have to deal mainly with people...

“To belong to God and to serve Him in the free surrender of love is not the vocation of a few chosen ones, but of every Christian. Every one of us, whether consecrated or not, whether man or woman, is called to follow Christ. The further he progresses in this way, the more Christlike he will become. Now Christ embodies the ideal of human perfection, in him there are no defects, the advantages of the male and female natures are united in him, the weakness abolished. Therefore his faithful disciples will also be increasingly elevated above the limitations of their nature: in saintly man we see tender gentleness and a truly motherly care for the souls entrusted to them, in women manly courage, firmness and decision. Thus if we follow Christ we shall be led to fulfill our original human vocation. We shall mirror god in us, the Master of Creation, by protecting and preserving all creatures in our care, the Father, by generating and forming children for his Kingdom in spiritual fatherhood and motherhood. But this transcending of natural barriers is the highest effect of grace; it can never be achieved by carrying on a self-willed struggle against nature and denying its barriers, but only by humble subjection to the divine order.”

From THE ETHOS OF WOMEN’S PROFESSIONS

“Is it possible to speak of a special profession of women or even of a multiplicity of professions? Radical feminist leaders, especially in the beginning of the movement, have denied the first question and claimed all professions of their sex. Their opponents will not admit the second; they recognize only one vocation, the “natural” one. The subject requires a discussion of both points of view. We must first ask whether there is a natural vocation of woman, and what is the psychological attitude it requires.

(Only unusual problems) could blind a person to such an extent to make her deny the palpable fact that the body and soul of a woman have been formed for a particular purpose. The clear, unshakable word of scripture says what daily experience has taught from the beginning of the world: woman is destined to be the companion of man and the mother of men. For this her body is equipped, and her psychological make-up, too, conforms to it. It is again a fact of experience that a psychological peculiarity exists; it also follows from St. Thomas’ principle that the soul is the form of the body. Where the bodies are so fundamentally different, there must also be a different type of
soul, despite the common human nature. We would outline this typically feminine psychological attitude quite briefly, since it is really quite familiar to all of us.

“Woman tends toward the living and personal; she wants the whole. To cherish, to keep and protect, this is her natural, her authentically maternal desire. The dead thing, the “object”, interests her in the first place insofar as it serves the living and the personal rather than for its own sake. This is connected with another feature: every kind of abstraction is foreign to her nature. The living and personal which is the object of her care, is a concrete whole and must be cared for and encouraged as a whole, not one part of the expense of the others, not the mind at the expense of the body or vice versa, neither one faculty of the soul at the expense of the others. This she tolerates neither in herself nor in others. And to this practical attitude corresponds her theoretical endowment: her natural way of knowledge is not so much notional and analytical, but envisaging and sensing the concrete. This natural equipment enables a woman to nurse and bring up her own children; but this fundamental attitude is not confined to them; it is also her way of meeting her husband and all those who come near her.

“This maternal character is matched by her gift of companionship. To share in another’s life, to take part in all that concerns him, in the greatest as well as the smallest things, in joy and in sorrow, but also in his work and problems, this is her special gift and her happiness. Man is absorbed in “his cause” and expects others to be interested in, and ready to serve it. He normally finds it difficult to enter into the personalities and interests of others. But this is natural to woman, and she is able sympathetically to penetrate into spheres which are in themselves foreign to her, and for which she would never care if a personal interest did not attract her to them. This gift is closely connected with her maternal vocation. If a person takes a lively interest in another, the latter’s capacities and performance will be increased. It is a truly maternal function even, and especially, needed by mature people; it will be given also to one’s own children the more they grow up, replacing the lower functions.

“... for the feminine nature is as much stained by original sin as human nature in general, and thus hindered in its pure development. Unless its evil tendencies are opposed, they will lead to typical perversions. The personal tendency is usually unwholesomely exaggerated; on the one hand woman is inclined to be extravagantly concerned with her own person and to expect the same from others; this expresses itself in vanity, desire for praise and recognition and an unrestrained urge for self-expression and communication. On the other hand we shall find an unmeasured interest in others that shows itself as curiosity, gossip, and an indiscreet longing to penetrate into the intimate lives of other people. The tendency towards wholeness easily leads her to frittering away her energy, it makes her disciplined to discipline her individual talents properly and leads to superficial nibbling in all directions. In her attitude to others it shows itself in a possessiveness far exceeding what is required by her maternal functions. Thus the sympathetic companion becomes the interfering busybody that cannot tolerate silent growth and thus does not foster development, but hinders it. Thus joyful service has been replaced by lust for governing. Only too many unhappy marriages have
been caused by this aberration, by which many mothers have also estranged their grown-up or even their growing children.

“If, by contrast, we would paint the picture of the purely developed feminine nature, of the wife and mother as her natural destiny would have her be, we shall look to the immaculate Virgin. Her life is centered in her Son. She waits for him to be born in blissful expectancy, she protects His childhood, she follows him in his ways, whether closely or from a distance, according to his wishes. She holds his dead body in her arms and carries out his last will. But all this she does not according to her own liking. She is the handmaid of the Lord, who fulfills the task to which God has called her. Therefore she does not treat her Child as her property: she has received him from the hand of God, and she places him again back into his hand, offering him in the temple and accompanying him to his death on the Cross.

“If we consider the Mother of God as a wife we shall be struck by her silent, limitless trust that counts on the same limitless confidence, and faithfully shares the other’s sorrow. In everything she is subject to God’s will that has given her husband as her human protector and visible head.

“In the image of the Mother of God we see the fundamental attitude of soul that corresponds to the natural vocation of woman. She is obedient to her husband, trusts him and takes part in his life, furthering his objective tasks as well as the development of his personality. She faithfully nurses and cherishes her child, developing hid God-given talents. She treats both with selfless devotion, silently retiring into the background when she is not needed. All this is based on the conception of marriage and motherhood as a vocation that comes from God, and must therefore be fulfilled for God’s sake under His guidance. How is it possible for a woman to reach such moral heights in mind as well as deed, seeing that in her fallen nature such powerful instinct oppose this end and urge her on to other ways? A good natural remedy for all typically feminine weakness is through objective work. This demands in itself the repression of exaggerated personal interests; besides, it combats superficiality not only in one’s own sphere of work, but provokes a general aversion against this failing. It requires submission to objective laws, hence it is a good training in obedience. But it must not lead to the sacrifice of the pure and praiseworthy personal attitude and to one-sided specialization and enslavement by one’s particular subject, which is the typical perversion of the masculine nature. This natural remedy is very effective, as is shown by the maturity and harmony of many women of high intellectual culture, and of others who have been trained in the discipline of strenuous professional work through the circumstances of their life...

“We now approach the second main question: are there women’s professions other than the natural one? Only prejudiced blindness could deny that women are capable of filing other professions than that of wife and mother. The experience of the last decades, and really the experience of all times has proved this. We may well say that in case of need every normal, healthy woman can do a job. And, conversely, there is no profession that could not be practiced by a woman. If fatherless children have to be provided with a breadwinner, if orphaned brothers and sisters or old parents have
to be supported, a woman ready to make sacrifices can achieve the most astonishing things. But individual gifts and inclinations, too, may lead to the most varied activities. Indeed, no woman is only “woman”; every one has her individual gifts just as well as a man, and so is capable of professional work of one sort or another, whether it be artistic, scholarly, technical or any other. Theoretically this individual talent may extend to any sphere, even to those somewhat outside women’s scope...

“Over and above this, however, we may say that also professions whose strictly objective requirements do not suit the feminine nature and could rather be considered as specifically masculine, may yet be practiced in a genuinely feminine way. We are thinking of working in a factory, in a business office, in national or municipal administration, in legislation, in a chemical laboratory or in a mathematical institute. All this needs concentration on things devoid of life, or is concerned with abstract thought. Yet in the great majority of cases the work will involve being together with others at least in the same room, often in the same division of labour. And with this we have at once an opportunity for developing all the feminine virtues. One may even say that precisely here, where everyone is in danger of becoming a piece of the machine, the development of the specifically feminine can become a beneficial counter-influence. In the soul of a man who knows that help and sympathy are awaiting him at his place of work, much will be kept alive or aroused that would otherwise be dwarfed. This is one way of feminine individuality forming professional life in a mode different from the average man’s...

“...When working out laws and decrees a man might perhaps aim at the most perfect legal form, with little regard to concrete situations; whereas a woman who remains faithful to her nature even in parliament or in the administrative services, will keep the concrete end in view and adapt the means accordingly.

“Thus it might be a blessing for the whole social life whether private or public, if women penetrated increasingly into the most different professional spheres, especially if they preserve the specifically feminine ethos. Here again the Mother of God should be our example. Mary at the wedding of Cana: her quietly observing eyes see everything and discover where something is missing. And before anyone notices anything, before there is any embarrassment, she has already remedied the situation. She finds ways and means, she gives the necessary directions, everything quietly and without attracting attention. Let this be the example of woman in the professional life. Wherever she is placed, let her do her work quietly and efficiently, without demanding attention or recognition. And at the same time she should keep a vigilant eye on the situation sensing where there is something lacking, where somebody needs her help. And rectifying things as far as possible without being noticed. Then, like a good angel, she will always spread blessing.

“We have now surveyed the sphere of feminine activities in the domestic as well as in the public life, indeed, a rich and fertile field. Yet this does not exhaust her capacities. Today as at all times since the foundation of Christ’s Church the Lord has called his chosen ones from their families and professions to his own service. Can the religious vocation be regarded as a specifically feminine
one? Both men and women receive this call, which is supernatural. For it comes from above and asks a person to rise above the earthly sphere. And thus it looks as if here the natural differences might carry no weight. Yet there is the theological principle that grace does not destroy, but that it perfects nature. Thus we may expect that in the religious vocation, too, the feminine nature will not be eliminated, but will be integrated and made fruitful in a special way. Beyond this it is possible that, like the natural professions, the religious life, too, may make special demands that appeal to the feminine nature in a special way. The religious vocation implies the complete surrender of the whole human being and of its whole life to the service of God. Religious are bound to use all the means suited to promote this end, such as renunciation of property, of vital human ties and of their own will. This may be achieved in many forms, that is to say the Lord may call His own to serve him in many different ways. They may silently contemplate the divine truth or solemnly celebrate the liturgy; they may spread the faith by the apostolate, or devote themselves to works of mercy. Thus the religious body consists of many different members. If we examine the various activities of religious, and how they are apportioned to the sexes, we shall find that they are differently related to them according to their differences. We may safely consider contemplation and liturgical prayer as transcending the difference of sex, since they are truly angelic activities. The spreading of the faith, since it is included in the priestly vocation to teach, is predominantly the task of men, though women, too, are active in this sphere, especially in the teaching orders. Works of charity, on the other hand, and the sacrificial life of atoning satisfaction, appeal quite definitely to the feminine nature. In the older orders which have men’s and women’s branches, the work is normally divided in such a way that the men are engaged in the outside activities such as preaching and giving missions, whereas the women devote themselves to the silent apostolate of prayer and sacrifice, although the education of the young was added to their tasks at an early age. The active women’s congregations of modern times are generally engaged in thoroughly feminine activities in the fields of education and charitable work. Thus today, when the majority of feminine communities devote themselves to external activities, the work of the religious Sisters is materially scarcely different from that of the women “in the world”. The only difference is the “formal” one, that in religious life all is done under obedience and for the love of God.

“We would now examine how this formal element of the religious life is related to the nature of woman. The motive, principle and end of the religious life is complete surrender to God in self-forgetting love. The religious puts an end, as it were, to his own life, in order to make room for the life of God. The more completely this is realized, the richer will be the divine life that fills the soul. Now the divine life is an overflowing love that needs nothing for itself, but gives itself freely, mercifully condescending to every needy creature. It is a love that heals the sick and restores to life what is dead, that protects and fosters, nourishes, teaches and forms. It mourns with the mourning and rejoices with the joyful; it makes itself the servant of every being, so that it may become what the Father has destined it to be; in one word: it is the love of the divine Heart.

It is the deepest desire of a woman’s heart to surrender itself lovingly to another, to be wholly his and to possess him wholly. This is at the root of her tendency towards the personal and the whole, which seems to us the specifically feminine characteristic. Where this total surrender is made to a
human being, it is a perverted self-surrender that enslaves her, and implies at the same time an unjustified demand which no human being can fulfill. Only God can receive the complete surrender of a person, and in such a way that she will not lose, but gain her soul. And only God can give himself to a human being in such a way that he will fulfill its whole being while losing nothing of his own. Hence the total surrender which is the principle of the religious life, is at the same time the only possible adequate fulfillment of woman’s desire.

“Now the divine love that enters the heart which is surrendered to God is a merciful love that would serve, awaken and foster life. It completely corresponds to what we have affirmed to be the professional ethos demanded of woman.

“What practical consequence follows from this? It certainly does not follow that all women who would fulfill their vocation should become nuns. But it does follow that the fallen and perverted feminine nature can be restored to its purity and led to the heights of the vocational ethos such as the pure feminine nature represents, only if it is totally surrendered to God. Whether she lives as a mother in her home, in the limelight of public life or behind the silent walls of a convent, she must everywhere be a “handmaid of the Lord”, as the Mother of God had been in all the circumstances of her life, whether she was living as a virgin in the sacred precincts of the Temple, silently kept house at Bethlehem and Nazareth, or guided the apostles and the first Christian community after the death of her Son. If every woman were an image of the Mother of God, a spouse of Christ and an apostle of the divine Heart, she would fulfil her feminine vocation no matter in what circumstance she lived and what her external activities might be.

“If I were to end here, the demands I have outlined, which are so frighteningly different from the average life of the present-day woman, might seem the dreams of the starry-eyed idealist. I must therefore add a few words on how they can be carried out in practice. We will therefore calmly face the contrast between the average life of modern women and our demands. Many of the best are almost crushed by the double burden of professional and family duties; they are always busy, worn out, nervy and irritable. Where are they to find the interior calm and serenity in order to be a support and guide for others? In consequence there are daily little frictions with husband and children despite real mutual love and recognition of the other’s merits, hence unpleasantness in the home and the loosening of family ties. In addition, there are the many superficial and unstable women who want only amusement in order to fill the interior void, who marry and are divorced, and leave their children either to themselves or to servants no more conscientious than the mothers. If they have to take a job they regard it only as a means to earn their living and to get as much enjoyment out of life as possible. In their case one can talk neither of vocation nor of ethos. They are like dry leaves blown by the wind. The breaking up of the family and the decline of morals is essentially connected with this group and can only be stemmed if we succeed in diminishing its number through suitable educational methods. Finally we would consider the by no means negligible number of those who take up a profession that corresponds to their talents and inclination. Nevertheless, many of them will discover after their first enthusiasm is spent that their expectations have not been fulfilled, and will be longing for something
else. This may often be due to the fact that they were trying to do their work “just like a man”. They have not sought—or perhaps not found—the means to make their feminine characteristics fruitful in their professional work. Then the nature that has been denied and repressed will assert itself...

“If we look behind the walls of convents we shall find that even there the average nun does not realize the ideal in its fullness. It is true, at all times there have been religious who did not take in the full meaning of their vows, or who were ready for the complete sacrifice in the first enthusiasm of youth, but could not keep it up. They will usually be a torment to themselves and a burden to their community. Add to this the difficulties produced by modern circumstance; there is, for example, the twofold burden of the nun who has to keep up to the standard of the contemporary demands made on a nurse, a teacher or a social worker, while at the same time fulfilling the obligations of her religious life. Only too often she will lose the right attitude under this twofold strain, in the same way as the wife and mother who has a job.

“Yet, despite this sad picture of the average, true heroines may still be met in all spheres of life, working real miracles of love and achievement in their families and professions, as well as in the cloister. We all know them from the records of the Church, but also from our own experience; there are the mothers who radiate warmth and light in their homes, who bring up nine children of their own, showering blessings on them for their own lives as well as for coming generations, and who still have a large heart for the needs of others. There are the teachers and office staff who support a whole family out of their salary, do domestic chores before and after their professional work, and still have time and money for all sorts of Church and charitable activities. There are the nuns who spend their nights praying for souls in danger, and take up voluntary penances for sinners. Where do they all find the strength to perform tasks which one might often think impossible for nature, and yet preserve that unalterable peace and serenity despite the most exacting nervous and emotional strains?

“Only by the power of grace can nature be purged from its dross, restored to its purity and made ready to receive the divine life. And this life itself is the fountain from which spring the works of love. If we want to preserve it, we must nourish it constantly from the Sacrament of Love. A woman’s life for which the divine lone is to be its inner form, will have to be a eucharistic life. To forget oneself, to be delivered from all one’s own desires and pretensions, to open one’s heart to all the pressing needs of others—this is possible only through the daily intimacy with our Lord in the tabernacle. If we visit the eucharistic God and take counsel with him in all our affairs, if we let ourselves be purified by the sanctifying power that flows from the altar of sacrifice, if we offer ourselves to the Lord in this sacrifice and receive him in our inmost souls in Holy Communion, then we cannot but be drawn ever more deeply into the current of this divine life; we shall grow into the mystical Body of Christ, and our heart will be transformed into the likeness of the divine heart.

“Something else is closely connected with this. If we have entrusted all the cares of our earthly life to the divine Heart, our own heart will have been freed from them, and our soul will be
ready to share in the divine life. We shall walk by the side of the Redeemer in the same way that he walked when he was on earth, and in which he still continues in his mystical life. With the eyes of faith we shall penetrate even into the secret life within the Godhead. Moreover, this participation in the divine life has a liberating power; it lightens the weight of our earthly concerns and gives us even in this temporal life a glimpse of eternity, a reflexion of the life of the blessed, by which we walk in the light. How we can walk thus, as it were hand in hand with God, he has shown us himself through the liturgy of the Church. Therefore the life of a truly Catholic woman will be guided by the liturgy. If we pray with the Church in spirit and in truth, our whole life will be formed by this prayer.

“Summing up we would say: every profession that satisfies the feminine soul and is capable of being formed by it is a genuine feminine profession. The inmost formative principle of the feminine soul is the love that springs from the divine Heart. A woman will live by this principle if she closely joins herself to the divine heart in a eucharistic and liturgical life.”

Notes on Margaret Sanger and Joan Andrews -

Activist counterparts of De Beauvoir and Stein

Margaret Sanger (1879-1966)


More than any other person, Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, is responsible for the application to contraception and abortion of an individualistic, independent philosophy of woman. Not so well known is the way in which, like the Nazis, Sanger wanted to breed a super-race, thoroughbreds, through eugenics by means of abortion, euthanasia, and genocidal sterilization of minority groups.

Sanger was born in relative poverty but became well to do at marriage. Her marriage broke up because of her promiscuity. (See. p. 85) Margaret Sanger also was known to have neglected her three children. Some of her famous lovers advised her to hide her belief in abortion and concentrate on birth control as the first step in her program. She was involved in the occult as well. (See p. 90)

An impetus for Sanger’s attitude toward limitation of families was disgusted at the poverty around her in the slums of the cities. Since the families of many immigrants were so large, her remedy was to try to convince people that the only way to a better life was through limiting population. (See p. 43) She was convinced that large families had more stupid children compared to the smaller families of the wealthy. (See p. 63) Through contraceptives, couples could have unlimited sexual gratification
without the burden of children. By 1932 Sanger was recommending gifts of money and presents in exchange for sterilization of the poor. According to her philosophy, sexuality is for the pleasure of the individual, not for the bonding of the couple in love with an overflow to their children. Elasah Drogin, a convert from an atheistic background, did a great deal of research on the writings of Sanger. Here are some of her remarks and citations:

“If a citizen of 1900 were told by a time machine traveler that in only 80 years birth control chemicals and devises and abortion as a back up for contraceptive failure would be highly approved throughout the world, our 1900 citizen would be shocked into unconsciousness....today’s culture is characterized precisely by the values she (Sanger) taught.” (p. 9)

Some quotations from Sanger’s writings in her magazine Birth Control Review and other publications cited by Drogin:

“The marriage bed is the most degenerating influence in the social order.” (p. 15)

(Instead Sanger recommended total sexual freedom and divorce if a woman was not sexually satisfied in her marriage.) (p. 15)

“(The philanthropists who give free maternity care) encourage the healthier and more normal sections of the world to shoulder the burden of unthinking and indiscriminate fecundity of others; which brings with it...a dead weight of human waste.” (p. 17)

Sanger was especially interested in limiting the births of Slavs, Latins and Jews. (See p. 18) She came to believe that 7 out of 10 people were feebleminded. This was to be changed through sterilization of low I.Q. people. She organized black ministers to propagate birth control among their people.

Instead of seeing the poor immigrants as “tired, poor, huddled masses yearning to be free,” who the United States should help compassionately, Sanger wrote:

“Herein lies the unbalance - the great biological menace to the future of civilization. Are we heading to biological destruction, toward the gradual but certain attack upon the stocks of intelligence and racial health by the sinister forces of the hordes of irresponsibles and imbeciles?”

(“This is the typical Sangerian description of a ‘welfare recipient.’” wrote Drogin.) (p. 52)

Back to Sanger:

“47.3% of drafted men have the mentality of twelve year old children - in other words they are morons. Assuming that these drafted men are a fair sample of the entire population of approximately 100,000,000 this means that 45,000,000 or nearly one-half the entire population, will never develop mental capacity beyond the state of moron...Our failure to segregate morons who are increasing and multiplying, ...demonstrates our foolhardy and extravagant sentimentalism.” (p. 65)
Sanger thought that we would have a new garden of Eden if, instead, we had a population of geniuses engineered by sterilization of the unfit. (p. 66) People would have to have permits to have children according to Sanger’s plan.

According to Sanger, most human beings should never have been born at all. (see p. 52)At the same time as she advocated state regulated sterilization, she accused the Catholic Church of “legislating their morality.” (See p. 55)

Drogin points out that statistics from Planned Parenthood, founded by Sanger, demonstrate the success of their original racist agenda with higher rates of abortion among Blacks and Hispanics.

Joan Andrews (1948 -


When I first read of Joan Andrews and then heard her speak, I was thrilled by her, thinking she was the Gandhi of the pro-life movement. Joan was born in Tennessee in 1948. She was a shy little girl living on a farm, afraid of strangers and school. In High School she started protesting the Vietnam War. (see p. 24) She didn’t like the anti-war groups because she could see they were hostile and did not understand the position of the pro-Vietnam side. Joan wanted to go over to Vietnam as a nurse.

Here is how she wrote about her involvement in the pro-life movement:

“In 1973, when Roe vs. Wade was decided, I was shocked. I felt that we had returned to the world of Nazi Germany. I had always figured that we lived in a civilized world, but now that had changed...even as a child I was really horrified by the Nazis....So when I heard about Roe vs. Wade, I decided I had to do something. It took me a few months of prayer and preparation to decide. I kept looking for a public outcry, but there was no outcry. People were not even marching in the streets. At Mass, the priests were not proclaiming that there was mass murder of children going on in this country, and we had to get out and stop it; that we had to go to the places where the killing centers were.” (p. 27-28)

Joan Andrews didn’t know what to do since she was a fearful person. She thought of direct action but couldn’t figure out what to do and instead started working for changes in laws such as informed consent and handing out literature. Here are some highlights of her account of how she decided to become an activist:

Joan asked the Lord what He would have her do. She heard this answer: “Rescue those being led unjustly to death.” Throughout the book we see that Joan’s sole motive was to save babies. Each moment of blocking a clinic would mean some babies saved.
1973 - tried to enter an abortuary in Chicago and disable the suction machine.

1974 - started picketing clinics.

1979 - started putting up signs in public restrooms about helping pregnant women in need. They were simple signs saying to call Joan and her sister if you were pregnant and needed help. (See p. 31)

1979 - Joan gets involved with the already started Operation Rescue campaigns.

1980 - In St. Louis Joan participates in first rescue risking arrest accompanied by 100 picketers.

   In her own words:

   “That first day was hectic. When we arrived at Escobedo’s abortuary in Manchester, police were all over the parking lot. Then the picketers arrived and swarmed all over the property. At first, everybody went everywhere, and the police did not know who might be risking arrest, who was counseling, who was picketing or who was just watching. There were people marching and singing right through the whole building, going in one door and out the other. The police did not want to arrest us, and they did not know how to arrest so many of us.

   “All of us who were going to do the rescue walked onto the parking lot. At first, we could not get in the front door because security guards and police were blocking it. But we started to crawl under their legs, between their legs, all around them like ants, and we got in. That did not go on very long; they just gave up and let everyone in. So the rescue team went right through the door...

   “When the first woman tried to get in, a whole group of us blocked the door, but the police dragged her in, right over us. Then they dragged a couple of our people away.” (pp. 45-46)

   In the process Joan’s hand got slammed into the door of the clinic by the police. People yelled that the police caused it. Joan explained that it was just an accident. The police were appreciative of that. (p. 46) Later she was arrested. The police captain’s own son was a rescuer and Joan overheard him give instructions not to arrest his son. Soon other non-Catholic Christians joined them.

   The police were often sympathetic to the rescuers. Joan Andrews charitably admits, in excuse for pro-life policeman arresting pro-lifers because it was part of their job, that going to jail a few days if very different from losing your job as the officers would have to have done should they have failed to arrest those blocking the doors. Later on in the movement, police got much more brutal - breaking people’s arms, etc. They were not to gripe about torture but forgive and offer it up. (See p. 195) While being tortured by the police rescuers would scream and also yell out “God Bless You!”(See p. 100ff.) Some police respected the courage of the rescuers and their evident love for their tormentors. (see p. 109) The rescuer has to keep in mind that objectively the police officer is the tool of the abortionist to keep the babies from being saved. (See p. 193)
Archbishop May of St. Louis came out and told the rescuers to obey the law. Disappointment was felt by Catholic Rescuers knowing he said nothing about Catholics in complicity with abortion. The rationale for not doing so is to save life. If you have a break down a door to save a baby in a fire you could do it. You would trespass. The lives of the babies are at stake in an abortion. (See p. 51) Joan once said:

“Can you imagine all those little babies who have been killed? They die, and no one’s at their death camps. Can you imagine how they must feel if someone does try to stand up for them? We can’t betray them. We can’t say that we won’t rescue them, because that would offend their dignity. I love these babies.” (p. 189)

Because of OR (Operation Rescue) coming to the clinic every Saturday abortions went way down. The abortionist considered stopping. Then came the injunction against rescue operations. After that many stopped blocking doors, but Joan and some others were willing to go to jail no matter how long to stop the killing even for the hours before the police came to drag them off. Usually at that time they didn’t stay long. (See p. 58) Meanwhile they started a place called Our Lady’s Inn for pregnant women who were turned away by rescue from abortion and needed shelter.

Conflict arose because some wanted only to do maternity work and stop the rescues. Some were arrested hundreds of times.

Joan had cancer of the eye and had an eye removed. She refused to worry about further consequences feeling she would have more stress thinking of the babies dying than staying away to handle the cancer.

To return to the dated chronicle of Joan Andrew’s activities:

1981 - jailed in Baltimore. Some paid fines but some such as Joan didn’t want to pay a fine as if they were guilty. (See p. 76) There is fear of the lesbian majority of women in the prisons who force it on other women. But other women would ask them to pray with them in the night. They would fast totally and partially.

1982 - Starting doing rescues by blocking the doors just by herself. A group would also pray the rosary on the roofs of abortion clinics at night. She had her first extended incarceration for pro-life activism rescuing babies in St. Louis for 225 days in 1983. (See p. 87) The judges kept bribing the group that they would add more convictions unless they agreed not to go back to abortion clinics. They refused to agree. Joan says that being arrested is a great Scripture course showing you what persecution is really like but also the solidarity of those jailed together. Also many rescuers would not come and protest in front of the jail because they had become cautious.

In the summer it was over a hundred degrees with no air-conditioning and 40 in a 20 person room. (See p. 91) Even though there is lots of violence in the prison pro-lifers are liked and respected
pretty much because they are Christian. The violent people rarely see compassion and they respond to the compassion of the pro-lifers for them.

1984 - the rescuers start to go limp when the police come to get them. (See p. 131) they also tried entering abortion clinics and locking themselves into the killing rooms. They also would dismantle the abortion machines whenever they could.

1986 - solitary confinement in Florida doing non-cooperative activities such as going out of the cell for meals and exercise but then not going back. She had to be dragged. Cooperating with the system is accepting that you deserve to be punished. In solidarity with the babies who don’t have any voice, the jailed rescuer should not be bargaining. Jesus was silent when prosecuted. (See p. 191)

During a five year sentence she got lots of mail from people who had started rescuing because of her heroism. (See p. 208) The most painful part of being in prison was not being able to go to daily Mass. She prayed the rosary a lot.

1988 moved to Delaware. Some women in the prison converted.

Since the writing of the book, I Will Never Forget You Joan has done rescue work in other countries. She is married and has children. The couple bring the children to talks and take turns lecturing or taking care of the babies.

“She once told a group of former abortionists,

‘You don’t owe us an apology. We owe you one because we didn’t try to convert you sooner.’”(p. 9)
Theme 6

Interior Analysis vs. Healing through Hope

Freud and Jung vs. Frankl

Introduction

First: a clarification. I have used the term interior analysis instead of psychoanalysis in order to be able to cover a wider range of therapies than the original Freudian technique. The term “psychoanalytic” has a technical meaning: treatment of patients based on theories and practices that emanated from Freud and his loyal followers. The confusion comes because the term psychoanalysis is also used in a general way for any type of therapy involving delving into the childhood of the client with a view to healing. “Psychotherapy,” is sometimes used as a synonym for psychoanalysis, but is also employed often, especially by non-professionals to include any kind of counseling given by a person with a degree in the subject of psychology. Psychiatrists, however, are those with a medical degree who specialized in nervous and mental ailments.

In novels of the 19th century, the mentally ill were often portrayed as patients to be treated in closed institutions. Treatment included electric shock and drugs. By contrast, later into the twentieth century, when Freud’s theories gained greater acceptance, many patients with the same symptoms were being treated by psychoanalysis. This treatment is based on a philosophy of the human person, which includes such facets as the unconscious, the id, ego and super-ego. When psychoanalysis
became popular around the middle of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, what was most shocking was Freud’s theory about the repressed sexual nature of many psychological problems. Could it really be true that most little boys were sexually infatuated with their mothers leading to adult mother-complexes? Could trivial compulsive behaviors such as nervous mannerisms really be rooted in childhood burying of forbidden sexual expression? Or, to turn to another topic, is the concept of God really nothing more than a projection of a child’s father image into the sky?

By the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, psychoanalytic theories of personality were generally acknowledged to be useful in the diagnosis of irrational behavior patterns. Critique centered more on the way Freud’s theory of personality influenced the concept of the normal person. For many psychologists and philosophers, Freud’s reduction of human behavior to complexes stemming from childhood frustrations seemed much too limited. Within his lifetime, more humanistic systems of therapy were gaining ground. The psychological theories of Carl Jung, including such controversial topics as the collective unconscious, gave more weight to spiritual factors in the maladies and healing of clients.

Many post-Freudian psychological systems were influenced by the work of philosophers now called personalistic. Psychologists such as Viktor Frankl, Abraham Maslow, Conrad Baars, to give only a few examples, were interested in the whole self of the human person, including genuine love, care for the community and the relationship of the individual to God. Most humanists take the data of real love as primordial. They refuse to accept a reductionism of the type often found among those psychoanalysts who think of love as a sublimated sexual drive.

As you read about Freud, Jung, and Frankl, our primary examples of the battle for the twentieth century mind concerning psychology, you will want to assess for yourself what is worthy of influencing the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century, and what might well be discarded.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Freud was born in Moravia, a small town in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, of poor Jewish parents. They moved to Vienna when Freud was 5 years old. He lived there, despite anti-Semitism, until he was 72 years old when he moved to England at the time of the Nazi invasion of Austria. Although the whole family was atheistic they retained Jewish identity.

Freud was the eldest and his mother’s favorite. His personal background had a lot to do with his later theories. He was a child of his father’s third marriage. His father was 40 and his mother 20. The sons of his father’s first marriage were close in age to the new mother. The maid was closer in age
to the father. He had fantasies that one of his step-brothers may have been his biological father. Sigmund was fiercely jealous of his siblings and thought he might have been responsible when he was 1½ years old for the “accidental” death of a 7 month old brother. As the first child, he hated having his place usurped by this little brother.

Freud had great desire for knowledge and studied biology as a medical student in the University of Vienna. He was interested in the research part of biology, but this paid little and so in order to earn enough to marry, he had to branch out into the practice of medicine. He became interested in the work of a doctor who was treating patients for hysterical neurosis (neurosis = an illness that comes from frustration, privation, when reality withholds the gratification of sexual wishes. The symptoms are substitute gratifications for these desires.) This doctor had discovered that by letting his patient talk about the past he could decipher the hidden emotional logic behind the symptoms. Because these emotions were repressed, they could only be expressed by bodily symptoms. In his own practice Freud discovered that letting patients “free associate” was even better.

His methods evolved into a system called psychoanalysis involving many years of sessions between the therapist and his/her patient. In his General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis, given as a series of lectures to interested students of medicine and psychiatry, he begins with this interesting paragraph:

“Psychoanalysis is a method of medical treatment for those suffering from nervous disorders; and I can give you at once an illustration of the way in which psycho-analytic procedure differs from, and often reverses, what is customary in other branches of medicine. Usually, when we introduce a patient to a new form of treatment we minimize its difficulties and give him confident assurances of its success. This is, in my opinion, perfectly justifiable, for we thereby increase the probability of success. But when we undertake to treat a neurotic psycho-analytically we proceed otherwise. We explain to him the difficulties of the method, its long duration, the trials and sacrifices which will be required of him; and, as to the result, we tell him that we can make no definite promises, that success depends upon his endeavors, upon his understanding, his adaptability and his perseverance.”

It was he, Freud, who invented terms like free association and repression to explain how patients had a resistance to bringing certain shameful material up into consciousness. Neurotic symptoms are a compromise between expressing or repressing some energy.

(From lecture 19 of Introduction to Psycho-Analysis)

“The resistance shown by patients is highly varied and exceedingly subtle...we require the patient to put himself into a condition of calm self-observation...and then to communicate everything which he becomes inwardly aware of, feelings, thoughts, remembrances, in the order in which they arise in his mind. We expressly warn him against giving way to any kind of motive which would cause him to select from or to exclude any of the ideas (associations) whether because they are too “disagreeable,” or too “indiscreet...”
The patient resists by means of pretending that nothing comes to mind, pausing, deciding that what he is thinking about is irrelevant.

“One hardly ever meets with a patient who does not attempt to make a reservation in some department of his thoughts, in order to guard them against intrusion by the analysis...Naturally analytic treatment cannot countenance a right of sanctuary like this; one might as well try to allow an exception to be made in certain parts of a town like Vienna, and forbid that any arrests should be made in the market-place...and then attempt to take up a wanted man. Of course he would never be found anywhere but in those safe places.”

From watching his own children carefully and relating what he saw in his patients to memories of his own childhood, Freud developed the theory that very small children are much more erotic than generally supposed.

The seeking of pleasure goes through various developmental phases: the oral, the anal, the phallic, the latency and the genital stage of adult sexuality. Sometimes frustration of the stages leads to a fixation and then a regression.

The phallic stage involves what Freud called the oedipal complex where the male child wishes for sex with the mother and views his father and brothers as rivals. This leads to a fear of being castrated. The girl takes her mother as her first love object and then relinquishes mother for father when she realizes that girls, including mother, do not possess a penis. Penis envy is the phrase Freud developed to describe this state of mind. Because of this envy the girl turns to her father to obtain what is not available from her mother.

Of great interest was Freud’s philosophy of dreams. Dreams are considered to be fantasized fulfillment of wishes. Sexual and aggressive drives that have to be repressed in conventional life express themselves instead in dream material in disguised forms. Analysis of dreams leads to understanding of unconscious wishes. Some of the observations Freud made about this which were originally ridiculed are now standard, such as hostility toward parents in spite of societal ideas about reverence for them, or sibling rivalry in spite of conventions about children in the family being only loving playmates. In Lecture 13 of Freud’s Introduction to Psycho-Analysis he talks about dreams of the death of these family figures being an outlet for repressed hostility:

“The little child does not necessarily love his brothers and sisters, and often he is quite frank about it. It is unquestionable that in them he sees and hates his rivals, and it is well known how commonly this attitude persists without interruption for many years, till the child reaches maturity...We can most easily observe it in children of two and a half to four years old when a new baby arrives, which generally meets with a very unfriendly reception; remarks such as “I don’t like it. The stork is to take it away again” are very common...attempts are even made to injure it (the baby) and attacks upon it are by no means unheard-of...when we find a wish for the death of a brother or a sister latent in a dream we need seldom be puzzled...”
Freud also contrasts pleasure instincts, called libido, with death instincts expressed as hate, anger and aggression. In displacement an individual who has to repress his or her frustrations expresses this by blaming others and seeing them as responsible, hateful, etc.

Underlying the descriptions of these states of mind is a theory about the human person divided into id, ego, and superego. The id, the unconscious comes at birth and is the seat of the instincts, a cauldron of fury, striving for immediate satisfaction of urges. The ego is that portion of the mind, which organizes strategies for self-preservation. It mediates between the internal needs of the id and the demands of reality. By the age of five or six, another agency of the mind develops called the superego. This is the internalization of the moral norms of the parents. An example might be disgust at seeing anyone talk with food in his or her mouth, because one was brought up strictly only to talk after swallowing ones food.

In later life, Freud, in the study *Moses and Monotheism*, developed the theory that religion was a father-complex. Because the child needs the protection of the father who is discovered with time to be fallible and weak, he projects a perfect all-powerful father God into the sky.

In case you feel “thrown” by this theory, consider as one Christian psychotherapist, Paul Vitz, puts it, you can reverse it and claim that those who reject God, the Father, are really rejecting their own fathers. Since Freud had a negative relationship to his father, one could explain his atheism as a way of “killing off” his biological father. (See Paul C. Vitz, Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism.)

Of course, the main thing is that God exists as the only explanation of the existence of the universe as we know it, as can be proved by reason. We can no more prove that he does not exist on a merely psychological basis than imagine he does exist on such a basis. Certainly there are plenty of people who believe in God in spite of having had negligent fathers and there are those who had wonderful fathers who have difficulty believing in God.

Biographers say that by the end of his life Freud was a cocaine addict. Faced with great pain from terminal cancer, he committed suicide as a form of euthanasia.

At first Freud’s theories were greeted with disbelief and derision by the general medical community, but gradually his success with patients and the meticulous elaboration of his views in lectures and writings won Freud important disciples.

Even though nowadays there are few pure Freudians, since his disciples branched out into variations on his original themes, most psychologists consider his thought as a lasting contribution in terms of knowledge about the unconscious, the mechanisms of repression, and the operations of id, ego and super-ego.

Here are some helpful definitions of Freudian terms:
complex – circle of thoughts and interests of strong affective value

normal - healthy – able to work and to love.

mental illness – symptoms or activities detrimental or useless to life as a whole.

narcissism – libido energy diverted to the ego itself as in delusions of grandeur.
regression – reversion from a higher to a lower stage of development.
sublimation – unconscious redirection of libido into socially acceptable channels.

traumatic neurosis – (as from war experiences) the ego seeks protection for the threatened self. One takes flight into psychological illness out of fear of still worse miseries in real life.

By way of critique, the idea of explaining irrational behavior as partly due to the repression of painful experiences of the past is probably true. For example, you have a strong revulsion toward someone just because they remind you of some trait of a rejecting parent.

Freud’s theories help explain irrational nationalism - such as Nazism. (Fury of the id, frustrated by loss of WWI, projected onto Jews?)

Since Freud has an erroneous concept of the human person it is hard for him to explain how normal behavior comes about. No distinction is made by some Freudians between authentic conscience and super-ego. Freud didn’t understand, as Thomas Aquinas did, that reason needs to control the emotions, not super-ego. Super-ego is harsh internalization of prohibitions; conscience is based on reason leading to amendment.

Freud’s theory is much too materialistic. There is no explanation of what is truly lovable and noble in oneself or an exploration of the response to the good we find in others. This leads to a relativism with no explanation of how there could be moral progress since there are no absolute norms. Freud once gave as the standard for healthy normalcy that the patient become able to love and work. However, Freud fails to provide a philosophy of life that includes the source of such values as love, work, honesty, or integrity.

Psychoanalysts who come from an atheistic, materialistic base, can distort and even destroy the true religious beliefs of their patients.

Freud seemed to hold to some form of “terrestrial messianism.” Terrestrial messianism is a phenomena that involves thinking that since there is no divine Messiah, as atheists certainly think, then earthly humans have to take that non-Messiah’s place by eliminating suffering. The way Freud thought the world could be saved without divine intervention was by means of normalizing neurotic and psychotic people who cause suffering to others.
In terms of contemporary relevance, it is important to realize that Freud and other psychoanalysts can help us understand puzzling realities. How is it, for example, that even those who pray a lot may exhibit many irrational symptoms. Examples: addiction, or passive-aggressive behavior.

On the negative side, there are narrow individuals in the field of psychology who have no interest in revelation, intuition or inspiration. This is limiting and destructive when such interior analysts demean, consciously or indirectly, the faith of their patients.

Psychoanalysis led to tremendous breakdown of morals when norms were reduced to mere expressions of super-ego with the resulting advice to get rid of these norms, especially sexual ones, and be free, which meant, if not for the analysts, at first, at least for their patients, being irresponsible.

Psycho-analysis as a general theory has led to people feeling like determined victims of their past. Everything is a symptom vs. a response. (In the heyday of the popularity of interior analysis, what was called “parlor psychoanalysis” consisted in people with no training analyzing others. “Aha, I know why you just did that - it was because in your childhood....” People under the influence of psycho-analysis can become self-engrossed vs. responsive and grateful.

Before going on to study something of the ideas of Carl Jung, one of the most original of the disciples of Freud who broke away to elaborate his or her own systems; I would like to append here something about a Freudian psychoanalyst who was a Jewish convert to the Catholic faith: Karl Stern.

Karl Stern (1906-1975) was a Jewish psychiatrist who came from Germany to the United States and then to Canada during the Nazi period in Germany. Stern became a Catholic, as described in his book The Pillar of Fire. Subsequently, he became interested in explaining to Catholics why he continued to be a psychoanalyst when Freud appeared to be the enemy of religion. His book: The Third Revolution: A Study of Psychiatry and Religion, written in 1954, explores what he considered to be valid in Freudian psycho-analysis and how those ideas could find a place in the broader perspective of the religious view of the human person.

The title “third revolution,” psychoanalysis, followed such revolutions as the replacing of faith by science during the French enlightenment, and the Marxist revolution.

Here are some thoughts and direct excerpts from the book The Third Revolution:

When Stern was a student of medicine in the early part of the century, psychiatry was taught as a branch of medicine with diagnosis, prognosis and treatment described in the same manner as one would talk about surgery or ear, nose and throat problems. There was little mention of neurosis. But in the second half of the century, Stern observes:

“...There are living in our midst thousands and thousands of people (there is a strong possibility that they form the majority of mankind in our present civilization) who suffer, or produce
suffering among those around them, in a most puzzling manner. They live in mortal anxiety, or they are unable to hope, or they are entangled in mysterious hatred, or they are out to destroy that which would give them happiness, they are incapable of trusting, or they are being oppressed by something which is best called insatiable remorse. They form a huge army of suffering, dissatisfaction, frustration, and assault…” (pp. 5-6)

These people are not in institutions but they lead a hellish life and make life a hell for those around them. (See p. 6) Stern’s view is that it takes a synthesis of psychoanalytic and religious concepts to deal with such problems. (See p. 12 ff.)

“In the face of these developments, a defensive attitude on the part of Christians becomes destructive. The temptation to ward off or shut out the seemingly alien is a sign of sterility…If our lives are guided by fear of error, rather than the love of truth, we are no better than those people whose lives are dominated by fear of sin rather than the love of good…

“This is a time when, in the world of ideas, we need the spirit of courage and discernment which characterized people like Saint Thomas Aquinas.” (p. 12)

“The existentialist philosophers tell us - and they tell us nothing new - that despair and anxiety, hatred and distrust lurk in a potential pit which surrounds us all, no matter how healthy we think we are.” (p. 15)

Here are some excerpts from other chapters of Stern’s intriguing book:

“To dispute the basic tenets of psychoanalysis on philosophical grounds would be just as wrong as to dispute certain tenets of physics on philosophical grounds. All we can say is that nothing discussed in the preceding chapter is incompatible with a Christian idea of the nature of man...

“It is therefore the more surprising that psychoanalysis is considered a vicious onslaught against Christianity, in fact against any religious belief...Freud did not stop at factual statements to which the tests of veracity can be applied...

“Freud’s method in dealing with anything spiritual is reductive. This means that Freud reduces everything which, to the religious believer, is in the supernatural order, to something in the natural order. For example, the idea of God, says Freud, is a father image projected on the sky. The child originally has a concept of an omnipotent father who is able to fulfill all his needs. In the degree to which the child develops a grasp of reality, that image of the father is gradually erased. Instead of it, a fantasy figure, a father in heaven, becomes imbued with the same qualities of omnipotence and protectiveness.” (pp. 115-117)

Stern explains that this kind of “nothing but” philosophy follows from denial of the supernatural.
“The ‘nothing but’ of Freud is the complete inversion, the upside-down, the perfect mirror image of the Christian position. Whereas Freud tells us that God is nothing but a father figure...a Christian philosopher would say: ‘Even in the child’s relationship to the father, there is contained a crude foreshadowing of our relationship to God.’ (pp. 118-119)

Stern refutes Freud’s theory about religion on the basis that it is quite irrational to say that because phenomena “B” resembles phenomena “A” in some ways, that “B” is nothing but “A.” For example, the fact that a picture in an anatomy book resembles Michelangelo’s statue of David doesn’t mean that the statue is nothing but the sketch in the anatomy book. “In order to understand the form and beauty of the face of “David,” we do not need to know anything about (anatomy).” (p. 124)

It is as if you said a rose is nothing but humus and manure because it grows out of it, remarks Stern.

Stern continues his critique by explaining that to make it seem as if psychology explains everything is to remove all boundaries and imagine psychology solves everything. This would be psychologism. (It makes it seem as if there were no genuine metaphysical realities that are explained by the reality of God as First Cause) (See p. 126).

Concerning the idea that everything good is merely sublimated sexual energy, Stern writes: “Does anyone really believe that families are founded, orphans are cared for, the sick are tended to, cathedrals are erected, symphonies are composed - only because instinctual drives are blocked by society?” (P. 127)

According to Stern, however, all this error does not mean that the basic ideas of psychoanalysis itself are false. Healing takes place through this method because of the encounter with the analyst which is in actually spiritual in nature and a form of empathetic exchange in the direction of personalism. (See p. 146-147 and p. 306)

Carl Jung (1875-1961)

Carl Jung, born in Kesswil, Switzerland in 1897, was the son of an Evangelical minister. His father was a disappointed man who was chronically depressed. Young Carl observed much conflict between his mother and father. Carl thought that his mother had two personalities: one, a pleasant housewife and loving mother by day; the other, a witch, prophetess and seer who communicated with spirits at night. He became convinced later that he had two personalities also. He thought he was growing insane because of horrifying dreams, some apparently demonic. By the time Carl was twelve he began to think that besides his child personality he was simultaneously a wise old man of the eighteenth century. He thought that he was given rare and secret revelations. He became increasingly solitary.
Given this background it is not hard to understand that Jung wrote his university dissertation on the occult. He married at twenty-eight and had five children. Jung began studying psycho-analysis with Freud but broke with him in 1910. He was unable to accept the exclusively sexual concept of the libido in Freud based on a biological model. Instead Jung believed that man’s spiritual needs are at least equally, if not more, potent than his basic biological needs.

Of interest to readers not necessarily in agreement with all his other theories is Jung’s book on Psychological Types written in 1921.

Jung was a world traveler, visiting New Mexico, East Africa, and other countries. In 1936 he received an honorary doctorate from Harvard. He lectured at Yale. From 1948 until his death in 1961 he was the head of the Jung Institute in Zurich.

The most famous of the students of Freud who broke away eventually from the master were Adler and Jung. Before describing the differences, let us look at what they had in common with Freud: “the mind, psyche, or personality of man comprises unconscious as well as conscious components, and that man’s behavior and his conscious states can be explained only by reference to the unconscious sources of motivation.” The practice of psychoanalysis” is the use of special techniques for bringing these unconscious factors into daylight.” (From Introduction to Jung’s Psychology - Editorial note by C.A. Mace, p. 7)

By the end of the twentieth century the term “unconscious” had become wide-spread and easily understood, but when Freud and Jung began explaining their theories, they were greeted with doubt and sometimes ridicule. According to psycho-analysts, evidence of the unconscious came in work with patients by means of techniques of free association, hypnosis, and dream analysis. Psychosomatic illnesses were said to indicate the work of the unconscious.

What Jung called the personal unconscious is what has been repressed from memory but can re-emerge. What Jung called the collective unconscious would be archetypal images from the past which are engraved on our psyches such as squares, circles, wheels, dwarfs, animals, plants.

A glossary of terms used by Jungian psychologists is appended here (see Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung’s Psychology, p. 146):

Affect – emotion

Anima – the unconscious feminine side of a man

Animus – the unconscious masculine side of a woman

Archetype – a content of the collective unconscious which is the psychological counterpart of instinct. Also loosely used to designate a collective image or symbol.
Collective – psychic contents which are not common to one individual, but to many. When these are unconscious they are termed the collective unconscious

Complex – an affectively toned group of associated ideas

Ego – the centre of the conscious mind

Extroversion – the turning of the libido towards outer objects

Fantasy – imaginative activity

Individual – the integrated whole personality

Individuation – the process of becoming an individual

Instinct – an unconsciously determined impulse, or action which is collective

Introversion – the turning of the libido towards inner objects

Libido – psychic energy

Neurosis – a disorder of the psyche caused by unconscious conflict, in which the ego remains relatively intact

Persona – the facet of personality which is turned to the world and by which a relationship with the environment is made

personal unconscious – repressed memories, wishes, emotions, etc., and subliminal perceptions of a personal nature

projection – the transmitting of a subjective process onto an object

psyche – a necessary postulate defining the subject matter of psychology, and as such including the conscious and the unconscious

psychic – pertaining to the psyche

psychosis – the invasion of the conscious by unconscious contents, so that the ego is partially or completely overwhelmed. What is commonly known as insanity

reductive analysis – the reduction of or tracing back of psychic manifestations to their original source

repression – the more or less deliberate withdrawal of attention from some disagreeable experience, causing it to be expelled from consciousness so that it cannot be recalled at will

schizoid – a split personality, an introverted personality which is not, however, insane
self – the centre of the totality of ego and unconscious, and/or the synthesis of ego and unconscious
shadow – the unconscious ‘natural’ side of a human being
symbol – an expression of something relatively unknown which cannot be conveyed in any other way
trauma – psychic injury

One of the most important contributions of Jung was the weight he gave to the imagination. The
imagination includes not only records of individual experience but also what are called archetypes.
These are inherited predispositions to respond with great emotion to specific events. For example,
within the collective unconscious is the archetype of the hero. In an emergency, you might find
yourself enacting the role of the hero slaying a “dragon.” Once
when I was in the 9th month of pregnancy, I noticed a pregnant cat lying in the sun. As I exalted in the
kinship I felt with that mother cat, of a sudden I felt myself fulfiling the universal archetype of
maternity. It would not be unusual for a Christian facing martyrdom to call up the images of the great
martyrs of many centuries past.

Even archetypal images that we have no previous conscious knowledge of, can appear in our
dreams. “These images find their way into myths where, for instance, the sunrise is seen as the birth
of the God-hero from the sea who drives his chariot across the sky and to the west where a great
mother dragon waits to devour him in evenings.” (See Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung’s
Psychology, p. 26)

A concept of Jung that has become popular as a way of describing features of the personality
is the shadow. This is a part of our personal unconscious which contains our unacceptable motives,
tendencies and desires. In a wider sense, just as your body throws a shadow, a person who is zealous
in a good way, sometimes may exhibit the shadow of zeal such as fanaticism.

Another topic of interest is regression. In our life choices we are often progressing, satisfying
the ego through active adaptation to one’s environment. An example I would think of would be work.
I finish a project of value to the company I work for and in this way make progress for myself and for
the goals of our business. Regression, on the other hand, satisfies the unconscious. It is an adaptation
to one’s inner needs. (See Fordham’s summary, p. 18) For example, I might indulge in the evening in
some puerile game reacting with childish petulance to failure to win over my child.

Throughout history there has been an interest in personality typology. Most enduring would
be the notion of the four temperaments: choleric, sanguine, melancholic, and phlegmatic. Jung
developed a typology employed by psychologists throughout the world even if they do not accept
many other concepts of the Swiss psychoanalyst. Here is a summary statement of Jung’s ideas about
personality types:
Jung postulated two personality types based on attitudes: the “introvert” and the “extrovert.” Introverts are characterized by their withdrawal from social stimulation, their intensely subjective interest in things intellectual and their reliance on the power of their own feelings. The extrovert, much the opposite, is dominated by objective, external reality and is socially orientated.

In addition to these attitude types, he proposed four functions: thinking and feeling (rational), and intuition and sensation (irrational). Classifying the functions as rational or irrational is dependent on the degree of judgment or reasoning involved. Thinking and feeling are classified as rational functions because both involve conscious reasoning and are judgmental processes; sensation and intuition are classified as irrational because conscious reasoning is virtually absent. Introverts and extroverts can each be dominated by one or more of these functions, leading to an eight-fold combined typology.

I. Extrovert types:

1. Extrovert Thinking Type (Rational): Use only objective facts at hand when drawing their conclusions and their thinking tends to be dogmatic and dominated by “oughts” and “shoulds.” Their key trait descriptions are: objective, rigid and cold.

2. Extrovert Feeling Type (Rational): Also respond to objective, external facts but respond with their emotions rather than thinking functions and found more in women than men. Their key trait descriptions are: intense, effervescent and sociable.

3. Extrovert Sensation Type (Irrational): Look for the sensory experiences of external objects and suppress tendency to introspection which makes them good social company. May be discriminating judges or connoisseurs of such things as fine art or wine. Their key trait descriptions are: realistic, sensual and jolly.

4. Extrovert Intuitive Type (Irrational): Has difficulty maintaining interest in any one thing for very long and tends to make decisions without conscious reflective thought. Yet, decisions are likely to be good ones because they are closely in touch with the wisdom of their unconscious. Their key trait descriptions are: visionary, changeable and creative.

II. Introvert Types:

1. Introvert Thinking Type (Rational): Looks like the stereotypical intellectual, the “egghead,” concerned with abstractions and creation of theories for their own sake and ignoring the practicalities of everyday living. Is a very private person. Key trait descriptions: theoretical, intellectual and impractical.

2. Introvert Feeling Type (Rational): Outward emotional expression is kept to a minimum despite intense and troublesome emotions which they might express through the writing of poetry rather
than share their feelings with others. More common among women. Key traits descriptions: silent, childish, and indifferent.

(3) Introvert Sensation Type (Irrational): Dominated by the changing flow of external events and what matters is his personal reactions to the objective sensory events which he evaluates in terms of clear-cut categories of what is good and evil to him. He is undisturbed if people point out that he is separated from reality. Key trait descriptions: passive, calm and artistic.

(4) Introvert Intuitive Type (Irrational): Tends to be aloof and unconcerned about concrete reality or external events and looks like the stereotypic “peculiar artist” or the slightly “mad genius” or “oddball” whose productions often result in strange but beautiful creations. He needs to shape his perceptions in a way that will satisfy his inner self. Key trait descriptions are: mystic, dreamer and unique.

It must be emphasized that the combined attitude-function types rarely occur in the pure form just described. In addition, individuals may change from one to another type as conditions of their personal and collective unconscious change. Such change may be facilitated by a growth effort such as psychotherapy.

In his practice, Jung met many middle-aged people for whom life had lost its purpose. He thought that what they needed was not necessarily great sexual fulfillment but rather greater development of their individuality by harmonizing the ego and the unconscious. You might think of a man who worked as an engineer to satisfy parental pressure to be a successful member of the community, but whose real yearning was to be an artist. In mid-life such a man might need to break with his former career to satisfy his artistic nature. Remaining an engineer would be too one-sided, eluding a wholeness that could come from integrating the knowledge of spatial relationships of the engineer with the sensitivity to color and form of the artist.

Psychological health, according to Jung, came with accepting the basic contradictions of life and becoming whole in integrating the light and the dark, the good and evil in oneself. Religion is of utmost importance in this quest, but is separated by Jung from objective questions such as whether God actually exists. He thought such matters were uncertain. What was important was not the fact of God’s existence but what belief in it does to help us become whole.

In evaluation, it is important to realize that when some Christians became aware of the way Carl Jung was bringing spirituality into the realm of psycho-analysis, previously thought of as materialistic, deterministic, and hedonistic, there was a rush to learn more about his thought and practice. For example, Viktor Frankl, whose writings in quite a different vein we will study next, once praised Jung as having the great merit of seeing that neurosis came from suffering of the soul that has not found its meaning.
“The great merit of Jung was to see that neurosis came from suffering of the soul that has not found its meaning.” (See Illustrated Biography of Jung, by Gerhard Wehr (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1989 p. 150) Quite a number of ministers, clerical and lay, made trips to Zurich to study his ideas in greater depth. Some of these concepts appear to have abiding value such as his insights into personality types, the importance of archetypal images, and the greater wholeness that comes with balance of features in a personality that may be one-sided.

Most fundamental of the objections made to Jungian psychology concerns his refusal to distinguish between religion as a response to a transcendent God who exists apart from human experience, and God as a symbol for man’s religious aspirations. Erich Fromm, a prominent humanistic psychologist wrote that “Jung is totally relativistic. He has no interest in whether a belief is true or false. This is logical nonsense.” (Illustrated Biography of Jung, p. 146) It appears that Jung’s fascination with archetypal symbols led him away from interest in the real God, and from revelation as a truth that requires obedience.

Another serious objection concerns Jung’s way of describing evil as a polarity vs. something to be shunned at all costs. It is impossible logically to deny that evil is to be avoided since everyone will protest some form of evil at one time or another, if only the evil of intolerance. It may be true on a therapeutic level that a client may need to sublimate sinful energies rather than repress them, but never can they be viewed as equally valuable or a force for good within that person. It appears that quite a number of so-called Christian Jungians will encourage clients to make choices previously considered immoral on the basis of considerations of psychological growth or wholeness. For example, a woman who has become drained by years of experience of the maternal feminine in marriage and family life, might decide as a result of Jungian therapy, to develop more of the masculine side of her personality even at the cost of abandoning husband and family.

There is much emphasis on introspective exploration in Jungian psychology. One can find those who become one-sidedly involved with some of these methods seeing other people merely as triggers for self-growth rather than persons of worth in themselves toward which one has a responsibility, especially when commitments are involved. Someone might announce to a spouse “I chose you because you embodied for me the eternal feminine, but now that I have interiorized those values while coming into touch with my own feminine, I have to move along.”

The features I have criticized here can assume a peculiar form in the life of those influenced by Jungian ideas or therapy. One can come to see other people and even God more as symbols or exterior examples of elements within one’s own psyche rather than as important totally separate individuals. We need to rejoice in the radical individuality of another person, not reduce him or her to a set of qualities to be found within ourselves or desirable for ourselves.

For example, my friend is not just a collection of qualities to inspire me, but a person in his or her own right I am gifted to be able to love. Mary, the Mother of God, is not just an archetype of the pure feminine I want to find or develop in myself. She is a separate person who dwells in heaven and
wants to help me on my path toward holiness. God is not a symbol of the divine within. He is the real Divine reflected most dimly in my own innermost core.

Viktor E. Frankl (1905-1997)

Viktor Frankl, a Jew, was born in Vienna and studied medicine and psychiatry. During World War II he was a prisoner in a concentration camp. After the war he became a professor and psychotherapist in the United States teaching at many universities. I personally met Viktor Frankl in 1972 when I was doing a research project on new methods of teaching. At that time he was a professor in San Diego at the International School of Psychology. His books were translated into many languages some with nine millions copies. I was amazed that he, an old man, said he took phone calls through the night wanting to help others at any cost of himself. He became a Catholic in his later years, but did not publicize this conversion in order to spare the feelings of his Jewish relatives.

Frankl’s most famous book was first called From Death Camp to Existentialism, in 1961, and then expanded into Man’s Search for Meaning, translated Isle Laschand printed by NY: Washington Square Press, 1963. The subtitle of the expanded book is “An Introduction to Logotherapy” The L.A.Times said Frankl’s approach was “the most important contribution to psychiatry since the writings of Freud.” By some, Logotherapy was considered the 3rd Viennese School of Psychotherapy after Freud and Adler.

In the concentration camps, Frankl lost his father, mother, brother, and wife, all except his sister. He asked himself how in the camp, with everything lost and suffering from hunger, cold, brutality expecting to be exterminated, he could still find life worth living. His answer was that when a person had a meaning to his or her life that transcended conditions, then life was worth living.

After the war Frankl started logotherapy at the University of Vienna and all over the world. Whereas Freud thought that neuroses come from anxiety caused by conflicting and unconscious motives, Frankl thought there were many layers where illness could arise, and that one of them was due to failure to find meaning in life. Logotherapy is a form of existential psychoanalysis. Frankl did not get rid of Freudian ideas but built around them a new much more humanistic system, compatible with religious belief.

In the concentration camps where there was nothing left but life itself, there were many phases, cold detachment, curiosity about one’s fate, strategies to preserve remnants of one’s life, though the chances of surviving were slight, humiliation, fear and deep anger at injustice; but also images of beloved persons, religion, or even a grim sense of humor, or the healing beauty of nature. But all of this doesn’t work until one can find a meaning to suffering. Frankl quotes Nietzsche p. xiii “He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how.”
This becomes a microcosm for the question for all patients: how can you find purpose in your circumstances, no matter how grim?

Frankl was interested in the average concentration camp victim. There were always choices to be made. For example, in order to try to maneuver to get one’s own name off a list of the most feeble prisoners in a smaller camp to be transported to the huge death camp or to keep one’s friend’s name off the list, one knew that someone else’s name would go on. Was it right to live on at the sacrifice of another, known or unknown? (see p. 5) No one had a name in the camp, just a number. Most of the survivors had to lose all scruples to save themselves. “The best did not return.” (p. 7)

Even though Frankl was a psychiatrist and medical doctor, he did not do this work at the camp until the last few weeks. Mostly he was digging and laying tracks for railways. The existentiality of this account is that it deals not with theories so much as the actual experience.

There are “three phases of the inmate’s mental reactions to camp life...: the period following his admission; the period when he is well entrenched in camp routine; and the period following his release and liberation.” (p. 11)

The first period is characterized by shock. Most of the prisoners were sent immediately to the gas chambers of Auschwitz, only those who were thought to be healthy enough to continue to live were allowed to work in the camp. The first evening this minority found out about the others.

“I inquired from prisoners who had been there for some time where my colleague and friend P had been sent.”

“Was he sent to the left side?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“Then you can see him there,” I was told.

“Where?”

“A hand pointed to the chimney a few hundred yards off, which was sending a column of flame up into the gray sky of Poland. It dissolved into a sinister cloud of smoke.

“That’s where your friend is, floating up to Heaven,” was the answer. But I still did not understand until the truth was explained to me in plain words.” (p. 18-19)

Then the SS greeted them with charm in order to get their watches and other valuables off them with the hint if they gave them over freely to this guard, he might help them after. Then they were stripped naked. The fear devolved into cold curiosity about the future. Also, surprise.
Regarding living conditions at the camp, Frankl made this surprising observation:

“I had been convinced that there were certain things I just could not do: I could not sleep without this or I could live with that or the other.” (p. 25) We found that we could sleep nine in a cot huddled together. “We were unable to clean our teeth, and yet, in spite of that and a severe vitamin deficiency, we had healthier gums than ever before…a light sleeper, who used to be disturbed by the slightest noise in the next room, now found himself lying pressed against a comrade who snored loudly a few inches from his ear and yet slept quite soundly through the noise.” (p. 26)

Everyone thought about committing suicide, mostly by running up against the electric barbed wire. In the first phase of shock the prisoner stopped fearing death. The apathy of the first phase is a kind of emotional death because of the pain of the “boundless longing for his home and his family.” Also people experienced great disgust at the external aspects of the place.

In the second phase feelings were blunted and someone could watch others being beaten unmoved. This, and eventual insensitivity to beating was “a very necessary protective shell.” (See p. 35)

The painful part was not so much the pain of blows but being treated like a dumb animal. Without thinking he tried to help a comrade who was partially disabled carry a girder. “I was immediately hit on the back, rudely reprimanded and ordered to return to my place. A few minutes previously the same guard who struck me had told us deprecatingly that we “pigs” lacked the spirit of comradeship.” (p. 38)

Fortunately Frankl’s usual guard had marital problems and consulted Frankl, and therefore he was favored and his life was saved.

In the second phase the only interest is in survival of self and of one’s friends. Other psychoanalysts at the camp spoke of a regression reflected in dreams, mostly being of bread, cake, cigarettes, warm baths. Mostly conversation was about food or the hope of liberation, describing the future life they wished for. One could predict who would die of starvation next. There was little interest in sex, probably because of malnutrition. Most interest was in rumors involving politics.

“The religious interest of the prisoners, as soon as it developed, was the most sincere imaginable. The depth and vigor of religious belief often surprised and moved a new arrival. Most impressive in this connection were improvised prayers or services in the corner of a hut, or in the darkness of the locked cattle truck in which we were brought back from a distant work site, tired, hungry and frozen in our ragged clothing.” (p. 54)

Some weaker prisoners did better than harder ones because they would retreat within themselves to inner riches and spiritual freedom. Marching along, for instance, Frankl started thinking of his wife’s image:
“A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth - that love is the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire....The salvation of man is through love and in love. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved. In a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way - an honorable way - in such a position man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment. For the first time in my life I was able to understand the meaning of the words, ‘The angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory.’” (p. 58)

Frankl grasped that love goes beyond the physical person of the beloved to his spiritual being, his inner self.

There is also a refuge in memories of the past, often trivial ones. The prisoners would go into ecstasy to see a mountain or a sunset. (See p. 60)

In the midst of despair he heard a “Yes” to the question of ultimate purpose. He had a deep sense of the presence of his wife of light shining in darkness. (See p. 64)

They even had a makeshift cabaret in the camp with prisoners singing songs or telling jokes. He got a comrade to agree each day to think of some amusing thing that could happen after liberation. This is a form of momentary self--preservation. (See p. 68)

“Under the influence of a world which no longer recognized the value of human life and human dignity, which had robbed man of his will and had made an object to be exterminated (having planned, however, to make full use of him first - the last ounce of his physical resources) - under this influence the personal ego finally suffered a loss of values. If the man in the concentration camp did not struggle against this in a last effort to save his self-respect, he lost the feeling of being an individual, a being with a mind, with inner freedom and personal value. He thought of himself then as only a part of an enormous mass of people; his existence descended to the level of animal life.” (pp. 78-79)

Even though it was likely to mean death, Frankl agreed to leave with a transport of sick persons. The transport contained his friends. On his way out he told a friend to tell his wife, if she survived, that their short time together outweighed everything, even the camp. Toward the end, the camp he had left became cannibalistic. (see p. 88)

There was a feeling of fate and a horror of having to make decisions such as about escape attempts. (p. 90) Once he was about to escape, but felt very bad about it, then stayed because of a friend he was trying to save from death. (See p. 93) After deciding to stay he became happier.

Another factor of the camp was a kind of inferiority complex:
“The majority of prisoners suffered from a kind of inferiority complex. We all had once been or had fancied ourselves to be ‘somebody.’”

“Now we were treated like complete nonentities. (The consciousness of one’s inner value is anchored in higher, more spiritual things, and cannot be shaken by camp life. But how many free men, let alone prisoners, possess it?) Without consciously thinking about it, the average prisoner felt himself utterly degraded.” (p. 99)

By contrast the prisoners who were capos or cooks felt superior with even delusions of grandeur.

There were lots of fights.

Does Frankl’s analysis of the concentration camp mean that man is completely at the mercy of his environment? Is there no free will? There is free will. Some men went around comforting others, giving away their last pieces of bread. There is a last freedom which is to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.

“It is this spiritual freedom - which cannot be taken away - that makes life meaningful and purposeful. ...If there is meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. ...the way in which (a man) takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity - even under the most difficult circumstances - to add a deeper meaning to his life.” (p. 106)

This freedom involves not only creative and enjoyment values but with these missing, the moral values come to the fore. Not just in the camps but everywhere man is offered the chance to achieve something through his own suffering. What of the fate of the sick and incurable? To die in a courageous and noble way?

The fact that the prisoners had no way to know how long it was or if they would survive changed their inner life. Life becomes meaningless if you don’t look at the opportunities of the present for spiritual growth.

“The prisoner who had lost faith in the future - his future - was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay...usually it began with the prisoner refusing one morning to get dressed and warm or to go out on the parade grounds...He just lay there, hardly moving...He simply gave up. There he remained, lying in his own excreta, and nothing bothered him any more”(p. 117-118).

A great number of the prisoners died right after Christmas because they had become sure they would be home by Christmas.

What they needed was meaning in the sense of tasks set for us by life. (p. 122)

Tears bear witness to the courage to suffer. (p. 125)
To get through despair one has to realize that one is an irreplaceable individual. (p. 127)

In the camp Frankl would quote from Nietzsche - “that which does not kill me, makes me stronger.” (p. 130)

And what of the guards - some were sadists, some were dulled by the camps, but some actually helped the prisoners - buying medicines. Some SS commanders were actually good, and some prisoners were evil to each other.

“I remember how one day a foreman secretly gave me a piece of bread which I knew he must have saved from his breakfast ration. It was far more than the small piece of bread which moved me to tears at that time. It was the human “something” which this man also gave to me - the word and look which accompanied the gift. (p. 137)

Frankl offers some interesting reflections about liberated prisoners.

The liberated prisoner: numb, could not really rejoice. Mostly people ate and ate and talked and talked. Frankl, out in a field, knelt down and prayed a line from the Psalms about calling to the Lord from a prison and being freed. (See p. 133 ff.)

Some liberated prisoners had taken in the violence and became oppressors themselves wanting some form of revenge. (p. 144)

“Only slowly could these men be guided back to the commonplace truth that no one has the right to do wrong, not even if wrong has been done to him.” (p. 144)

Some became bitter coming home to hear “We did not know about it,” and “We, too, have suffered.” Some were disillusioned to come home and find no one waiting. Others felt that: “the crowning experience of all, for the homecoming man, is the wonderful feeling that, after all he has suffered, there is nothing he need fear any more - except his God.” (p. 148)

A later edition of from Death Camp to Existentialism called Man’s Search for Meaning, concludes with chapters on the

BASIC CONCEPTS OF LOGOTHERAPY ( see p. 151 ff)

This healing therapy is more focused on hope for the future than the past. It is centered on how to break through the self-centeredness which keeps people from their life tasks.

Logos = meaning.

What is important in Frankl’s Logotherapy is not the will to pleasure of Freud or will to power of Adler, but more will to meaning. This meaning must be unique and specific.
Most people think you need meaning to live and many would die for it. This cannot be mere self-expression or wishful thinking because that is self-defeating. One cannot give oneself to it then or be challenged by it.

“This holds true not only for the so-called sublimation of instinctual drives but for what C.G. Jung called the “archetypes” of the “collective unconscious as well, inasmuch as the latter would also be self-expressions, namely, of mankind as a whole.” (p. 156)

According to Frankl, we don’t invent ourselves as Jean Paul Sartre thought, but we rather detect this meaning. Values do not drive a man, but pull him. Man is free to choose about what is offered.

Man doesn’t relate to drives he is motivated by the object, the cause, the person, God.

One can be frustrated - frustration having to do with meaning is called noogenic neurosis vs. psychogenic. Noos = mind in Greek. Noogenic neurosis come from conflicts of values, moral conflicts or spiritual conflicts. Instead of tracing these back to unconscious roots and sources, they are dealt with in spiritual terms by logotherapists.

For example: “a patient was discontented with his career (as an American diplomat hating the reigning US foreign policy). His (former) analyst, had told him again and again that he should try to reconcile himself with his father because the government of the U.S. were...nothing but father images and, consequently, his dissatisfaction wit his job was due to the hatred he unconsciously harbored toward his father.” (p. 161)

But with Frankl as a therapist, this man came to see that he really wanted to do a different kind of work. He is very happy in his new work.

Spiritual distress from despair is not a mental disease. “It may well be that interpreting it (despair) in terms of (mental disease) motivates a doctor to bury his patient’s existential despair under a heap of tranquilizing drugs. It is his task, rather, to pilot the patient through his existential crisis of growth and development.” (p. 163)

Narrator:

The logotherapist guides a patient in becoming aware of the hidden logos of his existence. This requires some analysis. The idea is to help the person find what he actually longs for in the depth of his being.

“Logotherapy deviates from psychoanalysis insofar as it considers man as a being whose main concern consists in fulfilling a meaning and in actualizing values, rather than in the mere gratification and satisfaction of drives and instincts, the mere reconciliation of the conflicting claims of id, ego and superego, or mere adaptation and adjustment to the society and environment.” (p. 164)
Frankl himself partly wanted to survive the camp because he wanted to get his first book published. This means that health is not just equilibrium but a tension about future accomplishment “or the gap between what one is and what one should become “What man needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him...the spiritual dynamics in a polar field of tension where one pole is represented by a meaning to be fulfilled and the other pole by the man who must fulfill it.” (p. 166)

“If architects want to strengthen a decrepit arch, they increase the load that is laid upon it, for thereby the parts are joined more firmly together. So, if therapists wish to foster their patients’ mental health, they should not be afraid to increase that load through a reorientation toward the meaning of one’s life.” (p. 167)

By contrast many people are caught in the “existential vacuum.” “The existential vacuum is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century...the traditions that had buttressed his behavior are now rapidly diminishing. No instinct tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; soon he will not know what he wants to do. More and more he will be governed by what others want him to do, thus increasingly falling prey to conformism.” (pp. 167-168)

This manifests as boredom. Lack of meaning is replaced by will to money, power, pleasure, sexual compensation, suicide, alcoholism.

Even if someone starts out with a psychological problem, the existential vacuum increases it. One cannot answer the question what is the meaning of life in general terms. It differs from person to person, from day to day. What matters is the specific meaning of a person’s life at a given moment. (p. 171) What we need is a vocation in life, a mission, an assignment. Life gives us a meaning, we are questioned by life to be responsible.

“Logotherapy sees in responsibleness the very essence of human existence.” (p. 171-173)

The categorical imperative of Logotherapy is “So live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now!”...such a precept confronts man with life’s finiteness as well as the finality of what he makes out of both his life and himself.” (p. 173)

He is accountable to himself, not the therapist. He is also accountable to God.

“The logotherapist’s role consists in widening and broadening the visual field of the patient so that the whole spectrum of meaning and values becomes conscious and visible to him. “ (p. 174)

“Human existence is essentially self-transcendence rather than self-actualization. Self-actualization is not a possible aim at all, for the simple reason that the more a man would strive for it,
the more he would miss it...self-actualization cannot be attained if it is made an end in itself, but only as a side effect of self-transcendence...

“The world must not be regarded as a mere expression of one’s self. Nor must the world be considered as a mere instrument, or as a means to the end of one’s self-actualization.” (p. 175)

We discover meaning in life in three different ways - deeds, experience of value, and suffering. In love we grasp the innermost core of the personality of another. Affirming the possibilities of the other. Love is not sexual drives sublimated, it is a primary phenomena. Love is not a side effect of sex but rather sex is a way of expressing “that ultimate togetherness that is called love.”

For example grieving is an expression of the love that was there. Suffering is not a symptom of maladjustment for which we should be ashamed, but rather suffering that is unavoidable is something to ennable. For example when Frankl lost his manuscript having to give it up on entering Auschwitz, the coat given him instead had a page of the S'hema Y'Israel. He thought it meant that he was challenged to live his thoughts instead of merely putting them on paper.

Most of his comrades in the camp thought the main question was “Will we survive the camp? For, if not, all this suffering has no meaning.” The question which beset me was, “Has all this suffering, this dying around us, a meaning? For, if not, then ultimately there is no meaning to survival; for a life whose meaning depends upon such a happenstance - whether one escapes or not - ultimately would not be worth living at all.” (p. 183)

Frankl cites a woman who had a son who died at 11. Her only older son was paralyzed. She wanted to commit suicide with the older son, but the older son didn’t want to die. He liked living, and thought it had meaning. Frankl had the woman in a group. He asked another woman to role-play a woman with no children in her 80’s but plenty of riches, bemoaning how meaningless her life was. Finally the first woman was able to articulate that her life would have meaning if she improved the life of her paralyzed son. (See p. 184-185) Then at the end of the session he got the whole group to consider that just as an ape who was being used as a guinea pig to develop a polio serum would not know why he was suffering, but we would know; so there might be a meaning to our suffering that we don’t know.

“What is demanded of man is not, as some existential philosophers teach, to endure the meaninglessness of life; but rather to bear his incapacity to grasp its unconditional meaningfulness in rational terms. Logos is deeper than logic.” (p. 187-188)

The therapist cannot bring in religious belief in a pressuring way, but if the patient is a believer he can bring this to bear. For instance an old rabbi had lost his wife and children in the camps. Frankl asked if he didn’t want to be reunited with them in heaven. He cried and said that he could never be with them since they were innocent and he was a bitter old man. Frankl asked if
possibly the reason he had been left was to be purified by all this suffering of grief so that he could be reunited with them. The Rabbi found relief in this view.

The fact that our life is transitory doesn't make it meaningless. The past is the storehouse of all our deeds and choices. We decided which opportunities would be actualized and what would sink into non-being. Instead of possibilities, the older person has realities lived, work done, love loved, suffering suffered. (p. 192)

With neurotic things like agoraphobia, the logotherapist works on elements that do have to do with philosophy - such as how anticipatory anxiety produces the bad results - just as fear of blushing leads to blushing. On the other hand over attention to a goal makes it impossible. Frigidity is helped not by concentrating on the goal of orgasm but instead comes with attention to the partner with the pleasure as the side-effect.

The collective neurosis involves a societal nihilism that seeps into psychological theory itself to permeate it negatively such as the image of man as a nothing but robot, not a human being. He calls this pan-determinism - as if from all sides man is conditioned whereas he sees the individual as self-transcending. Even horrible Nazi leaders can reform - he mentions one. He thinks it bad when religious people adopt these theories as if all who had bad fathers have to hate God whereas sometimes the good relationship to God is healing of the father problem. (See p. 204)

“Through such a misconception, the psychology of religion often becomes psychology as religion, in that psychology is sometimes worshiped and made an explanation for everything.” (p. 210)

“Man is that being who has invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who has entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord’s Prayer or the S’hema Y’Israel on his lips.”(p. 213)

In this way we end our chapter comparing psycho-analytic with personalist notions of the healing of mankind. I leave it to you to say which writer’s concepts seem to you the richer, the truer, and the more worthy of being carried into the 21st Century.
THEME 7

Social Engineering vs. Free Ethical Response

Skinner vs. Von Hildebrand

Introduction

One of the major issues of the 20th century concerned a deterministic view of human choice coupled often with related plans for social engineering vs. the traditional view held by most of mankind throughout the centuries that the human person has free-will and with it the ability to choose, in ethical response, between evil and good. Are human beings free in their choices or are they so “determined” by cultural conditioning that they are no better than sophisticated robots requiring the greatest possible control by experts to ameliorate their condition?

The debate about free will and ethics was partly a legacy of nineteenth century Marxism. Karl Marx taught that whereas people think they are free, in reality the behavior of individuals and groups is the direct and inevitable result of their economic conditions. For example, before the advent of unions, workers were conditioned to think it natural for the capitalists to get the profit and for them to live on starvation wages. According to Communists, People thus conditioned cannot simply decide to choose better conditions. It is necessary, instead, for powerful communist agitators to come on the scene to de-program them from their resignation. If such revolutionaries lead the workers into revolt
and this protest includes the killing of capitalist bosses, that is good. According to deterministic Marxists, no traditional moral absolutes about the rights of any individual to life or property, can stand in the way of revolution. This is because they think there are no moral absolutes. Notions such as the sacredness of human life, underlying absolute rights, came from an old-fashioned philosophy that presupposed a free response to the good by human beings of a fixed nature. Instead the Marxists thought that human nature was something that could be changed by pressures of an economic and sociological kind.

Another source of determinism came from the experimental branch of psychology. Intriguing experiments were done which indicated that under certain conditions people might act quite contrary to their own predictions because of the force of pressures of which they were unaware. One of the most ominous involved a large group of subjects who were brought into a room and told to follow the instructions of the facilitator in pulling switches which would affect other persons seen through a glass window. The subject could hear the progressively louder screams of the people on the other side of the glass, in reaction to his or her pulling of the switches. However, almost all of them unquestioningly raised up the level of that pain. When questioned afterwards they said that they assumed that a professional facilitator giving instructions had to be obeyed!

One of the most controversial determinists was B.F. Skinner who popularized his ideas about determinism in a best-selling novel entitled Walden II from which excerpts will be taken in the following theme of The Battle for the Twentieth Century Mind.

In response to claims that humans were no freer than guinea pigs in a lab, some thinkers promoted their own theories about the intrinsic freedom of choice of human beings. In this chapter we will focus on the defense of free will and ethical choice from the pen of Dietrich Von Hildebrand, the foremost Catholic philosopher of ethics of the century. You will see from the excerpts how determinism can be refuted and also the nobility that belongs to the human person as one able to make a response to such values as life, beauty, purity, and sacrifice.

B.F. Skinner (1904-1990)

B. F. Skinner, one of the most published psychologists of the century, was born in upstate New York to a fairly conservative family. His mother’s side of the family was conformist and correct. As a boy Burrhus Frederic was much frightened by the idea of hell taught him by his grandmother. By the end of high school he had decided that he didn’t believe in God. In college he rebelled against daily chapel and compelled sports. He specialized instead in planning hoaxes and in writing bitter caricatures of the faculty for which he was reprimanded. He wanted most to become a writer but after a few years
of relative failure he went to Harvard to study psychology out of an interest in animal and human behavior. In 1936 he married and had two daughters.

In 1945 Skinner became chairman of the psychology department at Indiana University. In 1948 he became a professor at Harvard where he became a permanent member of the faculty. A researcher and mentor of many doctoral candidates, Skinner became most famous because of his novel *Walden II*, a fictional account of a community run according to his behaviorist principles. This book became a best-seller.

The title *Walden Two* harks back to Thoreau’s famous book *Walden* describing his experiment in solitary living at the site of a New England pond. Skinner thought of starting his own community along utopian deterministic lines but decided he was too old to undertake such a venture. His most famous non-fiction book is *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*.

Before presenting excerpts from B.F. Skinner’s *Walden Two*, it would be well to acquaint you with some key terminology from what was called behaviorism in psychology.

Behaviorism holds that human behavior is caused by genetics and environment. In the book *Skinner for the Classroom: Selected Papers*, edited and introduced by Robert Epstein (Champaign, Ill.: Research Press, 1982) it is pointed out that, “Skinner does not deny that there are “thoughts” and “feelings,” and so on. He simply regards them as physical states of the body, as opposed to metaphysical or psychical entities.” (p. 2). In other words, you may think you are considering matters of truth and value as if to determine your behavior freely according to your conclusions about say, democracy or communism. In reality, according to a behaviorist such as Skinner, your thoughts and feelings are merely reflections of your programming either by a democratically organized society or a communistic one.

Skinner’s determinism, however, is not simply a theory about observable behavior. He is most interested in motivating people through conditioning to change in ways he deems important for their own good and the betterment of others around them. This is to be accomplished by what is called reinforcement. “If we can show that a response increases in frequency because (and only because) it follows a particular stimulus, we call that stimulus a reinforcer.” (pp. 3-4). By experiment psychologists can find out what is most effective for reinforcement. For example, one can find out by studies on students whether they do better on tests before or after meals. Eventually all these findings will produce a science of man with perfect prediction of all the effects of different kinds of reinforcement, according to Skinner.

So successful has Skinner’s behaviorism been in our times that the idea of positive reinforcement is simply a part of the vocabulary of educators and all those promoting any cause, product, or even presidential candidate. It is as simple in application as promising a child a treat after a painful inoculation as an incentive to getting him or her to walk into the car without resistance.
Even though Skinner thought there was no such thing as free-will and moral worth, he acknowledged that it is important that people feel free and worthy.

Now let us turn to how these deterministic ideas are illustrated in Skinner’s best selling novel *Walden II*, incidently written in a feverish seven weeks!

*Walden II* characters include: Frazier (the behavioral psychologist running the utopian community), and visitors to the community: Burris (a professor) Castle (a philosopher), Barbara and Roger, Mary and Steve.

Conditioning, or programming, was called behavioral engineering at the time Skinner wrote the book. *Walden II* is about a perfect planned utopian modern community. Members are made to imagine they are free, but in reality everything is planned for them. A trivial example is the way the trays in the cafeteria are transparent for easy cleaning because you can see both sides. The place is run by specialist managers, not democratically. Everything is planned, for instance children have to wait when they come in from play to eat for some minutes and if the other group eats first they have to watch the first group eat. (p. 84)

Frazier explains to the inquiring guests that in Walden II, children are cared for by many, with less constant care of parents only. “We go in...for everybody’s love - community love, if you wish. Our children are treated with affection by everyone - and thoughtful affection too, which isn’t marred by fits of temper due to overwork or careless handling due to ignorance.” (p. 99)

...Frazier, the founder of this project in the countryside, says about the utopian community:

“...The emotions which breed unhappiness - are almost unknown here, like unhappiness itself. We don’t need them any longer in our struggle for existence, and it’s easier on our circulatory system, and certainly pleasant, to dispense with them.” (p. 101)

The bad emotions such as envy and rage served a purpose, Frazier explains, in the evolution of man. But in his cooperative society they don’t fit.

“In a competitive world there’s some point to anger. It energizes one to attack a frustrating condition. The impulse and the added energy are an advantage...The world isn’t ready for simple pacifism or Christian humility...Before you can safely train out the destructive and wasteful emotions, you must make sure they’re no longer needed.” (p. 102)

Without the sort of behavioral engineering that prevails in Skinner’s *Walden II* there is little progress, according to Skinner, because people are conditioned in ways that are counter-happiness such as competitiveness. In the past progress was supposed to come through inspiring people to good behavior but in Frazier’s community it will come from experimental study.
“What’s the best behavior of the individual so far as the group is concerned? And how can the individual be induced to behave in this way?” (p. 105)

This is not new, Frazier claims. “‘Love your enemies’ is an example - a psychological invention...” (p. 105)

Skinner espouses total materialism: “All differences (between humans) are physical...We think with our bodies, too.” (p. 127)

In Walden II the children live with group care and regard all the parents as their own. In this way they get better programming than they would through tired busy parents. They have selective breeding. Insecurity in children, according to Frazier, comes not from professional care but from overworked emotionally upset parents. (See p. 145) Previous experimental utopias failed because they were based on moral principles instead of scientific ones.

At Walden II there is a division of labor with most people working only half a day because of good management. The rest of the time is spent with congenial groups of people pursuing the arts or hobbies etc. Everything is planned with the talents and character of the people taken into account. Frazier considers that this good life is justification in itself because it is enjoyable, and it doesn’t require any further justification. (See p. 161)

If anyone fails to do their part they are sent to a community psychologist. Self-control because of conditioning is what makes the community work. By contrast, communities based on freedom and morality “...put too much faith in human nature. (They are) an offshoot of the philosophy of perfectionism...We have no truck with philosophies of innate goodness - or evil, either, for that matter. But we do have faith in our power to change human behavior. We can make men adequate for group living - to the satisfaction of everybody. That was our faith, but it’s now a fact.” (p. 196)

In Walden II they take the members for field trips to the outside world to show them all the miseries of jails, saloons, slums, etc.

The goal is happiness and the best possible future that intelligence can work out. (See p. 209)

The sceptical guests of the community make all sorts of attempts to look for flaws but don’t find them except that Frazier’s room is a mess and that he obviously has psychological problems which he explains as due to his not having grown up in Walden II but in the world. (See p. 249 for juicy description of the confrontation of the main sceptic with Frazier on his unsolved problems.)

Finally Frazier tries to convince one of the sceptics that there could be nothing as challenging as trying to control behaviors: “What would you do if you found yourself in possession of an effective science of behavior? Suppose you suddenly found it possible to control the behavior of men as you wished. What would you do?” (p. 255)
The sceptic replies in a dialogue between Castle and Frazier:

Castle: “What would I do?...I think I would dump your science of behavior in the ocean.”

Frazier: “And deny men all the help you could otherwise give them?”

C: “And give them the freedom they would otherwise lose forever!”

F:“How could you give them freedom?”

C: “By refusing to control them!”

F:“But you would only be leaving the control in other hands.”

C:“Whose?”

F: “The charlatan, the demagogue, the salesman, the...bully, the cheat, the educator, the priest — all who are now in possession of the techniques of behavioral engineering.”...

“If man is free, then a technology of behavior is impossible. But I’m asking you to consider the other case.” (p. 256)

The sceptic insists that free will is undeniable because he experiences it. (p. 257) Frazier replies that all aspects of life involve behavioral control. “The determining forces may be subtle but they are inexorable.” (p. 258)

Even dropping a matchbook - you might do it to annoy the predictor or not do it to annoy the predictor but it is all in principle predictable even if difficult to predict at the moment. Behavioral engineering is done through reinforcement of what is wanted. A person is likely to behave in a way that leads to results he likes. We can predict what someone will like. This is more effective than punishment. (See p. 260) “Love your enemies’ is an example of positive reinforcement for you reduce your rage and therefore deal more effectively with the stronger person who you can’t subdue by force or rage.” (p. 261)

Positive reinforcement leads to people feeling free even if they are not. They are free from force but not from the inclinations they have been programmed with. (See p. 263) The leaders are benevolent tyrants because they use their psychological power to bring about happiness for the community.

Let us now turn to an evaluation of Skinner’s determinism. On the positive side, by the extremity of his determinism and his candid application to social engineering, he provided for defenders of free will a worthy opponent and a prophet of what was to come in manipulation of people in the future.

Formal critique of the negative can be found in Von Hildebrand’s refutation of determinism in the next section. Here I want to mention that a danger of determinism clearly shown in Walden II is the
way the authorities become pseudo-gods, omnipotent and omniscient in their efforts to control others. Even atheists such as Jean Paul Sartre thought that psychological determinism leads to the “bad faith” of blaming others for ones actions seen as the result of pressure rather than free choices.

Dietrich Von Hildebrand (1889-1977)

Dietrich Von Hildebrand was a student in Germany of the philosophy of Max Scheler and Edmund Husserl. A convert to the Catholic faith and a fierce opponent of Nazism, he fled across Europe during World War II and eventually became a professor at Fordham University in New York City.

Von Hildebrand’s fame as a thinker rested primarily on his development of an ethical philosophy based on insight into value response. The phenomenological method used in unfolding his ideas about intrinsic values is similar to the personalistic approach of John Paul II in his philosophical and theological writings. The excerpts you will find in this chapter from Von Hildebrand’s work Ethics include his refutation of determinism and of relativism, both presuppositions for the type of social engineering envisioned by Skinner.

(Note from Ronda Chervin: Because I teach ethics in a separate class and this book Battle was designed for courses in contemporary philosophy with students who had already studied ethics, I do not have a full theme on ethics in this book. For my own easily readable book defending ethical norms go to www.rondachervin.com and click on free e-books to Living in Love: About Christian Ethics.)

From Von Hildebrand’s Ethics, Chapter on Freedom of the Will (p. 286-294)

(Von Hildebrand distinguishes between two basic capacities, perfections, of the human will: 1) the ability to respond freely interiorly to any given phenomena or feeling [such as deciding that abortion is an atrocity]; 2) the ability to initiate a new chain of exterior happenings *such as clapping one’s hands].

“Someone may object: The capacity of the will to command certain activities, such as certain movements of our body, is nothing but a specific type of causality. As a fit of anger has the power to make our heart beat or our face redden, so too our will has the power to move our hands.

“In answer, it must be said: Certainly the link between our will and the activities commanded by it is a causal relation. But in comparing this with psychophysical causality it becomes precisely evident why we speak here of a completely new kind of causality, of one which by its nature includes a dimension of our freedom. Causality in other cases takes place without the intervention of our freedom; for when we are angry we no way command our heart to beat faster or our face to redden. These are pedestrian cases of causality, whereas in the case of the will there is a capacity to command certain movements, to use them for the realization of the state of facts which we have decided to realize. They are within the range of our power. The causality linking the will with these
activities is such that they are dominated by our will; and it depends completely upon our free power to command them in one or another direction, or else to abstain from initiating them....

“It is not enough, however, merely to distinguish the two dimensions of freedom or the two perfections of will. We must also show the intrinsic relation between them. The two perfections as such, despite their differences, are nevertheless deeply interrelated from the point of view of the specific “inner word” of willing. The second perfection, the capacity of intervention in the world around us, is deeply related to the specific inner word of the volitional response. We saw before that only states of facts which are as of yet unrealized (though realizable) can become the object of our will. We have to add now that the object, in order that we may will it, must be realizable not only in principle but must even present itself as something accessible to our own power. What precisely distinguishes the inner word of willing from any wishing or ardent interest in the becoming of something is that we say to the object, “Thou shalt be through myself.” This inner word of willing, the specific content of the volitional response, would be impossible if the will did not possess the marvelous capacity to command, spontaneously and freely, activities through which the goal of the will can be attained.

“Whereas the free value-response to the existence of something as such (i.e., the inner word “Thou shouldest be”) does not presuppose man’s capacity to start a new causal chain, willing in the strict sense does presuppose it, and even presupposes an awareness of this capacity. [Take the example of a child trying to overcome the fear of diving into the swimming pool.] The inner word ‘Thou shouldest be’ as it may also be found in wishing does not constitute willing in its proper sense. [The child can wish to dive but still not force his or her will to give the command.] Even if to the ‘shouldest be’ a ‘thou wilt be’ is added, we do not yet reach the specific inner word of willing. This would rather be the inner word of hope. But the response which implies the inner word ‘Thou shouldest be and thou shalt become real through me’—the distinguishing mark of willing—necessarily presupposes awareness that the coming into existence of this good is at least to a certain extent in our power, i.e., the awareness of the second perfection of willing. [This is when the child, overcoming fear, pushes him or herself to plunge into the water.]

After having examined the two perfections of freedom, we still have to add a few remarks concerning freedom as such. The freedom of the person refers to that unique, marvelous capacity to posit an act which by no means can be considered merely an effect of a former chain of causes. To be sure, if we are confronted with any change, any becoming, or any perishing in the sphere of matter, of life, or even of the psychical, we must ask for a cause and we must consider the changes as effects determined by certain causes. But a similar inquiry into the cause of an act of willing would be pointless; moreover, the assumption that this act of willing is an effect determined by certain causes would be a completely wrong and thoroughly unfounded assumption.

“The will to act in a certain way is not strictly determined by the character of a man, his education, his milieu, his former experiences, nor even by the importance the object may have. The
will to act is not a resultant of a parallelogram of these forces, but something which issues from the marvelous creative capacity of man, and which, notwithstanding all the influence of these factors, is never strictly determined by them. An act of willing can by no means be considered a link in a chain of causality whereby the person would merely be the causa proxima, and education, milieu, dispositions, and so forth the causa remotae: so that the person would be, as it were, the “transformer” of all these causes. Although these factors make it understandable that a man wills and acts in a certain way and not otherwise, we are nonetheless aware that they never necessitate him to act so, that they never determine his will in the sense of a strict causality. Notwithstanding the influence of all these factors, a man could will and act otherwise, and in many cases he does so.

“Every man, independently of any philosophical conception, presupposes this fundamental fact. As soon as he makes a moral judgment about another person or about himself, as soon as he has a bad conscience or becomes indignant at any action of another man, as soon as he is filled with admiration at someone’s action or with esteem for another person, he thereby presupposes man’s responsibility; and this again implies the capacity for free decision.

“In addressing a question to someone we likewise assume his freedom; we clearly realize that we are confronted by a situation different from that in which we try to obtain a result from a calculating machine. We presume not only that this person is able to understand us but also that he has the freedom of answering if he so chooses. We realize that his answer is not the effect of our questioning him as his leaping up could be the effect of our screaming. We are aware that this person is free either to answer or to decline to answer.

“In every social act we presuppose and refer to the freedom of man. In exhorting another person, we presuppose that he is able freely to decide whether he will not follow our exhortation. In no way do we believe that his response is necessitated by our exhortation; that we press a button which will affect the desired result in the other person. We clearly distinguish the exhortation which appeals to his freedom as opposed to any psychical effect which we may create in his soul in giving him a drug, and even from the sorrow which bad news will create in his soul.

“In every exhortation, in every rule, in every law imposed, freedom of will is essentially presupposed. (“Man has free choice, otherwise counsels, exhortations, precepts, prohibitions, rewards, and punishments would all be pointless.” St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, 1a,lxxxii,1.) We are constantly aware of this reality and we always count on it; it is as self-evident as the stability of being or the principle of causality. We must realize that if we seriously denied the freedom of will all morality would immediately collapse, and the notions of moral good and bad would lose all sense. In stressing the inevitability of presupposing freedom of will, we intend only to lead the reader to a deeper stratum in which it is univocally given as an essential feature of a personal being. In leading the reader to a deeper stratum, we want him to discover the fact that he clearly and firmly knows about his freedom.
“Yet the creative power of freely engendering an act of will does not imply that we could engender it without any motive. We have already seen that willing presupposes not only an object (that is to say, a state of facts which is as yet unrealized, although as such realizable) but also that this object is endowed with an importance—the importance may be a value, an objective good for the person, or something subjectively satisfying. The object, in order to have the potentiality of moving our will, must be important either as an end or as means toward an end. Something completely neutral cannot become the object of our will. Thus in every act of willing there is presupposed an object which has a motivating power. But the motivating importance by itself does not engender the will. Our freedom displays itself in the capacity to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ with our will to the invitation of a situation; or, in other words, displays itself in the capacity to conform in our will to the invitation or call of this importance, or else to refuse for a specific reason to initiate an activity.

“Willing cannot be brought into existence simply by our free center without any motive supporting it from the object side. In this sense St. Anselm says: ‘Every will, inasmuch as it wills something, wills as it does because of something...Wherefore every will has a what and a why, for we will absolutely nothing unless there be a reason why we will.’ (De Veritate. [R.P. McKeon, op. cit., p 176.])

“A conception ascribing to the person the capacity of willing without any motive would be a complete misunderstanding: it would make of the willing something purely arbitrary, thereby depriving it of its meaningful, spiritual character. In trying to stress the free character of willing, such a conception actually destroys the dignity and rationality of willing and even places it below merely blind urges. To confuse freedom with the arbitrary would imply a total misunderstanding of the very nature of willing, its intentional, meaningful character as a response rooted in an act of knowledge. Freedom and the arbitrary are essentially incompatible. For the arbitrary deletes the will from the great dialogue between person and universe. It separates the will from the logos of being, and above all from the world of values. Willing would thus no longer be a position taken by man toward something, becoming a merely blind movement.

“No, the true sense of freedom of will does not imply the capacity to engender an act of willing without the presence of any motivating object. Willing necessarily presupposes not only an object to which it is directed, but also the importance this object possesses, and in addition our awareness of this importance capable of motivating the movement of our will and of forming a meaningful basis for our willing. The freedom which so deeply distinguishes willing from all other motivated responses consists in this: that it is entirely within our power either to conform to the invitation of the object or to decline to conform to it; or in many cases to choose freely between different possibilities and even to decide in a direction contrary to our pleasure or the promptings of our heart. The really pertinent and decisive difference between willing and all affective responses is that willing never comes by itself as a gift. It always implies a free decision which we can accomplish with our free spiritual center, though never independently of some motive and always supported by the importance of the object, and furthermore it always consists in a turning to an object because of
its importance. On a case mentioned before we observed that we may sometimes be confronted by a situation in which we understand that we should be full of joy, that the object deserves joy, yet we realize that it is beyond our power to engender this joy. Now such a frustration is not possible with respect to willing; it is always in our power to engender an act of willing when we understand that the object deserves a positive decision.

“Someone might object: Is it not a self-evident metaphysical principle that every change presupposes a cause? How can the willing of man and the subsequent action issuing therefrom and directed by it (since both willing and acting involve a becoming of something) take place without being caused or at least without having a sufficient reason for their becoming? Must it not be that the experience of this freedom in one’s own person and the presupposition of it in other persons is a mere illusion, since the principle of sufficient reason forbids us to accept such a thing as freedom of will?

“In answer it must be said: Certainly every becoming (or even every contingent being) requires a cause for its coming into existence. But this fact in no way means that every becoming (or every contingent being) is necessarily the result of a long chain of causes, or that it must have the character of a link in this chain.

“Freedom of will is in contradiction neither with the principle of causality nor with the principle of sufficient reason. The act of willing which arises freely, inasmuch as it cannot be considered a link in a chain of causality, has its sufficient reason in the nature of the person; this nature is endowed with the mysterious capacity of engendering an act of will and of starting a new chain of causality.

“In its nature as well as in its existence, the freedom of any created person certainly demands a causa prima, inasmuch as the created person himself demands it. (“It is not of the essence of liberty that what is free should be its own first cause, any more than that a thing’s cause has to be its first cause.” St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, 1a,lxxiii,1,ad 3.) Freedom is a privilege granted to a man by his character as a person. Now just as the soul of man cannot be caused by any causa secunda but rather issues directly from God, so too the freedom of man does not depend upon any secondary cause; this capacity in man presupposes only the Causa Prima, God....

“In the case of freedom, however, we have to grasp that it is by its very nature a capacity for starting a new chain of causality which, as a capacity rooted essentially in man’s personal nature, presupposes God for its existence and actuation, but does not thereby make of our free decision something necessitated by God. The capacity freely to engender an act of willing and to start a new chain of causality is created by God and is actuated independently of Him. The spiritual center of the person, however, is really the free cause of a concrete act of willing.

“The freedom of the person undoubtedly belongs among those data which have the character of natural mysteries of being and which call for a special wondering about them. It certainly differs in
its intelligibility from causality. The fact that every contingent being needs a cause for its existence is, in another way, ‘transparent’ to our reason; it is something which we can more fully penetrate than we can the fact that man is able with his will to start a new chain of causality.

“But this does not mean that freedom of will is therefore less certain. It is evidently given as an essential feature of the person, with the difference only that the person is that kind of being which, because of its higher rank, possesses a richness and mysterious depth that, in spite of its objective, luminous intelligibility, does not have for our minds the kind of transparent intelligibility, which a mathematical truth possesses.

“In distinguishing the two perfections of will which we can also term the two dimensions of freedom, we mentioned those activities which are under the immediate command of the will. We still have to examine briefly the nature of these activities as well as their relation to our freedom.

“We saw before that all cognitive acts and responses, theoretical as well as affective, include a meaningful conscious relation of the person to an object, whereas, mere states, for example, lack this intentional character. Furthermore, all responses are motivated, whereas many states are merely caused. Activities such as eating, walking, running, or any voluntary movement of our limbs form, from this point of view, a separate class. They differ on the one hand from the responses, inasmuch as they include no meaningful, conscious relation to an object. They are thus not intentional in the strict sense. But they differ also from mere states, inasmuch as they are guided by a will, which itself has a clear intentional character, and are pervaded by a certain finality. They are certainly caused and not motivated; but they are caused by our will, they are voluntarily actualized. When we say that those activities are free or that they are in our power, we mean that they are accessible to our free will. They themselves are caused by our will, but since our will can command them and since they depend upon our will, which itself is free, they partake of its freedom. Inasmuch as they happen not in us or on us, but rather through us they belong to the zone of our free power; we consider them free and hence hold everyone responsible for them. In fine, they are free insofar as they are accessible to the command of our free will. The freedom of these activities, however, clearly differs from the freedom of willing itself. Whereas the person can be impeded in the freedom displayed in the command of activities by the will (e.g., by sickness such as paralysis, or by exterior compulsion), the first dimension of freedom can never be frustrated as long as the person is in possession of his reason. No force whatsoever can ever compel man to speak a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ with his will. (“As regards the commanded acts of the will, then, the will can suffer violence, insofar as violence can prevent the exterior members from executing the will’s command. But as to the will’s own proper act, violence cannot be done to the will.”) St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, 1a-2ae, vi, 4. (A.C. Pegis, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 231.) Calderon admirably expresses this peerless privilege of man: ‘Though my fancy it will gain, it will never my consent...Then the will no more were free if a force could it compel.’

“Thus the freedom of willing has its own unique character, which is not shared by the freedom of these activities insofar as willing is not so much something that we command as something which
we engender. Being so much nearer to the free spiritual center of the person, it is an actualization of this center itself; it is a position of the very core of ourselves and not something that is somehow distant from ourselves and which we dominate and command in the strict sense of this term. We experience the different activities in the zone of our power, as submitted to us, as below ourselves, whereas willing presents itself as an immediate actualization of ourselves.”

Von Hildebrand’s *Ethics* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press 1953) p.106ff

**RELATIVISM**

Ethical relativism is widespread. It is, unfortunately, the ruling moral philosophy of our age, the term “value” is generally employed now as something merely subjective. In speaking of values, one usually takes it for granted that there is general admission of their relative and subjective nature.

The preceding analysis concerning the nature of the important-in-itself should suffice to unmask the impossibility of any value relativism. He who has understood our statements and arguments will also understand that every attempt to interpret as an illusion the notion of an importance-in-itself or of an objective value collapses as soon as we examine more minutely the nature of value. Nevertheless, because ethical relativism is so ubiquitous, it seems necessary to discuss it in a separate chapter and to refute it in detail.

The first type of ethical relativism is no more than a subdivision of general relativism or skepticism. As soon as someone denies that we are able to have any objectively valid knowledge, as soon as he argues that there exists no objective truth, he necessarily also denies the existence of any objective value. The nature of a general relativism is such that it affects everything. We must observe, however, that even though this type of ethical relativism is a logical consequence of general relativism, nevertheless the unconscious motive for general relativism is very often the desire to do away with an absolute ethical norm. At least deep unconscious resistance against the objectivity of truth frequently has its source in a type of pride which revolts primarily against objective values.

General relativism or skepticism, however, has been overwhelmingly refuted many times, beginning with Plato’s *Gorgias* through St. Augustine’s *Contra Academicos* (and most especially in his famous *Si fallor, sum*— “If I am mistaken I am” *De Trinitate, XV, 12-21*; also *De Civitate Dei, XI, 26.*), through all the many classical *reductiones ad absurdum*, and last but not least in Edmund Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen* (*Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1900*; “Critique of specific relativism,” Pt. I, chap. 7, § 36, pp. 116ff.).

Whatever the formulation of the thesis denying the possibility of any objective knowledge or of attaining any objective truth, it is inevitably self-contradictory, because in one and the same breath it denies that which it necessarily implies. In claiming to make an objectively true statement by declaring that we are unable to attain any objective truth, this position clearly contradicts itself, or in
other words, it claims to attain an objective truth in the statement that we can never attain an objective truth.

If every general relativism is untenable because of its intrinsically self-contradictory character, so too is any ethical relativism, which is merely a subdivision of the former and is supported by no other arguments than those offered by general skepticism. But we are here interested in refuting these arguments of an ethical relativism which are not derived from the arguments of general relativism. And there exist many such arguments which are not necessarily derivations of a general value relativism.

To be sure, the ethical relativists are, for the most part at least, value relativists, since theoretically they will deny any importance-in-itself. But their arguments often refer exclusively to the morally good and evil, to moral norms, to any value which imposes on us a moral obligation. Certain other values, e.g., aesthetic values, they believe to be so obviously relative, or subjective and deprived even of any pretension to objectivity, that they no longer argue against their objectivity; again, other values, such as life, health, and democracy, they tacitly accept as objective, even though they will not theoretically admit them to be so. Thus, the real stress is laid on the denial of an objective good and evil in the moral sense, or at least in the sense which implies a moral obligation.

The first well-known argument for ethical relativism appeals to the diversity of moral judgments, which can be found in different peoples, cultural realms, and historical epochs. What is considered as morally good or morally evil, this view contends, differs according to peoples and historical ages. A Mohammedan considers polygamy morally justifiable. It does not occur to him to have any pangs of conscience on this respect. With an entirely good conscience he has different wives simultaneously. To a Christian this would seem immoral and impure. Of such diversity in judgments on what is morally good and what is evil, innumerable examples can be offered. Moreover this diversity of opinion concerning the moral color of something is to be found not only in comparing different peoples and epochs, but also in looking at the same epoch and even at the same individual at different times of his life.

Now this first argument for the relativity of moral values is based on an invalid syllogism. From the diversity of many moral judgments; from the fact that certain people hold a thing to be morally evil while other people believe the same thing to be morally correct, it is inferred that moral values are relative, that there exists no moral good and evil, and that the entire moral question is tantamount to a superstition or a mere illusion.

In truth, a difference of opinion in no way proves that the object to which the opinion refers does not exist; or that it is in reality a mere semblance, changing for each individual or at least for different peoples. The fact that the Ptolemaic system was for centuries considered correct but is now superseded by our present scientific opinion is no justification for denying that the stars exist or even that our present opinion has only a relative validity.
There exist a great many fields in which can be found a diversity of opinion, among different peoples and in different epochs, and also among philosophers. Does this then confute the existence of objective truth? Not at all. The truth of a proposition does not depend upon how many people agree to it, but solely upon whether or not it is in conformity with reality.

Even if all men shared a certain opinion, it could still be wrong, and the fact that very few grasp a truth does not therefore alter or lessen its objective validity. Even the evidence of a truth is not equivalent to the fact that every man grasps and accepts it immediately. In like manner, it is erroneous to conclude that there exists no objective moral norm, that moral good and evil are in reality illusions or fictions or that at least their pretention to objective validity is an illusion, only because we find many different opinions concerning what is considered to be morally good and evil.

What matters is to see that in all these diversities the notion of an objective value, of a moral good and evil, is always presupposed, even if there exist contradictory positions concerning the moral goodness of a certain attitude or action. And just as the meaning of objective truth is not touched by the fact that two persons hold opposite positions and each one claims his proposition to be true, so too the notion of moral good and evil. Of something objectively valid which calls for obedience and appeals to our conscience, is always untouched, even if one man says that polygamy is morally permissible.

The distinction between something merely subjectively satisfying and advantageous for an egotistic interest on the one hand, and the morally good on the other hand, is always in some way implied.

Thus conflicting opinions concerning the moral illicitness of something, instead of dethroning the general notions of moral good and moral evil, clearly attest their objectivity. As the diversity of opinions reveals that objective truth as such is always presupposed and is consequently beyond all possibility of the collapse to which the truth of a single fact may be exposed, so the indispensable presupposition of an objective moral norm reveals itself majestically in all diversities of opinions concerning the moral goodness or badness of a single attitude.

On the other hand, the fact that there have existed many more conflicting opinions concerning moral values, for instance, the moral character of polygamy or of blind revenge, than concerning colors or the size of corporeal things, can easily be understood as soon as we realize the moral requirements for a sound and integral value perception (The problem of value blindness has been discussed systematically in my former work, Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkentniss [Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1921], p.24ff.).

Without any doubt the perception of moral values differs in many respects from knowledge in any other field. In order to grasp the real value or disvalue of an attitude, in order to see, for example, the disvalue of revenge or polygamy, more moral presuppositions are required than for any other type of knowledge. Reverence, a sincere thirst for truth, intellectual patience, and a spiritual
souplessse are required in varying degrees for every adequate knowledge of any kind. But in the case of the moral value-perception much more is required: not only another degree of reverence and of opening our mind to the voice of being, a higher degree of “conspiring” with the object, but also a readiness of our will to conform to the call of values, whatever it may be (In his work on St. Augustine, C.N. Cochrane stresses this fact in saying, “Intellectually, this bad will finds expression in an effort ‘to make one’s own truth,’ i.e., to justify one’s conduct by rationalizations which are blindly and stubbornly adhered to for the very reason that they cannot stand the light of day.” Christianity and Classical Culture [Oxford: Claredon Press, 1940], p. 449.). The influence of the environment, of the milieu, of the traditions of a community, in short the entire interpersonal atmosphere in which man grows up and lives, has a much greater influence on this type of knowledge than on any other. In the ethos of a community, moral convictions are present in another way than are convictions concerning other spheres. They are embodied not only on the laws and customs, but above all in the common ideal which forms an ever-present pattern for judging our fellow men and ourselves. The entire atmosphere is so saturated with this moral pattern that the conscious and unconscious influence on the individual is a tremendous one.

And this influence may cripple the capacity for value-perception. Thus it is not difficult to see how errors in this field are more widespread, expressing themselves in conflicting value judgments in different tribes, peoples, cultural realms, and epochs.

But this only shows why errors and inadequacies in this field are more widespread. It shows us how the tradition of a community may in many cases hamper the moral value-perception, and in other cases facilitate an adequate value-perception. But in no way does it show that without any such influence of a community there would exist no moral good and evil, or that the morally good is nothing but a convention or a custom of a certain community.

How, moreover, will the moral relativists explain the fact that we often find great moral personalities piercing through the screen laid over morality by the customs and convictions of the environment and discovering parts at least of the true world of values? How do they account for the moral views of Socrates, of Zoroaster, and many others?

Once we have grasped the roots of moral value blindness, it will no longer be astonishing that there exist such diversities of value-judgments; rather we shall be astonished at how many agreements nevertheless exist among all tribes, epochs, and individuals. We must now cautiously examine the origin of this diversity in moral judgments.

In many cases the fact that one tribe in a certain historical age considered as morally evil the same thing which another tribe considered as morally good is due to a difference of opinion or belief concerning the nature of a thing, and not its value. If for a tribe certain animals are considered sacred (as, for example, the Egyptians considered the ox Apis to be holy), then to kill this animal assumes the character of something sacrilegious; whereas for one who is aware of the true nature of this animal, to kill it is not at all sacrilegious. Innumerable examples could be given of such diversities which
manifest in no way a contradiction concerning moral values, but only a difference of opinion concerning the nature of certain objects. A sacrilegious action is in both cases considered to be morally evil. Thus there is no diversity concerning the disvalue of a sacrilegious action, but only concerning the fact as to whether something is believed to be sacred or not.

There exist no doubt tremendous differences among peoples and epochs concerning the interpretation of nature and the world surrounding us. The interpretation of the universe by a superstitious primitive tribe naturally differs enormously from the universe as it is understood by science in our age. Thus one and the same action necessarily had a completely different moral significance according to the conception, which the agent has of the things that he is dealing with. This difference implies no diversity in the moral judgment as such. Precisely because the moral judgment as such is the same, because there is agreement concerning the value, the judgment of this concrete action must differ as soon as one set of factual presuppositions has been replaced by another.

One of the most widespread forms of ethical relativism is the thesis of what is called the French sociological school. According to this theory the notion of moral good and evil is in reality only the objectivation of the beliefs and will of a community. As Anatole France puts it, murder is not punished because it is evil, but we call it evil because it is punished by the state. The “objectivity” of the moral norm, its undeniable difference from our arbitrary mood or our subjective desires, is explained according to this theory by the fact that it is the beliefs of a community that the individual finds as something pre-given, imposed on him by tradition.

Moral good and evil are identified with mere convention, with something which has no other basis than the pseudo objectivity of Bacon’s idola tribus, the idols of the tribe or collective erroneous beliefs, as opposed to the idola specus, the idols of the cave or individual prejudices. We do indeed find such a pseudo objectivity of ideas as when in a particular epoch certain ideas are, as it were, in the air. The individual experiences ideas as if they were possessed of objective power and reality because instead of arising in his mind they have an interpersonal reality, and are considered as common knowledge. The individual experiences them as things which come from “outside” his mind, and thus confuses their mere interpersonal reality with objective truth. In order to see the confusion and fallacy at its basis, we need only concentrate on the thesis of the ethical relativists whereby moral values are identified with their being commanded by a community.

Even though we contended that all our convictions are fallacious, mere idola tribus, due to our confusing the pseudo objectivity of the interpersonal reality of an idea with its truth, the notion of truth as such would still remain untouched. There is a clear and unassailable opposition between objective truth and the relativity of all those concrete convictions which have no other basis than a collective belief. When these beliefs and opinions are denounced and belittled as merely relative, then the notion of objective truth, far from being invalidated and reduced to a mere illusion, reveals itself in its full majesty and undethronable reality. Objective truth forms the tacit presupposition of
this thesis, for plainly it is only because there exists an objective truth that the propositions, which have no other worth than to be *idola tribus* are declared relative. Now if we interpret this position as tacitly presupposing objective truth, it becomes tantamount to the thesis that we are unable to attain truth, a skeptical position as which is contradictory in itself, as we saw before. If, on the contrary, we interpret the thesis as considering that truth is in reality constituted by nothing more than the pre-agreement of a community, we are confronted with one of those nonsensical statements which are so often presented in the formula: “It is in reality nothing but...” We have already spoken of the impossibility of these “discoveries” in philosophy, because as far as true essences or necessary, intelligible unities are concerned the reduction of one to the other is inherently nonsensical. If someone tells us that in reality 3 is 4, or green is red, further discussion would be a waste of time. The same applies to every attempt, which declares ultimate, necessary, and intelligible entities to be mere illusions.

Besides the simple impossibility of identifying truth as such with the fact that something is held to be true by a community, the very nature of conviction also forbids such identification. For whether a conviction is true or false in its content, it nevertheless attempts to aim at something transcendent. The statement itself claims to be not merely the belief of a community but a truth. Therefore as such it presupposes the possibility of knowing an objective truth.

In much the same way the thesis of the ethical relativist which declares that what we call good is in reality nothing but the result of social convention means that every particular statement in which we say something is morally good or evil is therefore on the same level as mere rules of convention, such as those which fix the manner in which one person is to greet another. Now this thesis leaves untouched the notion of moral good and evil as such in its objectivity. For it amounts to the thesis: the things, which we believe to be morally good and evil are not so in reality, since we are unable to distinguish whether something is objectively so or whether it only appears to be good or evil because of the tradition of a community.

As far reaching and disastrous as is the denial of the objective validity of every value-judgment concerning any type of human attitude, the objective validity of the notion of moral good or evil would still not be touched by this ethical agnosticism. It would mean: though there exists a moral good and evil, every concrete statement (e.g., “Murder is morally bad,” or “Faithfulness is morally good”) is the mere result of a community convention.

Later on we shall discuss the arbitrary and unfounded character of this ethical agnosticism.

Of course the French sociological school would not accept this interpretation. They want to say that the notion of moral good and evil is nothing but a superstition; and that just as totemism ascribes to certain animals a magical power and significance which they do not have in reality, so mankind in general imagines such a thing as importance-in-itself, and even such things as moral goodness and moral wickedness. As superstition consists not only in ascribing magical power to a
being but also in the very notion of magical power, so too not only the predication of moral good or evil to a human act but the very notion of moral good itself is pure illusion.

This statement may assume two different forms: First, moral goodness and evil are mere illusions, and we are therefore on the same level with the notion of magic power. In reality, things are neutral. The second formula would run: What people call morally good and evil is in reality only mere convention, the social perspective of a certain community.

This latter formula does not lead to the same consequences as does the former. The idea of moral good and evil is not declared to be a superstition, which should be eliminated as in the former case, but rather it is seen as a normal part of man’s communal life. All we have to do is simply to understand its true nature, and this consists precisely in its being the expression of a community belief. Both formulas are equally nonsensical.

The first position, which declares the notion of good and evil to be mere superstition, a fiction to be explained by psychoanalysis, tries thereby to deny a necessary, ultimate, intelligible quiddity. This is a nonsensical procedure as we have shown before (Cf. Prolegomena, p. 5 ff.). Just as it is indeed possible to discover that some contingent idea is a mere illusion or fiction (e.g., that a centaur does not exist, or that the phoenix is a mere illusion) so it is absurd to say of any intelligible, necessary entity (e.g., the number two, or truth, or justice) that it is a mere fiction or illusion.

The very nature of these necessary, intelligible entities is such that they are beyond all invention and fiction, and possess a radical autonomy and independence of the act in which we grasp them. To ignore the essential difference between merely contingent facts and these entities, which have essences so potent as to exclude any possibility of denying them objectivity, and to place them on the same level with any contingent quiddity, thus betrays a degree of philosophical incapacity and superficiality which from the start dooms every theory touches by this blindness.

If we think of all the innumerable attempts in philosophy to reduce one thing to another despite the fact that the two things obviously differ in their very nature—whether it be to explain the meaning of a word by saying that it is nothing but association of an image with the sound of the word, or to explain the respect of an image with the sound of the word, or to explain the respect for a moral value as nothing but a specific form of inhibition, or to describe joy as nothing but the experience of a certain Organempfindung associated with a certain representation of an object, or whatever the particular form may be—we are at a loss to understand whence this idle and even nonsensical procedure derives its attractiveness. Not only value in general but, more important, moral value is, as we saw before, such an ultimate datum that in order to grasp the evident datum of value which, in spite of all theoretical denials, a person constantly presupposes, it suffices that he become fully aware of his lived contact with reality.

Adherents of the French sociological school were full of indignation about Hitler’s atrocities and racism, notwithstanding the fact that according to their theory there could be no basis for any
indignation. Even if, in order to be consistent with their theories, they should deny that they were
indignant, nevertheless at the first occasion in which for a moment they forgot their theory, they
would be sincerely indignant. Every day offers many situations in which their responses give the lie to
their theory.

But we need only think of the attitude, which ordinarily accompanies this theory. The
“dogmatism” of the moral objectivists is looked upon with contempt. Whether it is looked upon as
superstition or reactionary obscurantism or “mystical” phantasy, it is always fought against as
something evil, and never as something merely erroneous, as is the case when one or another
scientific theory is attacked. Obviously in attacking objectivism as evil the relativists admit what they
theoretically deny.

Sometimes we find that those who are in rage against the notion of any objective norm and
any objective value nevertheless strive against them in the name of “freedom,” or “democracy”; and
thereby they fully admit the character of the value of freedom or democracy. They do not speak of
freedom as if it were something merely agreeable or as if they wanted it for personal reasons, but
they speak of it as an “ideal” which itself implies the notion of value and even of morally relevant
value. The entire ethos of those who fight against any objective norm belies the content of their
theory. The pathos with which they condemn the attitude of the “dogmatists” is weighted with the
pretension of fighting for the nobler cause. Whatever may be the point on which they tacitly admit an
objective value and even a moral significance, whatever may be the “ideal” which they presuppose
unawares, somewhere the notion of value and even of moral value must inevitably enter. Would they
not look with contempt on a colleague who, eager to prove a theory, paid people for giving false
testimony, or lied about the results of his experiments? Would they not blame a medical charlatan
who foists fake medicines and cures on his unfortunate patients. Lewis brilliantly points to this
inconsistency in saying:

In actual fact Gaius and Titus will be found to hold, with complete uncritical dogmatism, the
whole system of values which happened to be in vogue among moderately educated young men of
the professional classes during the period between the two wars, their scepticism about values is on
the surface; it is for us on other people’s values: about the values current in their own set they are not
nearly skeptical enough. And this phenomenon is very usual. A great many of those who “debunk”
traditional or (as they would say) “sentimental” values have in the background values of their own
which they believe to be immune from the debunking process. They claim to be cutting away the
parasitic growth of emotion, religious sanction, and inherited taboos, in order that “real” or “basic”
values may emerge. (C.S. Lewis, The Abolition of Man {New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947}, pp. 18-
19.

Why indeed should they write books at all proposing their relativistic theory, if they did not
think that it is better to know truth than to err? (“For the whole purpose of their book is so to
condition the young reader that he will share their approval, and this would be either a fool’s or a
villain’s undertaking unless they held that their approval was in some way valid or correct.” (Ibid., p. 18.)

There may be people who in their lives ignore their moral obligations and become disinterested in the world of moral values and who, like a certain type of criminal or a complete egotist, aspire only to satisfy their pride or concupiscence. But one who is a sincere theoretical relativist can completely avoid presupposing the datum of moral value.

We repeat: As soon as one of these relativists should, in abstracting from his theories, become aware of his immediate contact with being, he could not fail to discover the datum of moral value in its undeniable reality. Only the relativist who could sincerely answer, “yes,” when asked whether he would prefer objective moral values, would be capable of reaching this deeper stratum and of gaining awareness of the value.

But some may object: As soon as a person in his search would rejoice in finding one possibility confirmed by reality rather than another, he is no longer unprejudiced and hence in analyzing reality he may become a prey to wishful thinking.

But this does not apply here. What we mean is simply this: The man who wants to commit suicide because he despair of objective truth or objective values is sincere in his conviction, even though he errs in his attitude. But the one who denies objective truth and objective values and, far from finding such a world tragic, prefers it, completely reveals the psychological and moral reasons which are at the basis of his denial.

The distinction between the notion of moral good and evil on the one hand and a mere convention or a mere “being forbidden by the state” on the other is obvious. To consider moral good and evil as in reality nothing but the result of a positive commandment springing from the self-defense of society against the individual is a typical example of an attempt to dissolve necessary, intelligible entities into contingent fictions and constructs. We might just as well say that in reality a triangle is a square. Such a consideration has sense only if it means that things are often presented under the title of moral laws, or as having a moral value, even though in actual fact those things are prescribed only because they are in the interest of society. This would amount to a judgment analogous to the one wherein we accuse somebody of being a hypocrite and of speaking of God when he really means money. But what must we think of the intellectual capacity of a man who would conclude from the fact of hypocrisy that in reality moral good and evil are only other names for selfish interest? Such a man would deny the hypocritical character of the person whose hypocrisy was the starting point of his disappointment! In the very premise, namely the hypocrisy of this man, he clearly distinguished between the Tartuffe and the morally good man, between what the man pretends to be and what he really is.

Another form of ethical relativism is one that bases itself on a value-subjectivism, and which is in common vogue as a theory concerning values. This theory contends that whenever we attribute a
value to something (e.g., in saying that a quartet of Beethoven is beautiful, a dialogue of Plato deep and luminous, or in praising Joseph’s noble forgiveness of his brothers), in reality we mean a certain feeling which we experience in connection with those objects. Though we attribute beauty, goodness, or depth to an object, these are in reality nothing but mere states of soul which we objectify, erroneously attributing them to an object.

The adherents of this theory seek support for their contention in the fact that such erroneous projections are often found in everyday experience. We call some food healthy because it contributes to our health. Not in the sense in which we say that we are healthy or in which we say that meat comes from a healthy animal, we cannot attribute health as such to a certain food. According to this theory, the same would apply to value-judgments: for instance, we call music beautiful, or an action morally good because they cause certain feelings in us; or because we associate certain feelings with the thought of certain objects.

Of course, so the theory continues, when we say “beautiful,” “sublime,” “good,” or “noble,” we are not speaking of mere illusions or fictions. We indicate by these terms something which is very real; but in fact this something is not a property of objects, acts, or persons, but a “feeling” which for one or another reason we connect with an object. Thus too the moral qualifications which we predicate of human actions or attitudes are in reality only feelings, connected for one reason or another with the object. So too, what we call moral obligation is really a specific type of coercive feeling. The experience of a “must” can be found in various forms in man’s inner life, ranging from an idée fixe to all kinds of inhibitions. Moral obligation appealing to our conscience is thus nothing but a form of coercive feeling. It can thus easily be explained by psychology. To ascribe to this obligation an objective reality, an existence independent of our consciousness, is again the mere result of a psychological tendency, in this case the tendency for objectivizing.

Since values in general and moral values in particular are mere subjective feelings and not properties of things, and since moral obligation is also just a specific kind of feeling, it is accordingly impossible to ascribe to moral values or to moral obligation an objective validity. They are subjective and thus relative. If certain individuals, tribes, or cultural realms differ in their moral value-judgments, this is quite natural, for we can hardly expect everyone to have the same feelings on the face of certain objects, as one person likes very hot food and another dislikes it; as one prefers salty food and another unsalty; as one and the same thing may cause pleasure in one man and displeasure in another; how much more understandable then is it that we have different “value-feelings” with regard to the same thing, since the connection with the object seems to be even looser here than in these cases of certain bodily effects.

First of all, there is no reason whatsoever for declaring that the beauty of a melody, or even the moral sublimity of an act of charity, is in reality a feeling and not a property of the object. Experience tells us just the opposite. The beauty is given as a quality of the melody, and the sublimity
as the quality of a moral act. This clearly differs from the way in which a typical feeling (e.g., a state of depression or irritation) is given to us.

The situation is just the opposite in the case of healthy foods. As soon as we try to verify what we mean by “healthy” (in saying, for example, that a certain mineral water is very healthy), we realize that we are using the term “healthy: in an analogous sense, and that the primary sense of health is question only when we speak of a healthy man or a healthy animal or any other living being.” We immediately realize that by healthy, we mean with respect to mineral water that it serves our health, whether in overcoming or avoiding an illness. Moreover, we clearly see that the relation expressed by the term “serves,” as when we say that medicine serves health, is a causal relation.

If on the contrary we ask ourselves what we mean in saying of a melody “How beautiful!” and in saying of an action “How noble!” “How good!” we find that in no way do we use these terms in an analogous sense and that they refer primarily to something else. There is neither a property of ourselves nor any feeling in our soul to which we could attribute the good or beautiful in its primary sense. Rather, we mean something, which precisely by its very nature, can only be a predicate of the object.

In order to grasp how entirely superficial and senseless it is to reduce the values to feelings, we must consider for a moment the term “feeling.” It is, as we shall see later in detail, an equivocal term (By this we do not deny that there are some common features which are at the basis of the different uses of this term.). It is sometimes used to denote mere states, such as fatigue, depression, irritation, anxiety: sometimes for experiences, such as bodily pain or bodily pleasure; and sometimes for meaningful affective responses, such as joy, sorrow, fear, enthusiasm. We shall see later the essential difference which exists between a mere state of alteration and a meaningful, intentional response such as joy. Here it may suffice broadly to distinguish them, and to see how the subjective-value thesis looks against the background of this distinction.

If we interpret the thesis as asserting that moral goodness or beauty is in reality a feeling like a bodily pleasure, then the absurdity is immediately evident. There is nothing in experience which would allow such a reduction; rather, experience totally excludes it. A bodily pleasure extends in space and time. We can localize it more or less, and we can strictly measure its duration. To predicate of beauty or of moral goodness that it extends in space and in time is sheer nonsense.

Bodily pleasure presents itself univocally as something which can be experienced only by ourselves and which has no existence outside of its being experienced. Moral goodness and beauty clearly show themselves as things independent of our experience; we clearly realize that the moral goodness of another’s act of charity in no way depends on its being witnessed by ourselves. On the contrary, we discover it to be good and we know that it would yet be good whether or not we were aware of it.
Now no one will actually try to reduce moral values or the dignity of a human person to certain bodily feelings, or to a projection of such feelings. This attempt is only to be found with respect to aesthetic values, such as beauty. We shall, however, disregard the specificity of this attempt here, because once one has grasped the impossibility of reducing values in general to feelings, the attempt to do so with aesthetic values reveals its futile character.

Insofar as values are concerned, moral values especially, this subjectivism contends that they are projections not of bodily but of psychical feelings. This theory holds that in praising as morally noble the action of a man, we only give expression to the fact that we rejoice before the object; that it moves us, or pleases us. And the content of these experiences is projected into the object: we express ourselves in our judgments as if the object were endowed with a certain quality.

According to this theory, value-judgments are merely a confused way of expressing ourselves. The real meaning of a value-judgment would then be: “I feel pleasure or displeasure in connection with this object,” or “The object causes a positive or negative feeling in my soul.” Yet, if we compare a value-judgment with a proposition dealing with our feelings, we immediately see the obvious difference. In stating that forgiveness is morally good, revenge morally evil, we mean by morally good the character of an attitude, and not of any feeling which I experience in witnessing these attitudes in another person. When, on the contrary, someone says, “I cannot stand angry people; they frighten me to death,” he means a feeling which angry people cause in him. When someone says of a landscape that it is sublime, or that a human person has a higher value than an animal, he certainly does not mean by sublime or by value a feeling which he discovers in his soul. Sublimity, moral goodness, the value of a human person are either properties of a being or they are fictions. As we have already seen they can never be feelings, because predications, which are meaningful and correct when applied to feelings or psychical entities, become senseless when applied to values. The thesis that value-judgments are statements concerning one’s feelings (and thus that they are feelings) is obviously wrong.

A special version of this value subjectivism is Ayer’s emotive theory. He contends that value-judgments are not statements referring to our feeling, but rather a mere expression of feeling or a command (A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* [London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1950], pp. 20-22, 102ff.). Thus, according to him, value-judgments can be neither true nor false. The statement: “Justice is good,” or “Injustice is evil” should, according to Ayer, be synonymous either with a mere expression of a feeling or with or with the command: “Be just,” or “Do not be unjust.”

The term “expression of feelings” is in many respects vague. In the first place, the term “feeling” is, as we mentioned above, equivocal; in order to give sense to this thesis, the datum which is here meant by feeling would have to be carefully elaborated. Secondly, the term “expression” is equally ambiguous. In its most authentic meaning the term refers to the intuitively given transparency of psychical entities in a person’s face or on his voice or movements. In this sense we say that a face expresses joy, a voice expresses fear, a way of walking expresses an affected or
sophisticated attitude. In this sense, too, we say that a certain face expresses kindness, purity, intelligence. It is obviously impossible in this primary sense of the term to identify a value-judgment with any expression.

By expression we may also mean any exteriorization of our emotions; e.g., tears may be an expression of sorrow, singing an expression of joy, or jumping in the air an expression of exuberant cheerfulness. In this sense certain words or even sentences may be called expressions of our joy, our sorrow, our fear, our enthusiasm. Such words and sentences obviously have a character completely different from any statement. They differ completely from a proposition in which we share that we rejoice or that we are angry. They have the function rather of an exteriorization, the character of a dynamic manifestation of our inner experience. This type of expression, Ayer contends, constitutes the major part of our value-judgments.

We can disregard in our context the thesis of Ayer that value-judgments are neither true nor false because they are not propositions. We may disregard this part of Ayer’s thesis for, even if he admitted that value-judgments can be true or false, the main basis for his relativism would not be overthrown: if value-judgments really do only refer to feelings independently of the more logical question whether they can be true or false, then values would truly be something entirely subjective.

The point of interest here is to see whether Ayer is right in saying that value-judgments are an expression of feelings or a command. Now this theory is equally in blatant contradiction to experience. Great music is given as beautiful to me, the quality of beauty revealing itself univocally as a property of the object; it stands before my mind as distinct from psychical experiences of my soul, such as joy, serenity, being moved, or sorrow and anxiety. The moral nobility of an act of charity is clearly given as a property of the act, as something on the object’s side, definitely distinguished from any psychical happening in the soul.

Our primary contact with values is in no way a judgment; it is not the act of imparting a property to an object but the perception of something autonomous. The original experience is the perception of the importance of an object; only after this initial disclosure of the value may we by a judgment attribute it to an object.

In the case of an expression, the primary experience is an emotion, e.g., joy, sorrow, fear; and the words we utter as expression of this experience can in no way be interpreted as the formulation of something we perceived before as the property of an object. These dynamic expressions have an analogous character to the “Ouch” someone utters when he is hurt, or to the famous “Uh” of Mozart’s Papageno when he sees Monostatos. They are an exteriorization of something, having only the character of a projection of a psychical experience. They speak exclusively of the psychical entity whose expression they are; they manifest univocally the nature and presence of joy, sorrow, or fear.

This expression itself shows up only in an active, dynamic process of exteriorization. How could one pretend that the beauty of a great work of art, the value of truth, the moral value of justice,
the dignity of the person (all of which are primarily known in a perception) are in reality mere expressions of feelings?

We are moved to tears because of the beauty of a work of art. Our being so affected is clearly distinguished therefore from the beauty of the object. How should the expression of our emotion be identical with beauty? Or how could one pretend that in saying that this work of art is beautiful, we are in reality not stating a fact but merely expressing our reaction?

Moreover, the untenable character of a theory such as Ayer’s becomes fully manifest when we analyze the kind of feelings of which value-judgments are supposed to be expressions. It is obvious that mere states, such as fatigue, irritation, depression, which are only caused by an object, but not motivated by it, are not at all in question in the theory under inspection. Clearly they have not the dynamic trend of exteriorization although they are typically “expressed” in the first and literal sense of expression. Obviously what Ayer means by the term “feeling” comes under the heading of intentional experiences, experiences having a meaningful conscious relation to an object. Experiences such as joy, sorrow, enthusiasm, indignation, admiration, contempt, love, hatred, hope, and fear are the feelings which, according to this theory, are the very source of value-judgments.

But the futility of this theory discloses itself as soon as we realize the nature of these acts. The intentional nature of affective responses, their meaningful response character, essentially presupposes the knowledge of a datum on the object’s side which is the very reason for our joy or enthusiasm. So long as an object presents itself to our knowledge as neutral or indifferent such a response is impossible. This elementary fact, as we have already noted in the first chapter, became the starting point for Freud’s discovery of the phenomenon of repression. So far are the affective responses from being the sources of the importance of the object that, on the contrary, they presuppose the knowledge of this importance (This importance can naturally also be the merely subjectively satisfying in the case of joy. But in these cases we are aware of the difference, for no man would speak of the financial profit about which he rejoices as morally noble, sublime, and so on. He might perhaps say that it is lucky.).

To believe that in stating the moral goodness of justice we only exteriorize our enthusiasm about justice is as absurd as to believe that the statement 2+2=4 is nothing but an exteriorization of our conviction. The acts which in both these cases are said to exteriorize themselves in a statement cannot be separated from the object which they essentially presuppose. There is no enthusiasm, no veneration, no esteem as such, just as there is no conviction as such. Every veneration is essentially a veneration of someone; every enthusiasm, an enthusiasm about something; every esteem, the esteem for a person; every conviction is necessarily conviction of a fact. The feelings to which, according to this theory, the values must be reduced, themselves presuppose an importance on the object side.

Thus Ayer confuses the principium with the principium. But apart from that it is plainly clear that the content of the quality on the side of the object (which we term “beautiful,” “sublime,”
“heroic,” “noble,” and so forth) clearly differs from the content of our responses, such as joy, enthusiasm, love, admiration, esteem, and so on. Above all, the radical difference which separates the consciousness of something, the awareness of an object and its quality, from our response to it should once and for all make manifest the impossibility of identifying the sublimity of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, which we grasp, with our experience of being moved by it or enthused about it. C.S. Lewis unMASKs in a brilliant way the ridiculous confusion of this interpretation of values:

Even on their own view — on any conceivable view — the man who says This is sublime cannot mean I have sublime feelings. Even if it were granted that such qualities as sublimity were simply and solely projected into things from our own emotions, yet the emotions which prompt the projection are the correlatives, and therefore almost the opposites, of the qualities projected. The feelings which make a man call an object sublime are not sublime feelings but feelings of veneration.

In summarizing we can say that the attempt to interpret the values as mere projections of feelings into an object, either because the object causes these feelings or because we associate them with the object, collapses and reveals itself as sheer nonsense as soon as we take the trouble first to expose the equivocal character of the term “feeling,” and then to examine the real nature of the experiences on which we grasp a value and respond to it.

The attempt to interpret value-judgments as sentences, expressions, or commands also collapses when minutely analyzed. It is obviously impossible to interpret as commands statements such as “The Ninth Symphony of Beethoven is beautiful,” or “The human person has a higher value than an animal,” or “Truth is something precious.” What kind of command should these value-judgments embody? If one would say it is a command to appreciate this music, or to respect the human person, or to worship truth, the question-begging character of such a view is obvious. Not only does one definitely mean something else, but the very reason for commanding such responses is precisely the value of the object. This involves the same confusion as if one would say, “It is true that Caesar was murdered in 43 B.C.,” and make this statement synonymous with the command to be convinced of it.

Without doubt, this reduction of values to a mere object of commanding is meant only to be applied to moral values. The transposition of the extra-moral value-judgments into commands is so plainly artificial that we can hardly believe anyone would seriously cling to it.

In the moral sphere, of course, commands and prohibitions play a great role. It is here that the view under consideration attains a certain meaning, in the assertion, for instance, that the sentence “Killing is morally evil” is synonymous with the sentence “Thou shalt not kill,” or again, that “Charity is morally good” is synonymous with “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Now it is not difficult to see that the two sentences are not identical in meaning; they express two facts, although these facts are interrelated. In stating that killing is evil, we clearly refer to a property of the act of killing; but we are not expressing any prohibition. We do not even refer to any
prohibition. But we are certainly indicating a fact which necessarily leads to the prohibition. We refer to something which is, on the one hand, the reason and basis for the prohibition, and from which, on the other hand, the prohibition logically follows. The same applies when we state that charity is good. We must realize that the connection between both facts—the goodness and the command to goodness—is evidently such that the goodness is the principium, and the command, the principiatum. Thus, it is impossible to substitute the command for the value, because the command, as soon as it is a moral command and not a mere positive commandment (such as the commandment in the Decalogue to observe the Sabbath), necessarily presupposes the value of the object to which it refers.

It would be just as nonsensical if one said that truth is nothing but the commandment to be convinced of something. In reality the truth of a sentence is presupposed in its independence in order to require conviction and oblige belief in it.

And what kind of command then should the moral value-judgment involve? Arbitrary commands which an incompetent individual places on someone else? Obviously not. Perhaps the commands of a community? This would amount to the relativism of the French sociological school which we discussed above, or at least to a pure value positivism.

If on the contrary the command in question is conceived as issuing from a true authority (e.g., the father in the family, the state, and above all the Church), the value is presupposed on the very notion of the authority. But even a true authority, implying the notion of value, could only be claimed to be the source of a valid positive law. The difference between a merely positive law and a moral commandment is so obvious and has so often been stressed that we need no longer insist on it.

In our age of psychoanalysis it is high time that we had a psychoanalysis of relativism. If anything calls for a psychoanalytic investigation it is the artificial and desperate effort to deny the most obvious data and to make of them innumerable different things—anything in fact except what they distinctly reveal themselves to be.

Addendum: Self-Help Groups and Free Will

Many 20th century academicians had trouble trying to refute determinism in spite of a strong sense that it had to be false since freedom is so much a part of the human person. But on the grass-roots level the 20th century saw a phenomenal growth of self-help groups pitting freedom to change with the help of God’s grace against the most seemingly impossible odds coming from enslavement to addictions. Simultaneously AA for alcoholics and Recovery, Inc. for anger, fear and depression developed programs in the first half of the century to develop the freedom of individuals who seemed otherwise doomed to repetitive destructive behavior patterns. By the end of the 20th century the concepts of 12 Steps and of what was called cognitive therapy were liberating people from areas of addiction ranging from drug addiction to compulsive shopping!
Here are some summaries of the basics of these programs for self-help with a commentary by me on how the principles contrast with deterministic ideas:

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.”

(This fundamental maxim admits that some things are not in my power, and not alterable by my free choices such as circumstances or actions of others - I can’t fix others, because they have to freely decide they want to change. To think I can just fix them is deterministic - but it also proclaims that with courage I can change some things, including my own attitudes. A spiritual director familiar with 12 Steps used to advise: don’t try to control others and don’t let them control you.

Let’s look at some of the 12 steps and slogans:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable. (Whether it is alcohol or other addictions - overeating, drugs, sexaholism, workaholism, compulsiveness, we can’t control it by ourselves. This shows that habit is a determining factor of behavior.)

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. (In spite of the way we have lost freedom from our choice or compliance with addictive determinants, with God’s grace we can be freed.)

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Through other steps, by admitting our wrongs and taking responsibility we get away from the idea that we are totally determined by what others did to us in the past. And, then, by step 7 we are ready to ask Him to remove our shortcomings. By step 11 we get closer to God to ask him to help us carry out his will for us.

In some 12 Step groups they give out a bookmark called “just for today” I am including these self-help maxims here. Notice that these slogans represent an acceptance that some things are too difficult or impossible to change but others are within my power:

“Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once.

“Just for today I will be happy. This assumes to be true what Abraham Lincoln said, that ‘Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.’

“Just for today I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my “luck” as it comes, and fit myself to it.
“I will be agreeable, not criticize one bit, not find fault with anything, and not try to improve or regulate anybody but myself. I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.”

Abraham Low, a psychiatrist from Europe who came to the United States in the first part of the 20th century, began to question Freudian concepts and to develop his own philosophy of the human problems. Eventually he founded a system for self-help groups working on training the will through training the mind. His techniques are similar to those used by many late 20th century cognitive therapists. Called Recovery, Inc., groups throughout the world work on liberating the members from defeatist ways of thinking that lead to anger, fear and depression. Here are a few points from this self-help system:

We feel trapped until we accept the average behavior of others. When people bother us in extreme ways, we need to put them in outer boundaries, if only by going into another room or taking a walk. The acceptance of what is fixed in human nature, its imperfection, is necessary to have energy to do what we can do, to look for alternatives, to take secure thoughts, to be courteous, to enjoy the love that is in daily life.
Introduction

From the 1960's onward there was an increasing interest in the West in Eastern spiritualities. By the end of the 20th century many people left main-line Christian churches to base their interior growth on a variety of methods coming out of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Most of those interested in Eastern spirituality were not attracted by the rigors of asceticism of the masters, but more in popularized versions of meditation and fellowship.

By the 1980's the term New Age became the name for any mixture of astrology, clairvoyance, prophecy, and meditation, with the common theme of breaking away from traditional Christianity into a belief in a cosmic convergence of light. Many New Agers thought that the year 2,000 would bring in radical changes in the universe, perhaps even a unification of intelligences from other planets.
with our earth’s sages. Often New Agers included in their spiritual synthesis elements of classical Christianity, especially communication with angels, but also with Jesus. The Jesus of most New Agers, however, is different from the Jesus worshiped by Christians in the past. In New Age movements, generally Jesus is seen as only one of the many great sources of light. He is on a par with Buddha, Krishna or with contemporary gurus such as Sai Baba, an alleged worker of miracles in India. As an illustration of the trend to bring together the truths of many religions and practices into a synthesis in the Eastern mode but adapted to the West, I will be excerpting passages from Deepak Chopra, an Indian doctor practicing medicine and spirituality primarily in the United States.

The pressure of the exodus of so many young people in the second half of the century from the churches into various alternative New Age groups led some main-line Christian and Jewish spiritual leaders to recover and articulate in modern terms the great wisdom of the West concerning the path to holiness. In the United States and eventually world-wide, the most influential figure in the movement to express classical Catholic spirituality in a new way was Thomas Merton, a man who became a Trappist monk after a confused and hedonistic youth. I will be quoting passages from one of his most famous books, *No Man is an Island*. Later in life Merton became a leader among Catholics seeking a synthesis with Eastern thought and practice. But it is his earlier work that was most powerful in bringing orthodox Catholics to explore their own spiritual heritage.

Before delving into concrete manifestations of the battle for the 20th century mind in the area of spirituality, I will lay out for you the main contrasts.

I. Seeking Treasures in Non-Traditional Religions vs. Delving into One’s Own Tradition

It is characteristic of the New Age movement to take elements from many sources sometimes even demonic, to create a personal synthesis. Even those belonging to specific groups with strong leaders do not feel bound to accept every idea offered, but usually take some things from one system and other ideas from other systems. By contrast, Catholics and other Christians study Scripture, tradition and the writings of the great Christian masters as formative. Even though loyal Catholics are open to truths of other traditions, they will be careful to avoid anything coming from the occult or from mysticisms they believe to be tainted by heretical concepts.

II. Experiential Wisdom vs. Dogmatic Truth

Whereas New Agers hold to individual religious experience even when such is contrary to classical Christian belief, Catholics see their spirituality as a response to the persons of the Trinity and as an exemplification of dogmatic truth.

III. The Divine Within vs. The Transcendent God Within His Creation
Most New Agers think of the Divine as within the soul instead of above and beyond the self. By contrast, Catholics and other believers in revealed religion such as Jews, Moslems and non-Catholic Christians know God as beyond the universe yet being present within it.

IV. All is One vs. The Personal Self Reaching Out in Love to God and Other Beings

Many New Agers overcome emotions of loneliness and alienation by immersing themselves in meditative experiences of the oneness of everything in the universe. They seek an ultimate unity where their own selfhood would be fused into the divine. On the contrary, Catholics and others belonging to Western religions believe that the unique self will never disappear since it is created by God in love for the purpose of uniting in love to God, other persons and all other beings of the universe.

V. Evil Comes from Ignorance vs. Evil Comes from Sin

It is characteristic of many New Age systems of thought to emphasize ignorance as the main source of suffering in the world. An enlightened person chooses good, according to many such New Age philosophies, not so much out of love, but out of desire to avoid the consequences of wrong choices for oneself such as turbulence, anxiety, enslavement. Catholics and others of Judeo-Christian or Moslem background know moral evil and the sufferings which follow to come from the deliberate choice of evil called sin.

VI. The Individual is the Final Authority in Spiritual Matters vs. God is the Lord of Our Lives

Many New Agers come from Jewish or Christian families where God was seen as a harsh authority figure, perhaps in the image of their own often unreasonable human fathers. As a result these seekers and others who simply cannot accept traditional religious authority, find comfort in the belief that no one can enforce anything upon them against their own judgment and will. By contrast, Catholics and others coming from a revealed religion will see God's authority as absolutely binding. In a difference of opinion how could the absolute omniscient God be wrong and limited puny-minded I be right?

VII. The Universe is Eternal and the Soul Reincarnated vs. Time has a Beginning and an End and the Soul is Judged by God after one Life

Because many New Agers reject the concept of creation by God at a given moment in time, they tend to think of time in the most common Eastern way as an everlasting cycle. Since they see God as the divine within, there is no God to judge the soul. Instead it evolves from ignorance to enlightenment through a series of incarnations in different bodies. Classical Judeo-Christian thought accepts God's revelation of a beginning and end of time with the soul being judged after one lifetime.

VIII: The Best Way to Serve Others is Through Spiritual Teaching vs. Corporal as well as Spiritual Works of Mercy
Generally speaking, most New Agers reject laboring for justice on this earth in terms of righting wrongs or alleviating physical suffering. This is because such seekers think that spiritual solutions are more important. Such a dualistic philosophy is contrary to the Christian insistence that spiritual growth is normally expressed in works of justice and compassion.

As we study the thought of representatives of New Age vs. Catholic spirituality these contrasts will take on flesh.

Deepak Chopra

(he doesn’t give out his date of birth, it seems)

One of the most influential of New Age gurus is Deepak Chopra, Director of the Institute of Mind-Body Medicine and Human Potential at Sharp Health Care in San Diego, Ca. with books translated into 25 languages. He lectured all over the world toward the end of the 20th century and will no doubt be even more famous in the 21st century.

To help you understand this leader, I will provide here some interesting facts from his autobiography: Return of the Rishi: A Doctor’s Story of Spiritual Transformation and Ayurvedic Healing, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1988).

Chopra, a doctor from India studied endocrinology in the United States where he became interested in holistic health. The holistic approach involves treatment integrating the body, mind and heart of the patient. During a trip to India he decided to pursue the old folk medicine called Ayurveda (ayus = life, veda = knowledge). One of the reasons for his interest in the old manner of treating illness was disgust with the way classical Western medicine makes people suffer enormously even if there is no cure vs. caring about how the patient feels, and offering him or her love and care. He decided to study what the old Indian Rishis (seers) knew concerning the way the body mirrors the natural cosmos.

As a child Deepak’s grandmother taught him about Rama and Krishna. She also believed that magic and perfection were in all people, but most were not yet perfected to be able to do miracles. Grandmother told beautiful stories from the tradition with words like these “The fire that leads to Heaven is hidden in the secret place of the heart.” By knowing the soul within yourself you can know immortality.

This home religious education was interrupted when Deepak learned from an Anglo-Indian communist to be a sceptic. The old traditional ideas didn’t seem to match the terrible suffering he found around him, which he wanted to ameliorate through social means. After high school Chopra
decided to be a doctor. His motive was to heal people and make them happy. As an intern he found that most academic doctors would not get to know the patients. He started sitting with them and communing with them, especially poor villagers.

In 1970 he graduated from medical school in India. For six months he worked in a village seeing with his own eyes how a dangerous looking grand mal seizure’s patient was cured not by their Western medicines but by being exorcized and then given herbs. This worked perfectly. He was surprised.

In the United States, Chopra worked in the summer in a hospital in New Jersey. Doing ER work he wondered about how it was that he was treating specific emergencies vs. really relating to the people. He saw a contrast to Hippocrates who swore that his own life should be pure and holy so that his very presence might help the patients who were in crisis. (see p. 8) He also became interested in how the ancient Greeks used food and herbs in cures, based on nature. It seems to him that American doctors were interested in fighting disease only (p. 9) and didn’t seem interested in the persons they were helping.

Chopra married an Indian woman he had loved from his teen years and brought her back to the United States. In his practice he began to notice the problem of patients who don’t want to be well. Only a small percentage believed they could be healed. He saw that by thinking of the patients not as full persons but rather as the cardiac case, the diabetic, etc., he was part of the problem.

Chopra’s goal became to see how to get people to want to be well. (p. 82) He quotes Emerson on invincible health. “Man is a god in ruins. When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and shall pass into the immortal as gently as we wake from dreams.” (p. 83)

Patients with a strong belief that they will be healed do much better. But most people want hard medicine and don’t want to lean on belief, which seems weaker. “Negative thoughts trigger substances in the body that are subtle and yet potent.” (p. 97)

On a visit to India Chopra met an Ayurvedic physician. This man was master of the art of feeling the pulse and knowing your whole diagnosis. He was sensitive where Western medicine tends to be clumsy. The diagnosis included much about diet but also about loving feelings and unhealthy emotions; such as too much work and worry vs. a more leisurely life. According to Ayurveda the goal of life is “to be happy and to receive wise and happy thoughts from every part of the cosmos.”

Traditional Indian medicine is related to certain metaphysical concepts such as:

“Nature is composed of one intelligence. Man is part of Nature. Therefore, man’s intelligence connects him to the universe.” (p. 115)

A turning point for Chopra came when he and his wife made a trip to India to see Maharishi Mahesh Yogi the founder of Transcendental Meditation (TM). Chopra read a book about TM and was
impressed. This type of meditation was not designed for recluses and ascetics. Instead it emphasized overcoming stress in the body. Since Chopra, himself, was involved in the heavy stress of the life of a doctor, carrying a beeper, drinking lots of coffee, smoking a lot, drinking whiskey in the evening, this analysis was appealing. Sitting for two 20 minute sessions, as advised in TM was something anyone could do. There was also no need to commit to a set a beliefs. (p. 125) Within a week of practicing TM, Chopra had stopped drinking. Two weeks later he quit smoking. He felt joyful and filled with new energy.

At the Maharishi’s training center, he met one of the monks who was full of inner silence and joy. Chopra and his friend sang a song about there being no death, no mother and father...no master, no disciple. I am only blissful consciousness. “I am God. I am God.” (p. 134) He linked this experience to a strain of unorthodoxy in Indian poetry and song, which contrasts with the supposed dullness of traditional religious orthodoxy.

According to Chopra, since nature has thought of all remedies, sickness comes from lack of knowledge. The doctor is to turn to nature’s intelligence to find the cure. Sickness is a distortion of consciousness. Everything in being, comes from the transformation of the one intelligence ( p.143). Silence breaks the power of the problems we are attached to. As silence increases, ignorance and disease disappear (p. 146).

Maharishi teaches that man is eternal bliss-consciousness. Instead of seeking happiness without, we find it within. (p. 149) How happy a person is has to do with the bliss he has brought out from Being into the conscious waking life. (P. 150)

Finding a way to happiness brings health. Happiness is an antidote to illness. The positive emotions set up biochemistry in the nervous system that directly enhances the body’s ability to avoid sickness (p. 156). A well person dwells inside hidden. It is your real self. In his meditation about his patients he comes to feel that he is them, not separate.

Studies show a decrease in violence in cities wherever there are more people meditating. This is because all people are really connected. When people feel at one then hostilities disappear (p. 172).

(Chervin wants you to note the utopian undercurrent here.)

Sessions in 1986 with TV cameras showed yogic levitations, called yogic flying. Chopra mentions that Catholic saints were known to fly. Chopra experienced this yogic flying himself. The interior experience is the integration of mind and body. (p. 185)

Now that you know more about Chopra’s life and ideas, we will go back to the themes mentioned in my introduction comparing New Age to Catholic spirituality. Quotations from Chopra will be used as samples of the general New Age mentality.
I. Seeking Treasures in Non-Traditional Religions

I am taking this information from Deepak Chopra, The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: A Practical Guide to the Fulfillment of your Dreams (Based on Creating Affluence) (San Rafael, California: Amber-Allen Publishing, 1994) About the original book Creating Affluence, Chopra says that coming into contact with the divinity within (a basic theme of Eastern spirituality) will give you “The ability to create unlimited wealth with effortless ease, and to experience success in every endeavor.” (p. 1)

“Success in life could be defined as the continued expansion of happiness and the progressive realization of worthy goals...the abundant flow of good things to you.”(p.2)

Success, according to Chopra, is not to be at the expense of others...this success involves good health and energy. The successful person has enthusiasm for life, fulfilling relationships, creative freedom, emotional and psychological stability. He or she also has a sense of well being and peace of mind. “Even with the experience of all these things, we will remain unfulfilled unless we nurture the seeds of divinity inside us. In reality, we are divinity in disguise, and the gods and goddesses in embryo that are contained within us seek to be fully materialized. True success is therefore the experience of the miraculous...the unfolding of the divinity within us...the perception of divinity wherever we go...in the eyes of a child, in the beauty of a flower, in the flight of a bird...when we begin to experience our life as the miraculous expression of divinity -- not occasionally, but all the time - then we will know the true meaning of success.” (p. 3)

This book of Chopra takes the reader through what he calls the Seven Spiritual Laws. Law is the process by which the unmanifest becomes manifest, the invisible into the known and visible. (p. 3) Creation is divinity, the process of creation is divinity in motion (or the mind); and the object of creation is the physical universe including the human body. (p. 4-5) We have to understand these laws. Then we apply them in our lives and we can create, “because the same laws that nature uses to create a forest, or a galaxy, or a star, or a human body can also bring about the fulfillment of our deepest desires.”

Note the way Chopra takes insights from many religions but gives them a modern interpretation in terms of extending the notion of human creativity to include humans creating the whole universe!

As you read Chopra’s laws, bear in mind that they contain many truths as well as erroneous formulations. For example, it is true that a saint seeks God instead of human approval. But his or her motive is not to become infinitely creative but rather to follow God’s will in humility and courage.

Law 1 The Law of Pure Potentiality
We are pure consciousness and therefore pure potentiality and therefore we are the field of all possibility and infinite creativity (p. 9). We should not be too influenced by objects outside ourselves, constantly seeking approval of others - this leads to fear and desire to control.

The true self is not afraid because it doesn’t feel beneath anyone. Ego-based power only lasts as long as the title, money, jobs. But interior self-power is permanent. This self-power magnetizes others to you. People feel bonded to you and enjoy being with you. From this comes true love. To get self-power you have to spend time in silence, meditation, non-judgment, nature. (p. 13). Meditation means that you simply Be (p. 14). He relates this to the Biblical “Be still, and know that I am God.” (p. 16-17) Constant judgment and evaluations also leads to turbulence.

Law 2 The Law of Giving

If we give what we seek then we keep abundance circulating in our lives. Bring everywhere you go and everyone you encounter a gift, a compliment, a flower, a prayer. Also receive the gifts life offers such as beauty of nature. (p. 36)

“Each time I meet someone, I will silently wish them happiness, joy, and laughter.”

Law 3 The Law of “karma” or Cause and Effect.

We sow what we reap, when we choose actions that bring happiness and success to others, the fruit of our karma is happiness and success (p. 38). “Our thoughts, our words, and deeds are the threads of the net which we throw around ourselves,” said Swami Vivekananda.

Witness your choices - see what the consequences are - ask whether the choice will bring fulfillment and happiness to me and also to those affected.

Ask your heart for guidance watching for feelings of discomfort. (p. 50)

Law 4 The Law of Least Effort

When we harness the forces of harmony, joy, and love everything becomes easy and carefree. When actions are motivated by love there is more energy. Energy is trapped when our motive is to uphold our importance. Acceptance vs. struggle (Chervin: This can be related to principles of 12 step) See problems as opportunities. Decide not to defend yourself all the time, to convince or persuade. Be open and not rigidly attached to opinions.

Law 5 The Law of Intention and Desire

These have energy. Think about goals, and expect them to come true. Don’t be influenced by opinions and criticisms of others. Don’t share with those who don’t have the same desires and goals. (p. 78) “Relinquish your attachment to the outcome...live in the wisdom of uncertainty. Enjoy every moment in the journey of your life, even if you don’t know the outcome.” Trust that when things
don’t go my way there is a reason - (p. 79) “The cosmic plan has designs for me much grander than even those that I have conceived.”

Law 6 The Law of Detachment

We have to detach from the known which is the prison of past conditioning. You don’t detach from the desire or intention but from the result. (Chervin: This could be related to the saying of Mother Teresa that God doesn’t tell you to succeed. He tells you to love.)

Attachment comes from fear and insecurity. Many saints such as John of the Cross, a doctor of the Church, teach the same. It is a sign of poverty to be always in fear and worry. Security is an illusion (p. 86). “The search for security and certainty is actually an attachment to the known. And what’s the known? The known is our past....” But this is stagnation. You have adventure when you are willing to step into the unknown.

“You don’t need to have a complete and rigid idea of what you’ll be doing next week or next year, ... then you shut out a whole range of possibilities”(pp. 87-88). Avoid forcing solutions on problems.

Law 7 The Law of “Dharma” or Purpose in Life

Joy comes when we blend our unique talents with service to others. We live in physical form to fulfill a purpose. Little children should be taught to see what their talents are not how to get good graces, etc. We exist on earth to know that we are spiritual, to find the higher self, to express our unique talents, to ask how can I help, vs. what’s in it for me. (p. 99) Quote from the Upanishads “You are what your deep, driving desire is. As your desire is, so is your will. As your will is, so is your deed. As your deed is, so is your destiny.”

To turn to another source of Chopra’s philosophy of life, there is lots of wisdom to be found in the presentations on the Chopra video: The Way of the Wizard. Here we are only interested in the way it ties in with the main themes of New Age.

We find the seeking of treasure in non-traditional religions illustrated in this video. The image of the “wizard” is not to be confined to fairy-tale characters or magicians or even to male figures. A wizard turns out to be very like a traditional holy person in some respects. We would think that the very use of a term “wizard” rather than saint or mentor already illustrates the theme of seeking treasures from sources other than traditional religion. One of the stated benefits of entering into the wizard identity, is that life becomes magic instead of either humdrum or desperate. Here, again, a term normally associated with the occult, “magic,” is used in a positive manner, thereby indirectly skirting negative connotations about magic in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

The wizard is a seer in the sense of one in touch with the divine. No distinction is made between true prophets inspired by a transcendent God and false prophets who might have their own
agendas. In this way Chopra is able to promote an ideal of the wizard superior to the ordinary trapped conformist mortal. The issue of good or evil doesn’t come to the fore as it would in the case of traditional religious belief.

According to Chopra, no one culture or religion has the first place. “Everywhere the truth emerged.”

More of the ideas on Deepak Chopra’s video, “The Way of the Wizard,” will be cited in relation to other themes of New Age spirituality.

II: There is no Absolute Religious Truth

In The Way of the Wizard, Chopra likes to quote sayings of Jesus such as “you are in the world but not of the world.” But, at least in this talk, he doesn’t quote Jesus as saying “Baptize all nations, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” or “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

In another part of the presentation about the wizard, Chopra advises his audience to “run away from those who think they have found truth. It is good to seek the truth but not to find it.”

Those of us brought up in traditional religions were taught certain absolutes such as: “The Lord, thy God, is One,” or “There is One True God, and Allah is his Prophet,” or “Jesus is the One True Son of God.” Such statements of religious creeds are conveyed not as hypotheses, speculations, or conjectures but as absolutely true and worthy of belief. Each of these purported truths implies the falsehood of a contrary statement. Jesus is the one true Son of God also implies that there are no others equal to him in sonship. That the Lord is one means that the Divine is not a plurality of gods as was thought in pagan Greece.

Most New Agers do not think this way at all. We don’t mean that they positively disagree with any of the above creedal statements. In the New Age a statement is taken not as an absolute truth. It is seen as one truth among many, sometimes no more true than its opposite! So, for example, someone could harvest spiritual treasure from the thought of the One God but also enjoy relating to the spiritual forces symbolized in the many pagan gods. An “open-minded” Jewish New-Ager might happily recite the morning prayer of his or her ancestors “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One,” and the evening of the same day go to some neo-pagan ritual involving Aphrodite.

Some seekers do not think there is any contradiction here. This is because he or she does not think in terms of absolute truths about God. More likely, the image would be of some divine energy floating around the world and in our human souls, symbolized variously in all religions. To worry about whether in reality there is one God or many would be considered naive and unsophisticated by some New Agers. This approach may explain why for many such seekers there is never a single path to walk toward God, but instead sporadic exciting experiences.
A concern about absolute truth presupposes entities existing outside our minds with real characteristics such as absolute being (the traditional God of Jewish, Islamic and Christian faith) or limited being (primitive multiple gods.)

III: The Divine is Within

In “The Way of the Wizard,” Chopra says that when the seeker realizes what was being sought was himself, then he becomes the seeer! The goal is not to find God as an Absolute Person but rather to come into touch with the inner self, which is divine. As one grows spiritually one also comes into divine consciousness. At that point one can see the divine in every thing.

A corollary is to think, as did certain “idealist” western philosophers of the modern period, that there is no real world. As Chopra explains, the brain creates reality! We create the world because our thoughts create energy. The example he uses is how we decide to eat and our hand moves toward the fork. The concept of mind creating material change relates to the Hindu idea that physical reality is maya - illusion. A common notion to be found in many New Age movements is that you create reality even to the point of unconsciously creating illness and disaster. (See Cults, Sects, and the New Age, edited by Rev. James J. LeBar (Huntington, Indiana, 1989) p. 155.)

“The kingdom of God is within you,” proclaimed Jesus. Those familiar with this Scripture passage naturally think, at first, that when a New Ager says that the divine is within this is a traditional belief. Not so. What most New Agers mean by “the divine is within,” is that there is not necessarily any God outside the soul at all. What used to be thought of as a transcendent “independent” God is really the innermost part of each of our souls or spirits. Such a doctrine is a basic part of Hinduism, as expressed in the famous formula: “Atma is Brahma.”

IV: All is One, so we are Never Alone

Chopra in “The Way of the Wizard” claims that as you grow in divine consciousness you realize that we are all the same being in different disguises and this makes you love the universe vs. plundering it. Birth and death are just ideas in your mind. Finally in the highest stage my spirit merges with everything in reality. Then there is no distinction between seer and scenery. No need for miracles because everything is a miracle.

Feeling lonely, alienated, separate - these are states of mind and heart few of us escape. Out of such emotions often comes hostility, anger, vengeance, despair.

Many New Agers overcome such feelings with the thought that even though our bodies exist somewhat separately from other material objects, innerly we are all one. Perceived difference is an illusion. That we are all one follows from the divine being within everything.

An important corollary of this dictum is that happiness comes not from changing outer aspects of our life and circumstances but rather from within. We don’t have to simply react to what is going
on around us. Through higher thinking we can see the illusory nature of all supposed evils and retain our peace.

For example, whereas most people experience physical separation from loved ones as unbearable, especially if the cause is death, a New Ager might try, instead, to focus on the spiritual unity of all souls such that the loved one is still present, even if invisibly so.

While being as positive as possible in life can be good, LeBar (sorry, lost reference - he is a Christian critic of New Age) points out that the twist New Agers give this concept can put them in conflict with reality itself as well as a sense of duty, penance and humility. (see p. 156)

V: What is Called Evil is only Ignorance. There is no such Thing as Sin.

Deepak Chopra in “The Way of the Wizard” says that we shouldn’t condemn desires, because all wishes lead to God. He does talk of diabolic as well as good forces but there is nothing in the video presentation about personal sin as such.

In most traditional religions, especially Judaism, Islam and Christianity, there are strong teachings about sin and evil. God will ultimately punish sin. Virtue will be rewarded.

New Agers tend to dispute these concepts. Instead they want to believe that it is ignorance that is at the root of negative behavior. Spiritual enlightenment coming from knowledge and meditation leads to peace of soul. Tranquility leads to choices that are not toxic for self or others.

Many New Age books, tapes, and workshops are designed to suggest new and successful ways of dealing with the frustrations and conflicts of daily life. Such miseries are shown to result from one’s own attitudes more than from external happenings.

VI: Every Person is his or her own Authority

In “The Way of the Wizard” Chopra says that philosophy gave rise to religions. Note that philosophy, so diverse and varied and at loggerheads surely has not the authority claimed as coming from God by revealed religious authorities.

Given the rejection of absolute truth and usually of “institutional religion” most New Agers lack any authority that claims to come to leaders directly from God.

As a result, it would seem that the only authority is the judgment of the self. It is possible that someone might truly make judgments about the divine on an individual basis. But this is unlikely. Since self is never all-knowing, there is a great interest among most New Agers in the sort of authority claimed for channelers, Tarot cards, crystals, astrology. As well, most New Agers seek charismatic spiritual mentors such as those we will be studying in later chapters.
VII: The Universe is Eternal and Reincarnation is part of the Soul’s Cycle

In the presentation of “The Way of Wizard,” Chopra states that it is false to think of time as a line. Rather we should think of time as a web. In some mystical sense a wizard exists in all times. Reincarnation, which Chopra holds to, is implied in such a view of time.

A basic concept of Biblical religion is that time was created by God with a beginning and it will have an end. Eternity in the form of timelessness is the realm of God. At the time of an individual’s death he or she is subject to judgment and, according to Catholic belief, goes to hell, purgatory or heaven. At the end of time, all humans are ushered into the eternal realm once and for all either to everlasting hell or a heaven of happiness in union with a God of love.

By contrast, in most of New Age spirituality the concept is that the world always was. It is eternal. Death comes only to the body. The soul is reincarnated in another body to continue the process of purification. When the soul has become totally free of attachment to the earth, it is liberated from the wheel of births and deaths into a state of perfect peaceful bliss.

VIII: Service – Even though New Agers are interested in helping others to come to spiritual enlightenment, there is a lack of the type of overflowing charity in the form of helping the poor such as evidenced in the history of Christianity. This is partly because of the dualism of soul and body characteristic of Eastern thought in general, but also because of a reincarnation doctrine often held by New Agers such that improving this world is not considered as high a priority as in religions that stress you have only one life to give in charity to others.

A good part of the evaluation of New Age spirituality has already been offered in the previous pages. Here are some other considerations.

By definition, New Age spirituality is much too diffuse a phenomena to make a critique based on any limited sample of readings from various writers and leaders. All that can be done here is to point out to our readers some of the positives and negatives found in many such writings including those of Chopra.

On the positive side, unlike materialists, New Agers think that the spiritual is real. This can be a bridge from scepticism and worldliness to more serious pursuit of the religious. Some members of traditional Churches, even some Catholics, can become so wrapped up in what they already know about religion they have difficulty letting anything new into their souls even if it is compatible. In his book Crossing the Threshold of Hope, John Paul II says that without compromising in any way the truths God has given us, we should be open to whatever is good in other religions in the way of wisdom. Having to combat erroneous ideas of New Agers in academic circles or in the family, work place, society and even in the parish, can sharpen the Catholic’s understanding of the truths of God.

Here are some negatives other than those already given in the text. It is often claimed by New Agers who come from Christian traditions that there is no great incompatibility between their systems
and Christianity. In this regard it is necessary to point out that the Old and New Testaments clearly prohibit many of the practices some
New Agers like to explore: Check out

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<td>Is. 45: 22</td>
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<td>Is. 47: 9-15</td>
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<td>Mt. 24: 11, 24</td>
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Many strong Catholics know why the Church forbids occult practices including astrology and going to mediums to contact the dead and why reincarnation is not the teaching of Christ, but some are unsure. Here are some passages from the Catechism of the Catholic Church about these matters:

2116: All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to “unveil” the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

2117: All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one’s service and have a supernatural power over others—even if this were for the sake of restoring their health—are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. Wearing charms is also reprehensible. Spiritism often implies divination or magical practices; the Church for her part warns the faithful against it. Recourse to so-called traditional cures does not justify either the invocation of evil powers or the exploitation of another’s credulity.
1013: Death is the end of man’s earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny. When “the single course of our earthly life” is completed, we shall not return to other earthly lives: “It is appointed for men to die once.” There is no “reincarnation” after death.

The reader may be wondering whether the only way to come against those New Age beliefs that run counter to Catholic spirituality is by blind faith in the Church’s magisterium. Is there no way that reason can help us understand why Catholic belief on the themes we have discussed so far is superior?

More insight will come with the excerpts from Thomas Merton and from other related sources. In the meantime some considerations of framework may be useful. Supposing there was no way of knowing anything about God or the soul except by means of religious experience. In that case the guesses of New Agers would be as good as the beliefs of anyone else. What makes the difference is that we believe that God is a conscious Person who created the world and has revealed much about His nature and ours through Scripture and tradition. Proof that a personal God exists was given in The Battle for the Twentieth Century Mind, Theme II. Regarding the nature of the soul, I believe it is rather easy to show that we are not divine as New Agers want to think. If the definition of divine means absolute, omniscient, unchanging, all-powerful, how could we think we qualify? On the question of ignorance or sin, what is clearer to experience than that sometimes we do things out of stupidity but others times because of deliberate desire to get what we want even if it involves stepping on others, dishonesty, and betrayal. Belief in cyclical time and reincarnation seems based on lack of faith in a God of love and mercy who can purify us through repentance and reparative deeds of love rather than forcing us through a long process of return to the earth over and over again.

Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

Thomas Merton was born in France. He was the son of an artist from New Zealand and an artist mother from the United States. His mother died when he was six. He lived with his father mostly in France, but went to a prep school in England and then to Cambridge. He eventually came to live in the United States where he studied journalism at Columbia University in New York. In 1938 he became a Catholic. He taught English at St. Bonaventure’s College. In 1941 he entered the Trappist monastery of Our Lady of Gethsemane in Kentucky. Merton’s description of his conversion and the beginning of his life as a monk became a best-seller under the title of The Seven Story Mountain.

At the monastery he eventually became Master of the Scholastics preparing for priesthood and later Master of Novices. It appeared clear that the vision of Merton of Catholic spirituality was destined not only for his students, but also for many other Catholics, priestly, religious and lay pursuing the path of holiness. Such books as, Seeds of Contemplation, The Sign of Jonah and No Man
is an Island provided much insight for Catholics seeking a new way to live out the great truths of the Catholic spiritual tradition.

Merton was never one to separate the contemplative from the active in his vision of the Catholic life. During the 1960’s and 70’s Merton became one of the foremost leaders in Catholic pacifism and social justice.

The last part of his life involved a vocational crisis. As he also delved into the thought of the East, some fans and some critics thought that Merton might leave the monastic life and even the Catholic faith. Others believed that by the time of his sudden accidental death at a monastic conference in Thailand, held in 1968, Merton was well back into the fold.

Without trying to judge the final state of Merton’s mind and soul, it seems safe to excerpt from one of his most popular early books. I see No Man is an Island as a manifestation of Merton’s gift of integrating classical with contemporary spiritual themes.

I am choosing selections which show how a Catholic can do justice to the sort of truths Chopra has understood, while at the same time deepening our grasp of the wisdom of Revelation and the joy of being close to the personal God of the Bible. Here are some excerpts from the book No Man is an Island, published in 1955.

A review in America magazine manifests the impact Merton’s books had on 20th century Catholics: “...unity of meaning, intense, burning, heroically reaching for the purest sincerity, characterizes this book of flame in which, with deeper tones and from profounder levels of the contemplative life, Thomas Merton returns to thoughts which are of absolute importance for the spiritual life of man... a major work of spirituality...”

“I consider that the spiritual life is the life of man’s real self, the life of that interior self whose flame is so often allowed to be smothered under the ashes of anxiety and futile concern...without a life of the spirit, our whole existence becomes unsubstantial and illusory. The life of the spirit, by integrating us in the real order established by God, puts us in the fullest possible contact with reality - not as we imagine it, but as it really is. It does so by making us aware of our own real selves, and placing them in the presence of God. (p. 7)

Note how the first part of this excerpt could have been written by Chopra, but the second part ushers us straight into the mystery of the personal God in whose love our selves are to grow. In the next excerpt you can see the same progression from universal spiritual wisdom to the specific truths of Christianity: “By salvation I mean first of all the full discovery of who he himself really is. Then I mean something of the fulfillment of his own God-given powers, in the love of others and of God...The salvation I speak of is not merely a subjective, psychological thing - a self-realization in the order of nature. It is an objective and mystical reality - the finding of ourselves in Christ, in the Spirit, or, if you prefer, in the supernatural order... (it) always transcends. Therefore this discovery of ourselves is
always a losing of ourselves — a death and a resurrection. ’Your life is hidden with Christ in God...the
discovery of ourselves in God...is, therefore, not the discovery of ourselves but of Christ” (p. 11-12).

Would a New Ager have the subtlety to write a paragraph like this?

“It is therefore of supreme importance that we consent to live not for ourselves but for
others...As long as we secretly adore ourselves, our own deficiencies will remain to torture us with an
apparent defilement. But if we live for others, we will gradually discover that no one expects us to be
‘as gods.’ We will see that we are human, like everyone else, that we all have weaknesses and
deficiencies, and that these limitations of ours play a most important part in all our lives. It is because
of them that we need others, and others need us. We are not all weak in the same spots, and so we
supplement and complete one another, each one making up in himself for the lack in the other.” (p. 16)

Here are some other challenging passages:

“A happiness that is sought for ourselves alone can never be found: for a happiness that is
diminished by being shared is not big enough to make us happy.” (p. 19)

“Infinite sharing is the law of God’s inner life. He has made the sharing of ourselves the law of
our own being, so that it is in loving others that we best love ourselves.”(p. 19)

“We are not perfectly free until we live in pure hope. For when our hope is pure, it no longer
trusts exclusively in human and visible means, nor rests in any visible end. He who hopes in God trusts
God, Whom he never sees, to bring him to the possession of things that are beyond imagination.” (p. 27)

“If we hope in God, by hope we already possess Him, since hope is a confidence which he
creates in our souls as secret evidence that he has taken possession of us. So the soul that hopes in
God already belongs to Him, and to belong to Him is the same as to possess him, since He gives
himself completely to those who give themselves to him. The only thing faith and hope do not give us
is the clear vision of Him whom we possess.” (p. 28)

“Without hope, our faith gives us only an acquaintance with God. Without love and hope,
faith only knows Him as a stranger. For hope casts us into the arms of His mercy and of His
providence. If we hope in Him, we will not only come to know that he is merciful but we will
experience his mercy in our own lives.” (p. 28)

“All desires but one can fail. The only desire that is infallibly fulfilled is the desire to be loved
by God.” (p. 29)
“Meanwhile, if we embrace them for themselves, we discover both them and ourselves as evil. This is the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - disgust with the things we have misused and hatred of ourselves for misusing them.” (p. 31)

“To consider persons and events and situations only in the light of their effect upon myself is to live on the doorstep of hell. Selfishness is doomed to frustration, centered as it is upon a lie. To live exclusively for myself, I must make all things bend themselves to my will as if I were a god. But this is impossible. Is there any more cogent indication of my creaturehood than the insufficiency of my own will? For I cannot make the universe obey me. I cannot make other people conform to my own whims and fancies. I cannot make even my own body obey me. When I give it pleasure, it deceives my expectation and makes me suffer pain. When I give myself what I conceive to be freedom, I deceive myself and find that I am the prisoner of my own blindness and selfishness and insufficiency.” (p. 34)

“If my will is meant to perfect its freedom in serving another will, that does not mean it will find its perfection in serving every other will. In fact, there is only one will in whose service I can find perfection and freedom. To give my freedom blindly to a being equal to or inferior to myself is to degrade myself and throw away my freedom. I can only become perfectly free by serving the will of God.” (p. 35)

“We ought to have the humility to admit we do not know all about ourselves, that we are not experts at running our own lives.” (p. 43)

“They would no longer keep the law with the formalistic perfection that defeated the whole purpose of the law, but they would realize that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” (p. 44)

“The whole function of the life of prayer is, then, to enlighten and strengthen our conscience so that it not only knows and perceives the outward, written precepts of the moral and divine laws, but above all lives God’s law in concrete reality by perfect and continual union with His will.”(p. 45)

“No matter how much we may deny our freedom and our moral responsibility, our intellectual soul cries out for a morality and a spiritual freedom without which it knows in cannot be happy.” (p. 46)

“The man who never prays is one who has tried to run away from himself because he has run away from God. But unreal though he be, he is more real than the man who prays to God with a false and lying heart.” (p. 46)

“All true prayer somehow confesses our absolute dependence on the Lord of life and death. It is, therefore, a deep and vital contact with Him whom we know not only as Lord but as Father. It is when we pray truly that we really are. Our being is brought to a high perfection by this, which is one of its most perfect activities. When we cease to pray, we tend to fall back into nothingness. True, we
continue to exist. But since the main reason for our existence is the knowledge and love of God, when our conscious contact with him is severed we sleep or we die.” (p. 47)

“At other times, we think of God in prayer but our thoughts of Him are not concerned with prayer. They are thoughts about Him that do not establish any contact with Him. So, while we pray, we are speculating about God and about the spiritual life, or composing sermons, or drawing up theological arguments. These thoughts are all right in their place, but if we take prayer seriously we will not call them prayer. For such thoughts cannot satisfy the soul that desires to find God in prayer. On the contrary, they leave it with a feeling of emptiness and dissatisfaction. At the same time, when one is really a man of prayer, speculative thoughts about God in the time of study or of intellectual work can often lead into prayer and give place to it; but only on condition that prayer is more to him than speculation.” (p.48)

“...we can reflect upon ourselves, and realize that we are the subjects of this great experience of love, as well as the objects of God’s love.” (p. 49)

“...what we find in our souls becomes terrible to us. Instead of complacently calling ourselves sinners (and secretly believing ourselves just) we begin to find that the sins of our past life were really sins, and really our sins – and we have not regretted them! And since the time when we were grave sinners, we have still sinned without realizing it, because we were too sure we were the friends of God...so that in many ways we have turned the love of God into selfishness and have reveled in His gifts without thanking Him or using them for His glory.” (p. 50)

“The man who can face such dryness and abandonment for a long time, with great patience, and ask nothing more of God but to do His holy will and never offend Him, finally enters into pure prayer. Here the soul goes to God in prayer without any longer adverting either to itself or to its prayer. It speaks to Him without knowing what it is saying because God Himself has distracted the mind from its words and thoughts. It reaches Him without thoughts because, before it can think of Him, He is already present in the depths of the spirit, moving it to love Him in a way it cannot explain or understand.” (p. 51)

“...it (deep interior prayer) has effected such an interior isolation and solitariness in our own souls that we naturally tend to seek silence and solitude for our bodies as well as our souls. And it is good for the soul to be in solitude for a great part of the time.” (p. 51)

“The will of the Lord is not a static center drawing our souls blindly towards itself. It is a creative power, working everywhere, giving life and being and direction to all things, and above all forming and creating, in the midst of an old creation, a whole new world which is called the Kingdom of God.” (p. 54)
“Before the Lord wills me to do anything, He first of all wills me to be. What I do must depend on what I am. Therefore, my being itself contains in its own specific nature a whole code of laws, ways of behaving, that are willed for me by the God Who has willed me to be.” (p. 57)

“We must, therefore, live by the commandments and the counsels and by the Spirit of Jesus. And in order to do this we must search the Scriptures and understand the Gospels, in order to find out what Jesus is like and what His commandments are.

Besides that, we have to seek Him where He is to be found living among us on earth: in the kingdom He came to establish, which is His Church. We must listen to His voice not only in the Scriptures but in the authority which, as we read in the Scriptures, He constituted over us to rule and sanctify and teach us by His own light, and His own holiness and His own power.” (p. 58)

“Above all, the Holy Spirit teaches us to live, not according to the flesh, but according to divine charity...‘Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like. Of which I foretell you as I have foretold you that they who do such things shall not obtain the Kingdom of God’ (Galatians 5:19-21).”

If we have the Spirit of God in our hearts, we will live by His law of charity, inclined always to peace rather than dissension, to humility rather than arrogance, to obedience rather than rebellion, to purity and temperance, to simplicity and quietness and calm, to strength, generosity, and wisdom, to prudence and all-embracing justice, and we will love others more than ourselves, for it is the commandment of Jesus that we should love one another as he has loved us (John 15:12).” (p. 59)

“God’s will for us is not only that we should be the persons He means us to be, but that we should share in His work of creation and help Him to make us into the persons He means us to be. Always, and in all things, God’s will for me is that I should shape my own destiny, work out my own salvation, forge my own eternal happiness, in the way He has planned it for me. And since no man is an island, since we all depend on one another, I cannot work out God’s will in my own life unless I also consciously help other men to work out His will in theirs.” (p. 61)

“Wherever we have some sign of God’s will, we are obliged to conform to what the sign tells us. We should do so with a pure intention, obeying God’s will because it is good in itself as well as good for us. It takes more than an occasional act of faith to have such pure intentions. It takes a whole life of faith, a total consecration to hidden values. It takes sustained moral courage and heroic confidence in the help of divine grace. But above all it takes the humility and spiritual poverty to travel in darkness, and uncertainty, where so often we have no light and see no sign at all.” (p. 62)

“Pure intention, in this highest sense, is a secret and spiritual word of God which not only commands my will to act, or solicits my co-operation, but fulfills what He says in me. The action is at once perfectly mine and perfectly His. But its substance comes entirely from Him.” (p. 64)
“Simple intention is a divine medicine, a balm that soothes the powers of our soul wounded by inordinate self-expression.” (p. 68)

“Merely accepted, suffering does nothing for our souls except, perhaps, to harden them. Endurance alone is no consecration. True asceticism is not a mere cult of fortitude. We can deny ourselves rigorously for the wrong reason and end up by pleasing ourselves mightily with our self-denial.” (p. 70)

“To believe in suffering is pride: but to suffer, believing in God, is humility.” (p. 70)

“Only the sufferings of Christ are valuable in the sight of God, Who hates evil, and to Him they are chiefly valuable as a sign. The death of Jesus on the Cross has an infinite meaning and value not because it is a death, but because it is the death of the Son of God. The Cross of Christ says nothing about the power of suffering or of death. It speaks only of the power of Him Who overcame both suffering and death by rising from the grave.” (p. 70)

“The saint is not one who accepts suffering because he likes it, and confesses this preference before God and men in order to win a great reward. He is one who may well hate suffering as much as anybody else, but who so loves Christ, Whom he does not see, that he will allow His love to be proved by any suffering. And he does this not because he thinks it is an achievement, but because the charity of Christ in his heart demands that it be done.” (p. 72)

“Some men have been picked out to bear witness to Christ’s love in lives overwhelmed by suffering. These have proclaimed that suffering was their vocation. But that should not lead us to believe that in order to be a saint one must go out for suffering in the same way that a college athlete goes out for football. No two men have to suffer exactly the same trials in exactly the same way. No one man is called to suffer merely for the sake of suffering.” (p. 72)

“Before we come to that which is unspeakable and unthinkable, the spirit hovers on the frontiers of language, wondering whether or not to stay on his own side of the border, in order to have something to bring back to other men. This is the test of those who wish to cross the frontier. If they are not ready to leave their own ideas and their own words behind them, they cannot travel further.” (p. 190)

“Those who love their own noise are impatient of everything else. They constantly defile the silence of the forests and the mountains and the sea. They bore through silent nature in every direction with their machines, for fear that the calm world might accuse them of their own emptiness...The loud plane seems for a moment to deny the reality of the clouds and of the sky, by its direction, its noise, and its pretended strength. The silence of the sky remains when the plane is gone.”( p. 192)

“Those who do not know there is another life after this one, or who cannot bring themselves to live as if they were meant to spend their eternity in God, resist the fruitful silence of their own
being by continual noise. Even when their tongues are still, their minds chatter without end and without meaning, or they plunge themselves into the protective noise of machines, traffic, or radios. When their own noise is momentarily exhausted, they rest in the noise of other men.” (p. 195)

Or, common to all spirituality but with a Christian aspect that transcends New Age as a result of pure interior solitude, “We are both in time and out of it. We are poor, possessing all things. Having nothing of our own to rely on, we have nothing to lose and nothing to fear. Everything is locked away for our sure possession, beyond our reach, in Heaven. We live where our souls desire to be, but our bodies no longer matter very much…” (p. 189)

“The soul that has thus found itself gravitates toward the desert but does not object to remaining in the city, because it is everywhere alone.” (p. 189)

What is absolutely different in classical spirituality from New Age spirituality is the conviction that we are in the midst of an encounter with a real personal God who wants to meet us as Bridegroom (see Matthew 25:6).

“...we go forth to find him in solitude. There we communicate with Him without words, without discursive thoughts, in the silence of being.” (p. 190)

“Because they (men of noise) do not know the silence of love, they cannot know the silence of God, who is Charity, Who cannot destroy what He loves, who is bound, by His own law of charity, to give life to all those who he draws into His own silence...the silence of Good Friday night and the peace of Easter morning...We work out our salvation in silence and hope.” (p. 193)

Can a New Ager with the same intimacy speak of those near death as, in the words of Merton, turning “the face of our soul, in constant desire, toward the face of Christ”? (p. 196)

ADDENDUM ON AUGUSTINE

His Conversion from Gnostic Spirituality (from which New Age took many themes) to Catholic Spirituality:

A key figure in the contrast between New Age and Christianity is St. Augustine, the African 3-4th century saint. Augustine was brought up in the Roman Empire. His mother was a Catholic Christian but his father was a pagan. In those days it was thought that committing any sin after baptism was so heinous that this sacrament was postponed until after a man or woman became an adult. The thought was that the teen years provided especially strong occasions for sin.

Augustine was a brilliant boy, but also delinquent, roaming about with a gang that indulged in petty theft as well as sexual sins. He was a seeker of truth and, as a young man, became deeply involved in a sect of Manichees. These people followed the precepts and practices of many different systems.
They were criticized as Gnostics by the Christians. Gnostics were seers who were in the know about secret doctrines and rites. The Manichaeans included the notion that good and evil were equally powerful principles. Astrology was one of the studies of this group. Because they were so philosophical, Augustine took them more seriously than the Christians he knew. These he thought of as childish in their beliefs. Scripture was baffling to Augustine with all its stories and seeming contradictions. At one point, however, he engaged one of the leaders of the Manichees in long discussions. These left him convinced that this sect had little validity.

Eventually Augustine became a teacher of rhetoric in Milan, Italy. As a result of studying Greek philosophers such as the Platonists, Augustine came to believe that there was such a thing as pure immaterial being and that absolute truth could be found. The example and sermons of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan stirred his soul. Mired in sins of a sexual nature, however, Augustine was afraid to look into the Christian religion, his holy mother urged upon him so vehemently. His will was torn between the desires of the flesh and the longing for salvation.

Finally, through grace and example and an extraordinary mystical experience, Augustine broke through to embrace the Catholic faith. He went on to become a Christian philosopher, a bishop in Africa, and a saint. As we lay out for you the main differences between New Age and Christianity we will make reference to Augustine’s experiences.

GOD

The first major contrast concerns the nature of God. There are many concepts of the divine within New Age spiritualities. Sometimes the divine is thought of as energy, force, light. Sometimes the image is more traditional, but the words don’t mean the same thing as in Christian theology. For example if one talks about Christ-consciousness, the Christian might think this means the consciousness within the person of Jesus of his role in the salvation of mankind. A New Ager means, instead, that the human seeker becomes aware of inner spiritual forces such that he comes to see the universe and other people in a benign vs. a hostile manner.

The God of Judaeo-Christian revelation exists outside of his creation. That means he is transcendent. He is a Trinity of Divine Persons in one Nature. This God is absolute perfect being. That he is personal and conscious and active is signified by his revealing his name to Moses as “I AM WHO AM.” These words, repeated so often that many don’t pay attention, reveal God as a person = a self-conscious being. God reveals himself also as the holy one. Holiness means total goodness and supernatural power. A force or energy, by contrast, is not an “I,” not an absolute perfect personal being. A force certainly has power, but not the type of goodness that comes with a personal being of love.

To bring out the difference more clearly, consider if a magician came to you and asked if you wanted to be turned into a force as great as the ocean or as all the electric current in the world. There
would be one proviso. You would not be aware of being this force, because you would have no personal consciousness. Would you consent?

Before his Christian conversion, Augustine could not imagine any being that was not material and thought of the spirit world as some kind of thinner matter. Afterwards Augustine realized that just as the truth his mind sought and grasped was immaterial, so there could be a spiritual realm. He also realized through faith that just as he, himself, was a living conscious being, so must be the Creator of such a being. Thought doesn’t exist in a vacuum but in a mind. So the absolute truth much exist in an absolute mind.

Another contrast can be made between Christianity and New Age concerning creation. For most New Agers since God is everything and everywhere (pantheism), there is no special act of creation by a transcendent God (above the universe). Everything always was, so it doesn’t need to be created. The Christian, however, believes that God chose to create the world out of love. The universe did not have to exist and didn’t always exist. To get a clearer picture of the significance of this difference consider the following choice:

You arrive in the universe as a adult from outer space. Then you are given a choice - to dwell in a house that is completely decorated, furnished and populated, or to build a house with materials you create, decorated as you choose, and populated with individuals you procreate. Which choice makes an on-looker think of you as a loving personal creator? Which choice is more impersonal?

A Swiss scholar of religions from whom we will quote much more later in this book, Jacques-Albert Cuttat, writes about the question of how the concept of creation by a personal God differs from the Eastern concept of emanation. He says (p. 18) that practically all Asiatic philosophies of the cosmos “consider the evolution of the objective cosmos not as a progress or an ascension, but, on the contrary, as a descent…the world-process as such is a perpetual departure from its divine origin toward worldly periphery…they are ultimately maya, i.e. a dream-like manifestation of the unmanifested, yet omnipresent, uniquely REAL…correspondingly, all Eastern ways leading to the Divine…consist of an inner counteract…Yoga, Zen and Taoist meditation are all a movement backward, an inner return to the pre-cosmic, pre-temporal Reality. This implies a radical detachment from the world as such, not only from evil…The first the last word of Eastern spirituality is “concentric retreat” toward the Divine Centre abiding in oneself….Asiatic spiritualities aim at total interiorization.

“In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, both these movements have an exactly opposite orientation. Their common holy Scripture, the Bible, describes the world-evolution as theocentric…not as descending from God, but as ascending toward God according to the Divine Plan…universal existence emerges first from non-being to mineral existence…then progresses to vegetal and animal life and finally culminates in man as in an epitome of the cosmos as well as a free image of God, so that through man the whole cosmos can and should culminate in God…Thus creation is a total invention – including matter – out of nothing…a progress…rising towards a Personal Reality…the result of a free Act of the absolute Person…Creation places an intrinsically real world and
free creatures in front of an ultimately personal Creator...Therefore salvation or sanctification – monothestic ways of union with God are, accordingly, not an inner ascending recession from the world and ego, but an ascending inner progression from world and ego, a spiritual movement forward towards a divine Thou, not a spiritual retreat into a pure Self...the basic inner gesture here is recollection before God, confrontation, not pure concentration within; full response to all values whether infinite or finite...” the Asian leads to blissful solitude where the Western leads to faith and hope in an omnipresent, providential, yet increasingly unpredictable “divinizing Love.”

Easterners try to find all within themselves (the seeker becomes the seer when he sees that what he is seeking is within him - Chopra) whereas the biblical approach is losing oneself in Christ to find it again. The Eastern is to abide within, the Western is ecstasy - to be lifted outside oneself. To live in God – communion. p. 20-21

But at the summit of these experiences, according to Cuttat there is a complementarity - for we all want to find the God within and all want real spiritual communion. see p. 21

(Note: Related to New Age - no Christian wants to be locked up in such a way as never to experience anything new and thrilling say, and really New Agers are seeking deep contact with the Mysterium and wishing for the completion of perfect love.)

Augustine as the synthesis:

Once Augustine embraced the doctrine of creation his awe and delight at the beauty of the universe knew no bounds. Instead of accepting it all as just there, he realized it was a gift of a loving God of infinite creative powers.

In most systems of New Age thought time moves in cycles, repeating, evolving, dissolving. Some believe that every 2,000 years requires a new Messiah. Ultimately reality has no will or purpose. The Christian, by contrast, believes that God created a linear time-line into which he, himself, enters to reveal his will. Jesus is the unique incarnation, the Messiah who teaches us how to live in such a way as to attain one day eternal happiness with him. Eternity is not merely a foreversness of cyclical time, but a different sphere where the soul is united in love to the timeless one: the God of love.

Once Augustine understood the linear nature of time, he became the first Christian philosopher of history. His famous classic, The City of God, was written to defend the Church against the belief of some Roman leaders that the empire was falling apart because of the Christians. When someone converted to Jesus, he or she stopped making sacrifices to the pagan gods who protected the empire. Roman officials excused their own failures by pointing to the Christians as to blame. The Roman gods must be angry at the defections. In The City of God Augustine proved that it was the loss of virtue among the corrupt Romans that caused the disintegration of Roman society.
JESUS

To turn to another difference between New Age and Christianity, let us consider the place of Jesus. Most often, in New Age spirituality, he is considered to be one of many manifestations of God on a par with the Buddha or miracle worker such as Sai Baba. For the Christian there is only one God. (“I am God; there is no other” (Is. 45:22) Jesus is the unique divine Son of God who died, rose from the dead, is seated at the right hand of the Father and will come again to judge all of mankind. Unlike other holy men and women he freely chose to die for our sins. Whereas many of those in New Age movements think there is no way to evaluate a unique claim to being the Son of God, Christians believe that the claims of Jesus and his mighty deeds show forth this truth. Only of Jesus does the Christian say with the apostle Thomas: “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28) Jesus is the one savior of all people, the “one mediator between God and the human race.” (1 Timothy 2:5)

Behind the plurality of divine incarnations New Agers explore probably lies the general scepticism about truth so characteristic of the 20th century. As John Paul II explains:

“A legitimate plurality of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid, which is one of today’s most widespread symptoms of lack of confidence in truth.” (Fides et Ratio #5)

Often there is a pluralism of views with no clear criteria for truth even within a specific area of New Age phenomena. For example in the town of Sedona, Arizona, famous for its unusual rock formations and vortexes, some believe there are fifty-six such vortexes while others number them as ten.

The life-story of Augustine illustrates this contrast. Before his conversion he was “all over the place” exploring every possible spiritual path that could be found in the Mediterranean. After he found the truth of Christ and the Church his prodigious energies found a unified focus and outreach. Far from being limited and narrowed, his wonderful rhetorical skill and writing style could be put at the service of the one God, the one Savior, and the one Church. He became the most seminal mind in the Church.

THE HUMAN PERSON

As mentioned under themes, most New Agers think that the spiritual nature of the human person is actually a sign of divinity within. A well known summary of wisdom in this regard is from ‘Heal Your Body’ by Louise L. Hay called “Deep at the center of my being there is an infinite well of love.” Here are some lines from it:
“I love myself, therefore, I love totally in the now, experiencing each moment as good and knowing that my future is bright, and joyous, and secure, for I am a beloved child of the universe and the universe lovingly takes care of me now and forever more. And so it is.”

The Christian does believe that the soul is spiritual and eternal. The way that God dwells in the soul is called immanence, and his presence is, indeed, a well of love. On the other hand, Christians believe that at the same time God is transcendent, beyond, at a level infinitely above the human soul. The way Christian philosophers describe the paradox of immanence and transcendence is with the word “participation.” This means that the human soul partakes of the divine through grace, but that does not make it divine in the sense that God is divine.

Before his acceptance of the Christian faith, Augustine found the self extremely puzzling. How, he wonders, in the Confessions, can the one self be so divided with apparently two wills - one wishing for holy things and the other infatuated with the life of the flesh. After finding Jesus he came to see that God was within, deeper than his own conflicted self. “Thou Lord, was more interior to my innermost” but he also saw that God was “superior to my summit.” But that did not mean that he was divine. He would still have to struggle with his weaknesses. His joy was not to be God; his joy was to be loved by God.

SUFFERING

(Note - healing is a gift, not a right.)

Leaders of New Age spiritualities are certainly eager to help people deal with the problem of pain. The remedies usually have to do with change of attitude, deeper understanding of what can and what cannot be changed, and especially how to become detached from goals and addictions. The project of changing human consciousness so that we can create a reality of less pain and conflict could be described as “self-redemptive.” On the world-wide scale such transformation of consciousness is to lead to a new world order with global peace and perfect harmony. Often the idea of one-world government accompanies such hopes.

By contrast, Christian spirituality while keen on detachment from worldly things and outlooks, is more concerned with the human will and the purposeful turning away from God’s law to doing one’s own will. Not “thy will be done,” but “my will be done.” The Christian is only able to give up large and small rebelliousness against God by opening him or herself to being flooded with God’s love, available in prayer and the sacraments. Through meditation on the Word of God in Scripture and Tradition the Christian learns how to live in peace with self and how to help bring about the Kingdom of God “on earth as it is in heaven.” Only in heaven can there be perfect justice and mercy, for then God will be Lord of everything.

Key to Christian consciousness is the reality of the cross - the crucifixion of Jesus that won our salvation and carrying our own crosses.
At the critical moment of Augustine’s dramatic surrender to Christ, he was led by a voice to pick up Scripture and read whatever his eye fell upon. It was the passage from St. Paul about giving up lust and not worrying about ones desires for pleasure. At this moment he realized that it was not by his own will-power and philosophy that he could overcome his lustful ways, but only by God’s grace.

AUTHORITY

The final authority in most New Age spiritualities is the seeker himself or herself. No matter how much one might want to fall at the feet of a charismatic holy “guru” figure, ultimately there is no reason not to walk away from such a mentor should he or she show clay feet.

By contrast, Christians believe in the total authority of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, and some in the authority of Bishops’ Councils and/or Peter as continued through the Papacy. Obedience is a crucial virtue for the Christian because he or she understands that because of original sin we are continually pulled toward evil. Far from seeing ourselves as infallible in spiritual judgment we beg to be liberated from self-deceit.

St. Augustine made sure that his exercise of authority as a Bishop was conducted in a loving way. He insisted that the priests of his diocese in Hippo, Africa live in his residence so that they could pray and study together. Close to the people, he was a constant solace to them with his magnificent spiritual sermons and his care for the temporal as well as their eternal well-being.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Most New Agers believe in reincarnation. Reincarnation is related to the notion of karma taken from Hinduism. Certain actions lead to bad consequences and others to good consequences but these consequences may not surface immediately. According to some, these bad consequences are not perfectly played out within one lifetime. Therefore, until ones karma is resolved one has to be reincarnated after each lifetime. The Christian hopes for eternal happiness through the redemption from sin that came with the crucifixion of the God-man, Jesus Christ. He or she believes that the love relationship developed on this earth with the Lord is meant to grow to the point where the soul is purified of sin and can enter heaven immediately after death. Those whose hearts are paralyzed with hate and who refuse the last invitation of love from Jesus they will receive at the time of death, have themselves chosen hell as their final abode. Those of good will still underdeveloped in love through worldliness and sin need to be purged before living with God forever.
Theme 9

Violent vs. Non-Violent Social Philosophies

Hitler and Mao vs. Gandhi and Solzhenitsyn

Introduction

In the face of injustice or the dream of a better world, is violence justified? In the 20\textsuperscript{th} century there was enormous bloodshed from war, genocide, and abortion based on the idea that violence was justified for the sake of what appeared to be a more just or better outcome for nation, world, or oneself.

By contrast, the non-violent thinkers, such as Gandhi, insisted that violence only produces more violence. Only through the extreme sacrifice of violence in favor of peace making, they thought, would there ever be a better life or a better world. Joan Andrews, the pro-life activist sought to promote the cause of the innocent victims in the womb through non-violent tactics.

These two viewpoints have been promoted throughout the century. The Catholic view is that sometimes violence is justified, but more often not, especially when the violence is directed against the innocent.

Another fundamental question concerns human control over society. Is a totalitarian approach the answer? Such figures as Stalin and Mao insisted it was. What is the contrasting teaching of humanists and Christians such as Solzhenitsyn and Martin Luther King?
Adolf Hitler - 1889-1945

[This section of The Battle for the Twentieth Century Mind is based on the book Adolf Hitler by John Toland (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976). Note - the facts here reported are disputed by other historians. I am using Hitler’s life and thought as an illustration. I am not competent to judge between historians on relatively minor details. Note also that most of the quotes taken here are in common domain because written or spoken by Hitler himself more than 70 years ago.]

Hitler’s father was an Austrian civil servant, who was abusively alcoholic, beating the children. Hitler’s mother adored him. They were Catholic. As a boy Hitler thought of being a priest, but came to prefer artwork and architecture, and loved music, especially opera. He was a ring leader at school, but not too bad. In character he was stubborn, with a violent temper. He was inward and had no friends until he went to Vienna where he was rejected by the art schools of Vienna. This created a permanent sense of injustice and desire for revenge. He lived in Vienna sometimes begging, sometimes doing odd jobs.

This excerpt from the biography from many years later when he triumphantly marched into Vienna is most telling. Marching past the Imperial Hotel, he remembers a time of his young adulthood when he worked outside that same hotel:

“I could see the glittering lights and chandeliers in the lobby but I knew it was impossible for me to set foot inside. One night, after a bad blizzard, which piled up several feet of snow, I had a chance to make some money for food by shoveling snow. Ironically enough, the five or six of us in my group were sent to clean the street and sidewalk in front of the Imperial Hotel. (On that particular evening the Habsburgs happened to be entertaining inside.) I saw Karl and Zita step out of their imperial coach and grandly walk into this hotel over the red carpet. We poor devils shoveled the snow away on all sides and took our hats off every time the aristocrats arrived. They didn’t even look at us, although I still smell the perfume that came to our noses. We were about as important to them, or for that matter to Vienna, as the snow that kept coming down all night, and this hotel did not even have the decency to send a cup of hot coffee to us...(The cheerful music inside not only made him wish to cry but made him boil with the injustice of life) I resolved that night that someday I would come back to the Imperial Hotel and walk over the red carpet in that glittering interior where the Habsburgs danced. I didn’t know how or when, but I have waited for this day and tonight I am here.”

Hitler as a young man was very kind to his mother who became a widow. In the end he nursed her with fatal cancer and even cooked for her. He helped the Jewish doctor who treated her to survive during his persecution of the Jews. Hitler’s family rejected him for becoming such an arty bohemian as a young adult. He became destitute - lived in hovels, finally as a tramp, but then went to an enlightened hostel and there got involved with politics, ranting and raving. He was interested in the Christian Socialist party - hated poverty and injustice, pro-German. He screamed when he spoke but
otherwise would be quiet. He had some Jewish friends. Jewish art dealers bought his little postcard-like paintings.

Hitler claimed that he became anti-Semitic on discovering that the Jews controlled prostitution, the music and art world and the Social Democrat press. In his hostel, he used to read magazines by a mystical theorist who thought that the Europeans were the master race and needed to maintain racial purity. The Aryans must rule the earth by destroying their dark, racially mixed enemies. (p. 46) One magazine talked about the limitless power of the Jews who controlled the money. Hitler stayed at the hostel for 3 years. Then he decided to leave for Munich to be in the Fatherland. Peddled paintings door to door and in beer halls.

In Germany he started studying Marxism. He loved Munich and felt really happy there. Then came 1914. He was ecstatic as this chance for a Greater Germany. War fever swept the country. Young people wanted the war as an escape from boredom. The desire was to gather all men of German tongues into one Reich and one people as a master race to direct the progress of mankind. Hitler joined a regiment. The solders were full of joy. He was often almost hit under fire, but Hitler miraculously survived.

Consider all these chances for Hitler to die and he didn’t. Why did God allow it? He writes letters about the dear Lord saving his life. But some thought he was saved by demonic powers (p. 64.) While at the front he wrote a poem that included these lines:

“I often go on bitter nights to Wotan’s oak in the quiet glade with dark powers to weave a union...magic formula.”

Hitler was courageous and well liked and drew pictures for the others. He was sure that Germany would win. Hitler read Schopenhauer and learned from him the strength of blind will. Wounded in Berlin in the hospital he was horrified by the drop in morale which he attributed to the Jews who he thought were plotting Germany’s downfall. (p. 66) He thought Jews were controlling German production.

A basic theme of violent philosophies is scapegoating. Hitler couldn’t stand to think Germany was too weak to win the war, there had to be a scapegoat - the Jewish industrialists in this case. A question for us: why is hate so ugly and revenge so sweet?

He told a friend later that war teaches you a lot about human nature. He decided on the front that, “even if Christ was a true fighter, the turning of both cheeks is not a very good recipe for the front.” (p. 68)

Hitler was appalled that back home workers were striking, hoping for an end to the war. At the front the ones retreating reviled the ones on the front lines as prolonging the war. Hitler said the pacifists and shirkers and the Reds were losing the war for them.
By now Hitler felt he belonged with the army and was full of self-confidence. He was proud of his manhood and loved having fought for Germany. Then he was gassed - went blind, recovered his sight but went blind again when he heard of Germany’s surrender. During this period had a vision which could have been a hypnosis induced state that he was to save Germany. From then on he hated Jews who he identified with Reds. There were Marxist uprisings in Germany, which seemed to be about to tear Germany to pieces. The Kaiser was driven off and all over Germany the workers were in charge who ordered an 8 hour day, unions, pensions.

Groups of young people rejecting bourgeois life sat around campfires under the direction of a Fuhrer singing songs and listening to passages from Nietzsche. These young people loved danger of the war. Like Hitler they were ashamed of the surrender and hated the Bolsheviks. These types defeated the Bolsheviks who would have taken over.

Hitler met Alfred Rosenberg a fanatic anti-Semite and anti-Marxist from Estonia, eager to keep Germany free from Jewish communism and Jewish Masonic plots. According to him the Hungarian Communist revolt was led by Jews. After all Marx was of Jewish lineage. These theories can be understood partly as having to do with what has been called terrestrial messianism. Lacking hope in an eternal kingdom, people with a strong sense of justice start seeking paradise on earth to be brought about through their works or their violence.

All this ferment came to a climax at the end of the war because of the Treaty of Versailles which greatly humiliated Germany and which was followed by terrible economic depression where from one day to the next money and property became worthless. There was fear of starvation as money kept going to paying off the war debt.

Hitler became a speaker for rightist groups. He attracted crowds. He joined a small workers group called national socialists and started writing about the liquidation of the Jewish people. In his speeches he talks in the language of the trenches vs. as an intellectual and this attracts. He electrifies groups ever larger in beer halls. He changed the party it from a little group into a large group. In Hitler’s manifesto he likened his program to Luther’s proclamation nailed to the Church door.

His plan, repeated in many speeches, was the union of all Germans in a Greater Reich, colonies for excess population, equality for Germany among nations; revocation of the Versailles Treaty, creation of a people’s army, ruthless battle against criminals to ensure law and order; abolition of all income unearned by work; confiscation of war profits; expropriation of land for communal purposes, profit sharing, socialization of great stores to small tradesmen; old age national health care, Jews to be treated as aliens, denied the right to hold public office, deported in times of need and expelled if they had emigrated after 1914. (See p. 68)

The audience was to yell out if they agreed. Chaos caused by Marxist-led strikes led to shootouts. The industrialists were interested in alternatives to Marxism. The Jewish plot issue was fostered by the Protocols of Zion, a forged document purported to be an account of the Jewish plot
written by Jews. Hitler in his talks claimed that the Jews wanted to de-nationalize all nations for the final take over. He hinted at ways to remove the Jews from society.

(Incidently, the swastika, originally a sanskrit word meaning all is all, was a symbol of the Teutonic Knights.)

Hitler took over the party as a dictatorial leader, threatening otherwise to leave, and started organizing a private army of storm troopers. Hitler was jailed for riots and compared himself to Christ being dragged off by the Jews. As early as 1922 Hitler said that if he ever had power every Jew would be hanged in the squares until there was not one left.

Mussolini was the one who called his movement Fascist and was about to take over Italy at this time by force. The black shirts marched into Bolshevized Italian towns and the garrisons were neutral or joined them. Hitler was called Germany’s Mussolini.

Some of the Generals joined Hitler seeing him as a leader who would not shrink from bloodshed. Hitler even got some US support as the man to overcome the Marxists because he knew how to speak to the people.

Asked about his love life he said he would never marry because the masses were his spouse - the masses are feminine.

Here is a key description of the reason for his success: “All men, rich or poor, have an inner sense of unfulfillment. Slumbering somewhere is the readiness to risk some final sacrifice, some adventure, in order to give a new shape to their lives. It is my job to channel that urge for political purposes...The humbler people are, the greater the craving to identify themselves with a cause bigger than themselves. If I can persuade them that the fate of the German nation is at stake, then they will become part of an irresistible movement, embracing all classes.”

As a personality, Hitler went from being fanatically excited, witty and charming, to glum and paranoid. He likened himself to Christ coming to get rid of the moneychangers - the Jews. He also grandiosely likened himself also to Napoleon.

Hitler, jailed after an uprising, spent a year in prison. In prison he studied Nietzsche and Marx. He decided that it is will power that counts not knowledge. “If God had only known the world and not willed it, there would still be chaos today.” (p. 187)

He dreamed of toppling Russian Communism. At the trial he said he couldn’t be tried as a criminal since his only interest was the honor of Germany. He spoke at his trial about the final court of judgment, God. In jail he started writing Mein Kampf - my struggle. By the time he left jail everyone was weeping. He had won all of them to his cause.
Hitler said he wanted to solve the Jewish question in the name of God, as the agent of God fighting off the Jews.” (p. 213.) He thought that God was giving him and his followers the gift of hate. (p. 219) He considered that Christ was the enemy of the capitalistic Jews of his time. (p. 222) He would continue Christ’s work. (p. 222) Hitler considered that Jesus was only half Jewish since he only had 2 Jewish grandparents due to the Immaculate Conception!

Hitler was often advised by astrologers. At one point one of these goes to his own village to get a mandrake - a root shaped like a man with all sorts of nefarious rites.

Hitler started organizing more and more storm troopers to defeat Marxism. Also, he worked out how German expansion is necessary for greatness. To win over the Communists Hitler would say that the Nazis were socialists, enemies of capitalism, and exploitation, unfair salaries, and “the evaluation of a human being according to wealth and property instead of responsibility and performance.” (p. 224) He recommended war to get more land for Germans. Hitler also had Darwinist ideas of the conquest of the weak by the strong. (p. 226) Might makes right. The need for expansion was linked to the elimination of the Jews on the basis that they were sapping German strength through intermarriage. He quoted Jesus: the lukewarm will be spit out of my mouth - to justify his virulence. (p. 260)

Toland mentions that in the Secret Book Hitler wrote and didn’t publish there are allusions to his own fear that his father might have had Jewish blood and that his mother was poisoned by the Jewish doctor’s cancer treatments. He had a terrible fear of cancer.

His bodyguard were called the S. S.

The Communists and the Nazis shared similar socialist goals, had contempt for parliamentary procedures, hated the police and thought the end justifies the means. Relate to East Communist Germany? (p. 239)

By 1930 his storm troopers were smashing the windows of Jewish shops.

General Hindenberg won the election but by a narrow margin. Hitler insisted on being Chancellor. After all sorts of pressure he got that role and because a lone Dutch Communist tried to burn the Reichstag he used this as an excuse to get emergency powers and kill off main Storm Trooper leaders who were restive and rowdy and won’t accept obedience to him.

At this point there forms an opinion among some of his own leaders that he is dangerous.

Hitler says he cannot marry his mistress because he is really married to Germany and would not be able to do justice to marriage and family.

At Oberamagau people said that Hitler was today’s Christ and that a dissident general is Judas - the people consider Hitler the German Messiah.
When he occupied the Rhineland, which had been ceded to France in World War I, he rejoiced and thanked God who he believed helped only heroes like himself. He said that if this act where someday to cause unnecessary sufferings to his beloved German people, God should punish him. (p. 389)

1938: The generals were against the Czech invasion because they thought they could not win a world war, (p. 468) They even planned to arrest Hitler. Hitler (p. 470) claimed that “every generation must experience war.” (p. 470) The generals considered Hitler to be mad. They, in turn, were regarded by Hitler as arrogant and not aware of his genius. An old German proverb (p. 482) “An end, even with terror, is better than terror without end.”

Chamberlain argued that it was insane to start a war over a far distant country Czechoslovakia. Armed conflict is a nightmare.

“But if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by force, I should feel it had to be resisted. Under such a domination life for people who believe in liberty would not be worth living: but war is a fearful thing, and we must be very clear, before we embark on it, that it is really the great issues that are at stake.” (p. 485)

The biographer mentions that during this time Carl Jung said Hitler was a mystic medicine man and his popularity and worship were because he told every German what they had in their unconscious inferiority complex, that they will overcome the superior ones by magic. (p. 497)

Not until 1938 did the Jewish persecution mount decisively with burning synagogues, and looting shops and Jews sent to camps by the S.S. which was called crystal night because of the sound of smashed windows. 20,000 sent to camps. Great protests from USA and France but US kept up trade with Germany.

Meanwhile Hitler purged anyone who disagreed with him because he became more and more monomaniac.

Hitler worked by intuition which Toland says is the equivalent of abandonment of logic in favor of impatience. (p. 528)

His revenge motive: joy at conquering the French who had vanquished Germany in 1918. Wanted to woo the Parisians into a fascist Europe and insisted on no looting or rape. (p. 619)

By the time Hitler decided to battle with Russia he had deified himself saying he “had emerged into a superhuman state, more godlike than human, and therefore as the best of the race of supermen, he was bound by none of the conventions of human morality and stood above the law.” (p. 646)
During the invasion of Russia the Nazi soldiers were to round up all Bolshevik leaders, Jews, gypsies, Asiatic inferiors and useless eaters such as the deranged and incurably sick. (p. 676)

Even the operators of the killing camps for Jews became miserable – either neurotics or brutes from the horror of it. Himmler, head of the S.S., ordered the ones shooting the Jews to assemble and told them that “Yours is a disgusting task, but as good Germans (you) should not enjoy doing it. Your conscience, however, should be in no way affected because you are soldiers who have to carry out every order without question. I alone, before God and the Fuhrer, bear the terrible responsibility for what has to be done. Surely you have noticed that this bloody work was as odious to me and moved me to the depths of my soul. But I too am obeying the highest law by doing my duty.” (p. 677)

Hitler took 2 1/2 million prisoners. There were 1,700,000 dead on the Soviet side after only 6 months of fighting. ( p. 685) In a speech to the German people in Berlin Hitler said: “Only when the entire German people become a single community of sacrifice can we hope and expect that Providence will stand by us in the future. Almighty God never helped a lazy man. Nor does he help a coward.”

He talked of God Almighty as his superior just as the generals have to obey him! The Reich was to last for a thousand years to come. (p. 689)

But mud and snow ruined the invasion of Moscow.

Meanwhile he thought of the US as totally in the hands of the Jews! After Pearl Harbor when he declared war on the US he considered it part of (p.695) his total war upon the two major enemies of human survival - international Marxism (Russia) and international finance capitalism (America), both “the creatures of international Jewry.”(p. 695)

In 1941 Hitler ordered the final solution for the Jews: gas chambers. Hitler likened the camps originally to the US solution to the Indian problem - like reservations.

Toland, the biographer, admits that even though Hitler was a Catholic, the hierarchy hated him. But Hitler considered that his extermination of the Jews was the work of God to rid the world of those who killed God. (p. 703)

Actually, according to Toland, most Germans and Poles did not know about the gas chambers. They thought their Jewish neighbors had been deported. When challenged on this, one leader said that everyone sensed something was wrong,

“...but they didn’t want to know. It was too comfortable to live on the system, to support our families in royal style, and to believe that it was all right.” (p. 758)
Hitler said that no one cared any more about the Turks massacring a million Armenians and so they would forget about the Jews after the fact. (p. 759 ff.) The world would be grateful that they had lanced the Jewish abscess. In Warsaw in the ghetto the Jews finally revolted and fought back.

Toland says that the Vatican was torn in its response to Hitler because they thought Bolshevism more dangerous than Nazism, but he admits that the Vatican saved more Jewish lives than the Allies. (See p. 97)

(Compare with liberals and abortion now.)

About the Russian front Hitler said, “As long as there is one stouthearted man to hold up the banner, nothing has been lost. Faith moves mountains. In this respect, I am ice cold: if the German people are not prepared to give everything for the sake of their self-preservation, very well! Then let them disappear.” (p. 707)

200,000 Germans died in Russia, 708,000 were wounded. But they were to be supermen after getting rid of the Jews. They made slippers for soldiers out of the hair of the Jews going into the gas chamber.

“I could only say, ‘Jawohl,’ (equivalent of Yes, Sir.)” Hoss, the commandant of Auschwitz, later confessed.

“It didn’t occur to me at all that I would be held responsible. You see, in Germany it was understood that if something went wrong, then the man who gave the orders was responsible.”

Nor did these executioners ever question whether the Jews deserved their fate. ‘Don’t you see, we S.S. men were not supposed to think about these things; it never even occurred to us...We were all so trained to obey orders, without even thinking, that the thought of disobeying an order would simply never have occurred to anybody, and somebody else would have done it just as well if I hadn’t.’ Besides, those who participated in the exterminations had been trained so rigorously ‘that one would shoot his own brother if ordered to. Orders were everything.”

Interestingly the Germans are now under-populated because of abortion and birth control!

As more and more reverses took place with the US also in the War, people began to think Hitler was mad. He insisted on surrounded troops in Russian fighting to the death even though they had no food or ammunition left! (p. 729) He recommended that the general, if he had no hope, should shoot himself and leave this vale of tears to go to eternity and be immortalized by his nation. Instead the general surrendered to the Soviet general and begged for food for his men. 400,000 POW’s died of starvation. International Jewry was blamed.
Meanwhile the Italians gave up and Mussolini was arrested. Bombing of Hamburg by the Allies led to 70,000 people dead. A Viennese pilot sent gliders in to the country and rescued Mussolini but his spirit was broken.

At last the leaders began to think they could lose. By 1943 there was total mobilization of Germans based on the idea that Germany should never live under the whip of American Jews or Bolshevik commissars. (p. 778) The army had suffered 1 1/2 million casualties in a year. A plot by the military to assassinate Hitler fails because the briefcase with the bomb is moved out of full range. Hitler thought that it was a worker who placed the bomb and that Fate saved him for his mission. (p. 799) Later the propaganda was that these generals, now shot, or committing suicide, had caused the defeats in the other countries as saboteurs.

Hitler began to think of death as peace. His doctor considered that he was a neurotic with Caesar-mania.” (p. 821)

Meanwhile a million men were being killed in France.

Hitler spoke of himself this way: “Genius is a will-of-the wisp unless it is founded on perseverance and fanatical determination. That’s the most important thing in human existence....It’s merely a question of who can stand it longer. The one who must hold out longer is the one who’s got everything at stake.”

Toland remarks “What would be sheer madness to another was only logical for one with his obsession.”

At the end he was muttering about an atom bomb he would use to obliterate England, and also wondering who could follow in his footsteps after his death. And again that if the nation failed to have teutonic fury it had no worth and deserved destruction.

Hitler said that there was no need to plan for the remaining Germans after the war since “the good have been killed and only the inferior will remain.” (p. 857)

Before his death by suicide Hitler said the captain must go down with his ship. (p. 878)

When a younger officer yelled about how all the wonderful other German officers went to their deaths, sacrifices for the thirst for power of the leaders, Frau Goebbels, wife of the famous Nazi, replied that everything good has been defeated and a world without Hitler and National Socialism was not worth living in. She must kill herself and the children because God will understand that they are not meant for life after Hitler. (p. 880)

Just before his suicide Hitler married his mistress, Eva Braun, and had a little wedding party. In his last will he claimed credit for destroying the Jews.
In defeat with Berlin surrounded, Hitler shot himself at 56 with Eva doing the same. He said, in defeat, that he wanted their bodies to be cremated immediately: “I don’t want to be put on exhibition in a Russian wax museum.” (p. 887)

He said he wanted on his tombstone the words: “(I) was the victim of (my) generals.” (p. 888)

Final comments from his biographer, Toland.

When he died so did National Socialism and the Thousand-Year Third Reich. Because of him, his beloved Germany lay in ruins. “The greatest irony of all was that the driving force of his life - his hatred and fear of Jews was thwarted. He had intended the elimination of six million Jews to be his great gift to the world. It would lead, instead, to the formation of a Jewish state.” (p. 891)

So much for the ends justifying the means.

It is, of course, not difficult to critique a violent philosophy of life such as Hitler’s as not only viciously evil but also clearly disastrous for all those who took part in executing it. Perhaps more important would be to trace the same themes in present-day terrorism and also, in another sense, in the acceptance of abortion. In both cases people think that the end justifies the means.

Mohatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Such a different life from that of Hitler though both men were famous and acclaimed and adored!

The following biographical information is taken from The Words of Gandhi, selected by Richard Attenborough, (N.Y.: Newmarket Press, 1982)

As was the custom in his time he married Kasturbai at the early age of 13 and then was sent off to study law in London. After becoming a lawyer he went to South Africa and worked for immigrant Indians.

While in South Africa, Gandhi started developing the idea of non-violent resistance: satyagrahi, truth force or soul-force.

He was jailed for protests. Then he went back to India and led the struggle for independence by means of non-violent protest. He had great religious tolerance of Moslems and Christians. He said he would have become a Christian had they not kicked him out of the Church for being non-white when he visited once. Gandhi used to fast practically until death against violence.

He persuaded the Indian people by spiritual and political means to get involved in vast non-violent strikes that paralyzed colonialism. After a while even the English in England began to side with Gandhi.
1947 brought independence, but Gandhi despaired over the violence caused by the partition of India with the Moslems starting their own Pakistani state. He was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic at age of 79.

Einstein said “Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

He had a great influence on Martin Luther King who influenced Operation Rescue indirectly.

Some points:

The spinning wheel issue - because of love for foreign made articles, the Indians shipped their wool overseas and then bought the foreign stuff for large prices, thus impoverishing themselves. The campaign to get them back to the spinning wheel meant self-sufficiency. He disliked communism as making man a cog in the wheel.

Some sayings:

“Majority rule can become tyranny, we need to respect the rights of the minority.” p. 38

(regarding in S. Africa Indians forced to walk in the gutter that whites could pass unimpeded along the sidewalk.)

“It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings.” (p. 7)

(need for discipline vs. conscience without discipline.)

“Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.” (p. 13)

“Literacy must be one of the many means for intellectual development, but we have had in the past intellectual giants who were unlettered...it is a superstition to think that the fullest development of the man is impossible without a knowledge of the art of reading and writing. That knowledge undoubtedly adds grace to life, but is in no way indispensable for man’s moral, physical or material growth.” (p. 14)

“In India we have 3 million people who have to be satisfied with one meal a day...You and I have no right to anything we have until these three million are clothed and fed better.” (p. 16)

“The distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization is an indefinite multiplicity of human wants.” (p. 17)

“One must not possess anything which one does not really need...one must not keep a chair if one can do without it. In observing this principle one is led to a progressive simplification of one’s own life.” (p. 18)
“Love is the subtlest force in the world.”

“Love is a rare herb that makes a friend even of a sworn enemy and this herb grows out of nonviolence.” “I hold myself to be incapable to hating any being on earth. By a long course of prayerful discipline, I have ceased for over forty years to hate anybody.” (p. 22)

“Chastity is one of the greatest disciplines without which the mind cannot attain requisite firmness.” (p. 23) (Note he was anti-contraception, claiming that unless a man could attain control of his sexual powers in abstinence when necessary, he would not have control in any other sphere of life.)

“Learning takes us through many stages in life but it fails us utterly in the hours of danger and temptation.” (p. 25)

“Democracy, disciplined and enlightened, is the finest thing in the world” (p. 29)

“Good travels at a snail’s pace. Those who want to do good are not selfish, they are not in a hurry, they know that to impregnate people with good requires a long time.” (p. 41)

On non-violence:

“I can imagine a fully armed man to be at heart a coward. Possession of arms implies an element of fear, if not cowardice. But true nonviolence is an impossibility without the possession of unadulterated fearlessness...Non-violence should never be used as a shield for cowardice. It is a weapon for the brave.” (P. 44)

“I see neither bravery nor sacrifice in destroying life or property for offense or defense.”

“It is no non-violence if we merely love those that love us. It is nonviolence only when we love those that hate us. I know how difficult it is to follow this grand law of love. But are not all great and good things difficult to do? Love of the hater is the most difficult of all. But by the grace of God even this most difficult thing becomes easy to accomplish if we want to do it.”

Enemies must be converted into friends with no rancor after non-violent resistance. (See p. 45)

“Its object should not be to punish the opponent or to inflict injury upon him. Even while non-cooperating with him, we must make him feel that in us he has a friend and we should try to reach his heart by rendering him humanitarian service whenever possible.”

Non-violence includes under not hurting others by evil thoughts, undue haste, lying, hatred, wishing others ill. (See p. 46)
“Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evildoer, but it means the pitting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant...And so I am not pleading for India to practice nonviolence because she is weak. I want her to practice nonviolence being conscious of her strength and power...I want India to recognize that she has a soul that cannot perish and that can rise triumphant above every physical weakness and defy the physical combination of a whole world... (p. 52- 53)

Nonviolence, according to Gandhi, will not fail through inherent weakness. It may fail because of poverty of response...the high souled men, who are unable to suffer national humiliation any longer, will want to vent their wrath. They will take to violence.

Gandhi:

“Although non-cooperation is one of the main weapons in the armory of satyagraha, it should not be forgotten that it is, after all, only a means to secure the cooperation of the opponent consistently with truth and justice...Avoidance of all relationships with the opposing power, therefore, can never be a satyagrahi’s object, but transformation or purification of that relationship.” (p. 55)

“Nonviolence succeeds only when we have a real living faith in God.”

“Experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence.” (p. 57)

“Nonviolence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-cooperation with evil.” (p. 58)

“He alone who is strong enough to avenge a wrong knows how to love and forgive.” (p. 66)

Non-violence is not just a stopgap until one can win with violence. It can also be used in daily personal life by men, women, and children. (p. 68 ff.)

“I believe in God, not as a theory, but as a fact more real than that of life itself.” (p. 74)

“A man who throws himself on God ceases to fear man.” (p. 76)

(Note Gandhi uses He for God even though, in general Hindus think of the divine as impersonal) ( p. 77)

“Why can we not see that if the sum total of the world’s activities was destructive, it would have come to an end long ago? Love sustains this planet of ours.” (p. 81)
“Lying is the mother of violence. A truthful man cannot long remain violent. He will perceive in the course of his search that he has no need to be violent and he will further discover that so long as there is the slightest trace of violence in him, he will fail to find the truth he is searching.” (p. 86)

“Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency. Man is a social being. Without interrelation with society he cannot realize its oneness with the universe or suppress his egotism.” (p. 87)

“As soon as the spirit of exploitation is gone, armaments will be felt as a positive unbearable burden. Real disarmament cannot come unless the nations of the world cease to exploit one another.” (p. 89)

“It may be long before the law of love will be recognized in internal affairs. The machineries of governments stand between and hide the hearts of one people from those of another.” (p. 92)

Gandhi wrote about a peace brigade:

“He or she must have a living faith in non-violence. This is impossible without a living faith in God. A non-violent man can do nothing save by the power and grace of God. without it he won’t have the courage to die without anger, without fear and without retaliation. Such courage comes from the belief that God sits in the hearts of all, and there should be no fear in the presence of God. (p. 94)

After the atom bomb he said that now the world would see that they had either suicide or non-violence. (p. 97)

Here is a cute joke about Gandhi from Internet:

Mahatma Gandhi, as you may know, walked barefoot most of the time, which produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little which made him rather frail and with his odd diet, he suffered from bad breath. This made him what?

“A super callused fragile mystic plagued with halitosis.”

In evaluation one can bring in the Catholic Just War principles. Was Gandhi’s success based on the fact that Englishmen were brutal but not mad? Would Gandhi have been able to overcome Hitler? Relate these questions to the motives for liberation theology.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

Martin Luther King, Jr. is so well-known that I am only going to highlight ideas about non-violence that might be important for this section.

Taken from the book of selections edited by Washington: A Testament of Hope.

He was influenced by Gandhi. (p 7-9) King thought that the alternative to violence is nonviolent resistance.
Five points can be made concerning nonviolence as a method in bringing about better racial conditions.

First - It is not for the passive but requires constant action, trying to convince the opponent of his mistakes. It is passive only physically, not spiritually.

Second: the idea is not to defeat or humiliate the opponent but to win his friendship and cooperation. Nonviolent techniques are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.” (Relate to World War I)

Third: One should direct the attack against the evil not the persons. It should be a victory not just for Negroes, but for justice. “We are out to defeat injustice and not white persons who may happen to be unjust.”

Fourth: One needs also to avoid internal “violence of spirit.” “In speaking of love at this point, we are not referring to some sentimental emotion. It would be nonsense to urge men to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense. “Love” in this connection means understanding good will...loving them because God loves them.” (Agapic love vs. eros, philia)

Fifth:

“The method of nonviolence is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. It is this deep faith in the future that causes the nonviolent resister to accept suffering without retaliation. He knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic companionship. This belief that God is on the side of truth and justice comes down to us from the long tradition of our Christian faith. There is something at the very center of our faith which reminds us that Good Friday may reign for a day, but ultimately it must give way to the triumphant beat of the Easter drums. Evil may so shape events that Caesar will occupy a palace and Christ a cross, but one day that same Christ will rise up and split history into A.D. and B.C. so that even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name. So in Montgomery we can walk and never get weary, because we know that there will be a great camp meeting in the promised land of freedom and justice...” Largely as a result of King’s movement, the Supreme Court did eventually rule that segregation was illegal.

Eldridge Cleaver (1935-1998)

Information for this unit comes from the book by Cleaver Soul on Fire (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1978) This is an autobiographical book about a violent Black activist.
Cleaver had been 14 years for criminal activities in reform schools, detention centers, State prisons before leaving the U.S. He escaped a 7 year sentence for involvement in violence with the Black Panthers by leaving the United States for a communist country. Disillusioned with the communist countries, he went to Paris. Close to suicide he had a saving vision of Christ, surrendered to the authorities, came back to a jail cell in California and is now a crusader for Christian evangelization.

Here are some facts and thoughts from Soul on Fire:

In 1968 he said that if he should be elected President on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket, “I would not enter the White House, but would burn it down, erecting on its ruins a museum or monument to the decadence of the past…” (p. 18)

Cleaver once thought that the revolutionary black guerillas would join up with the Vietnam Vets and turn against Washington, led by the armed black panthers with hidden weapons. He thought there would be an open civil war. He planned this war in Algeria via Cuba. He was going to model this on Mao’s long march. Instead, after his conversion, he was willing to face a trial leading to a jail sentence where he could be killed by police or fiends or communists, but he was full of hope instead in the Holy Spirit.

When he fled the country the Panthers were being ransacked and fired upon by the FBI. Riots led to bloodshed in the cities. In 1968 the murder of M.L. King left a vacuum in the civil rights movement. In the 60’s the Panthers gave some kind of hope and honor to Blacks who were living in total depression in the ghettos. The Panthers were a political action party dedicated to overcoming killing of black citizens by police. (p. 25) The police “patrolled the black community like foreign troops.” So they created armed black patrols that follow the cops around the ghetto and monitored their conduct.

“When a black man or woman was shoved up against a wall or spread across the hood of a car, our Panthers would jump out and focus immediate community attention on the encounter advising the victim of his rights. The police got furious, but we gained the respect and admiration of millions of blacks for having the guts to face up to these bullies and urge others to do the same.” (P. 26)

This was done on the basis that here is a constitutional right to own arms. (p. 27) White America hated and feared the Panthers but also respected us. The police did all sorts of illegal things in retaliation - entry without warrants etc. He gives a list of all those killed by the police mostly youngsters. The Panthers would shoot back.

What was the background of this violent leader?

Cleaver was born in Arkansas, moved to Phoenix and then to Los Angeles. His father was a physically abusive man who used to hit his mother and when riled would smash everything in sight.
Once his father retaliated against the preacher who had treated him unjustly on a property matter by going into his Church and hitting his head with a hammer and splintering the old man’s false teeth. His father beat Eldridge for defiance and beat his mother Saturday nights. He would never hit his father back when his father was hitting him, but always when his father was hitting his mother. Finally when he was a strong enough young man, Eldridge decided to kill his father. The day he decided to kill his father, his father didn’t beat him but left home for 5 years. (p. 63)

Now he began to direct his violence elsewhere. He started posing as an investigator and going into motels where couples were spending the night and then write them up and rape the wife. Then he got into drug dealing. He became rich. (p. 68) Writing about this after his conversion, Cleaver says that only Jesus Christ can redirect the personality of a criminal mind. He describes the Black Moslem movement, which was part of his story as depicted in his first bestseller: *Soul on Ice*. Elijah Mohammed bonded blacks together and insisted that drugs, shooting, and drinking brawls had to stop. He claimed that it was the white devils who were trying to burn out the blacks through drugs and crime. The Blacks were losers this way. Later the Panthers took this and ran the drug dealers out. Cleaver was greatly influenced by Malcolm X who was more of an intellectual.

In prison Cleaver started getting into ideas, literature, reading and study, especially Marxism. In prison he came up against prison psychiatry. From taking lots of mace for a high, he wound up crazy. Though he thought that one prison psychiatrist was helpful, others he hated for turning men into mice.

Leaving prison in 1966 Cleaver got into the San Francisco hippie scene. He saw this as a rebellion against the avarice and power hunger of the older generation. The non-violent civil rights movement had attracted whites to rebel against the power structure. He claims that drugs and pacifism were like the Boston Tea Party, a contemporary way to rebel against society by refusing to go to Vietnam to die. (p. 82)

In prison Cleaver resolved to become a revolutionary to defeat the ruling class. He was socialistic in his plans to defeat capitalism. He hated government, and bureaucracies. He tried to get Blacks out of the idea of creating a future in the ghetto. Instead they should join him in plans to overthrow the establishment. During this time Cleaver married an activist black woman. King’s death fostered despair and interest in violence. He financed his revolutionary groups by income from his book *Soul on Ice*.

It was he who started calling the cops pigs. But he didn’t like the idea of the Muslims that all whites were evil. His mother taught him that there were good and bad whites. (p. 93) He did not invent the Panthers but joined them, impressed by their courage in carrying guns openly.

Cleaver wanted the Blacks to form their own nation and be part of the U.N. If the Black was supposed to be an American then why was he treated like a dog? (p. 96) These rebellious thoughts led to urban guerrilla warfare, seen as analogous to the revolution of Americans against the English.
Positively, the Panthers wanted freedom, release of all prisoners unjustly tried, Black juries, land. (p. 113) The Panthers came into a leadership vacuum where riots were going on and King couldn’t stop them.

After a skirmish with the police, Cleaver decided to break his bond and flee from US to Cuba. Dressed as a mime he escaped from his police surrounded house. He went from Cuba where he was disillusioned to Algeria. From there he visited Korea, China, North Vietnam. He liked best the North Vietnamese who were the most “civilized” and pro-Panther. In a letter about the International Black Panthers he used this telling phrase: we fight so that we will not bequeath “to our children the chains that now bind us.”

He got into trouble claiming that Algeria, so anti-colonial, should support the Panthers vs. the U. S. Government. He lauded Communist heroes such as Stalin and Mao. Later he would see that the corruption of the communists was as violent and inhumane as the powers they replaced. (p. 97)

His plan was to train guerillas in Cuba. But in Cuba he discovered that the communists were racists. Castro shipped Blacks off to Africa. In the Asian communist countries he could see that they had no tradition of individuals and their rights. In America you could protest the betrayal of the American dream as it affected Blacks, but in Communist countries there was no such ideal to appeal to. (p. 109) The Communist party in America promised support but did little. In the Asian countries he experienced lots of racism, for instance against the Japanese.

One of the greatest factors leading to Cleaver’s rethinking about life was the birth of his son and daughter who seemed like miracles. Because of his children Cleaver began to think there is a designer God. The children had souls. This truth was contrary to his previous anti-religious ideas.

Living in unfree countries he slowly began to realize that in the U. S. at least you could call the police and find out why someone was jailed. “Later I learned that without inner control, a moral perspective, and a spiritual balance that flowed out of Christian love, justice, and caring, the Communist promises were to become the largest fraud of all.”

Eventually after living in Communist countries he would say “I would rather be in prison in America than free somewhere else.” (p.98)

In Communist countries there could not be outburst in the press or any kind of legal recourse.

At that time some Panthers dreamed of assaults on the prisons, commando attacks at the Olympics. The hope was that anti-war activists would join in the revolution.

A fascinating side-effect of the trial of the Nixon aides was that Blacks disillusioned with America could see that the most powerful man in the country could be brought down by justice. The Constitution proved stronger than Nixon. (p. 103)
At that time there were splits in the Black Muslims and then in the Panthers.

Concerning this Cleaver wrote that the splits “would finally cause me to doubt completely the efficacy of social, political movements as the agent of true liberation and lasting salvation. Everything that I had trusted, supported, and believed had a propensity for melting under the heat and light of testing. At last Jesus would be the One who not only stood and tested time, governments, kingdoms, and nationalities; but I learned with increasing joy that He who was my judge was also my personal Saviour.” (p. 77)

Most Blacks, tutored by Elijah Mohammed, the founder of the Black Mosleems, could not stand the idea of a white Jesus. Cleaver now runs the Eldridge Cleaver Crusades and tries to explain universal religion to these bewildered Black Muslims.

Here is a description of the events leading up to Cleaver’s conversion. In 1972 he was living with his family under a false name in Paris. He couldn’t return to the States without serving his prison sentence. He started to become empty and restless. Meanwhile the Panthers split and voted him out as too militant and dangerous. Cleaver began to dislike the arrogance of the French. He felt alienated by French culture. He was impressed that Nixon was out and the FBI was being reformed. His old revolutionary friends were becoming leaders of cities. They didn’t want him back because they are now going up the ladder. He becomes depressed and thought of suicide.

One night in Southern France, Cleaver was staring “at the moon from a balcony and he saw his face in it and then his fallen heroes, Castro, Mao, Marx... passing in review - each one appearing for a moment of time, and then dropping out of sight, like fallen heroes. Finally at the end of the procession, in dazzling, shimmering light, the image of Jesus Christ appeared. That was the last straw. I just crumbled and started crying. I fell to my knees...and in the midst of this shaking and crying the Lord’s Prayer and the 23rd Psalm came into my mind. I hadn’t thought about these prayers for years. I started repeating them, and after a time I...jumped up and ran to my bookshelf and got the Bible. It was the family Bible my mother had given to me...

“That night I slept the most peaceful sleep I have ever known in my life...in the morning I could see in my mind the way, all the way back home...I saw a path of light that ran through a prison cell...This prison cell was a dark spot on this path of light, and the meaning, which was absolutely clear to me, was that I didn’t have to wait on any politician to help me get back home. I had it within my power to get back home by taking that first step, by surrendering; it was a certainty that everything was going to be all right.” (p. 212)

God had reached out and touched him and turned him around. He claims that God showed the way out of the dead-end of his choices, taking away all fear of police, courts, and prison.

People thought he had sold out, but he said he had sold out to Jesus. (p. 217)

Arrested on landing in NYC, he still “felt free because of God.” (p. 220)
Some Panthers denounced him as a FBI informer. (p. 222) His old friends wouldn’t visit him. Because of this he turned more and more to God. Alone in his cell he asked Jesus to be his personal savior and take away his sins. (p. 224) Tears of joy. Soon he was making new friends in Christ. After nine months of prison, he was out on bail on the generosity of a Christian friend. He got to see his mother who had prayed for her prodigal son for 30 years.

Presently he goes around to colleges and to prisons and appears on TV. He was so strong in the Lord that he could enjoy having a prayer session arranged by Colson, the ex-prisoner Nixon aide, with a former Klu Klux Klan leader. All three, born again. Jesus brought them together; also a Southern policeman.

He is now on a crusade against violence. This man who had spent almost half his life in prison and was awaiting trial for assault with intent to kill wrote: “The Lord has transported me from worldly revolutions to a radical dependence on his transforming power.” (p. 237)

Mao Tse-Tung (1893-1976)

This information is taken from T he Peop l e’s Em per or MAO - A Biography of Mao Tse-Tung by Dick Wilson (NY: Lee Publishers Group, Inc, (arranged with Doubleday & Co., Inc.)1979) Wilson is an English journalist. I have been told that this biography may be slanted and I am gong to look at other sources to make corrections if necessary.

Wilson begins by describing Mao as a peasant boy climbing by grim determination to become ruler of a great nation. He governed a quarter of mankind for a quarter of a century. Mao remained to the end peasant like, frugal, wearing patched clothes and sleeping on a wooden board bed without springs or mattress, eating simple food.

According to Wilson, who seemed to me pro-Communist, Mao invented a completely new system of life, economy and government. ragged a decayed, corrupt and inefficient imperial order into modernity, As a primary school headmaster in a minor provincial city, he became convinced that communism was the only possible instrument for China to cut cleanly through to social justice and economic advance: called the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution . He was the champion of the underdog yet also the cause of violent turbulence. Mao himself admitted to the deaths of
hundreds of thousands in the course of his introduction of communism after 1949, others say 50 million. Some Chinese said he was the biggest feudal despot in Chinese history.

Mao was also known also for defying Stalin to carry Marxism forward to a new modernity and relevance. Stalin ridiculed him as a “margarine Marxist.” Mao appealed to some European communists because he was a thinker. Castro thought him a ridiculous mortal whom his Party turned into a god. Others said he was like a living Buddha with a priestly court.

Mao’s 3 successive wives and children suffered greatly in various political situations but he survived many near deaths.

The author of this biography says that Mao failed to bring all the reforms he wanted and underestimated the resistance to them.

To understand Mao’s Communist social philosophy it is necessary to know more about his life.

Mao’s province, Hunan, was known for interest in reform, education, better ideas about women, but intellectuals were blocked from power. Meanwhile it can not be underestimated how great was the humiliation to the Chinese because of imperialists taking off parts of China. The French had Indo-china; Japan had Korea and Taiwan.

Mao’s mother was a devout Buddhist. His father was a non-believer. His father was mean but enterprising. His father moved up from small farmer to big farmer and, then, a trader. At 13 Mao was forced to leave school to work on farm. In his relationship to his father he learned that if he rebelled he got somewhere but he lost if he was weak and submissive. Mao desperately wanted a modern education and borrowed from relatives to leave against his father’s will. Like Abraham Lincoln he read in bed with a hidden lamp. Finally with the money of the relatives he left home with a mosquito net, two old sheets, a few tunics and 2 books and went to a primary school. He begged to get in to learn the modern way vs. reading old romantic novels as in his previous school. He was a rebel in school, gathering the kids together and suggesting that they could retaliate against a mean teacher by killing him!

What about the social scene at that time? After WWI people were only interested in their own profit. They didn’t know how to work together in companies or unions. Only foreign enterprises were run well. Everyone was inspired by Japan defeating Russia in 1905. Mao read newspapers about political reform and about world heroes. He loved George Washington.

Mao joined the revolution against emperor, but he saw that the republic under Sun Yat-sen was weak because the old landlords would retake the territory. He read Darwin, Mill, Rousseau at the training school for teachers he attended. Pride and anger ruled him plus dogged attention to detail in
scholarship especially geography and history. He wrote in his journal “my boundaries must be expanded so that the universe will become one great self.”

Mao believed great in sacrifice to reform the world - one should sacrifice self and family. Hard work and realism were needed. Traditional values block individualism. Mao was too busy thinking about large matters to talk about or get involved with women. He began to take cold baths and otherwise build up his strength.

He started building up a group of friends devoted to working for reform. In early days he used to say that the family impeded nationalism and that children should be educated free by the state and owe their first allegiance to the state.

Mao’s first known poem:

“to fight with Heaven is infinite pleasure!

to fight with earth is infinite pleasure!

to fight with men is infinite pleasure!” (p. 54)

In Mao’s group manifestos he opposed prostitution, gambling, concubinage. As students, Mao and his group started a free night school for workers to learn how to read and write and figure.

When Mao graduated from the teachers’ school he had not read Marx. His mind was a mix of liberalism, democratic reformism, utopian socialism, anti-imperialist and anti-militarism.

Next Mao went to Peking University. He started reading Tolstoy and Russian socialists. When the Revolution in Russia came he was ready to agree with others of a Marxist Study group that they should follow the lead of Russia as communists. Marxism appealed to his sense of injustice. (p. 70) He liked its rational and materialist premises, assertion of human equality and dignity but most of all that it had been used with success in Russia. He adopted the idea that China could not be liberated if the peasants weren’t liberated.

At this time he fell in love with his future wife, the daughter of his ethics teacher. He began to teach history at a Primary school in his native province. He started a Review which he sold himself on the street. In the second issue he put his manifesto entitled “The Great Union of the Popular Masses. It was about the need for everyone to form a revolutionary united front based on Marx - to form peasant and worker’s organizations. This was to overcome the sufferings of humanity and the darkness of society where the poor slave for the ease and comfort of the capitalists.
“The world is ours, the nation is ours, society is ours...Our Chinese people possesses great inherent capacities...One day, the reform of the Chinese people will be more profound than that of any other people, and the society of the Chinese people will be more radiant than that of any other people. We must all exert ourselves. Our golden age, our age of glory and splendor lies before us!” (p. 73)

Mao also started writing against the double standard and about arranged marriages.

He organized a student strike to protest against the corrupt governor and against Japanese imperialism. He also read the Communist Manifesto and Russian communist literature.

When Mao’s father died he didn’t return home to help with family headship. When he did finally it was to get his family to become communist.

Next he started working for his province’s independence of neighboring war-lords with a view to making the improvements there a basis for national reform. Hunan should become a little republic “a new heaven and earth”

In 1920 he led a march of 10,000 for democratic government. He formed the first communist cell in Hunan based on those in Peking and Shanghai.

He started identifying with labor and peasants instead of being an intellectual who wouldn’t carry his own luggage or do manual labor.

Interestingly for our course Mao actually met Bertrand Russell who was teaching for a year in China and also John Dewey who was lecturing in China also. Russell was for Communism but against dictatorship and violence; wanted to raise consciousness and not have a bloody revolution or loss of freedom. Mao rejected this as unrealistic since the capitalists are in control and will never relinquish power without violence. (P. 84)

Mao got married, probably not in court, possibly because the woman, the daughter of his teacher, was pregnant.

His closest friend came back from France and argued against Mao. His friend was against capitalism and for communism but not without freedom.

“Without freedom there would be superhuman pressure needed to maintain equilibrium.”

Mao retorted that the leaders need power to carry out plans, to obtain prompt action. “In order to reform a country one must be hard with oneself and it is necessary to victimize a part of the people.” (p. 86)
Mao began organizing unions and strikes. In foreign mines for instance workers were beaten by management while working 12-15 hours a day for low pay and bad living conditions. The workers who gained from these strikes helped him later when he was underground. He rose in the Communist party at this time as they joined the Kuomintang in opposing the Northern warlords who cooperated with the imperialists.

Meanwhile Russian advisors were coming to help the new Party. Mao was more radical than the party and organized the peasants and the workers to a revolt where they were to confiscate land and collectivize even the lands of small landowners and peasant proprietors. He refused to obey the Russian and Indian communist advisors. He started the Red army, but was defeated and fled to reorganize a band of 400 in the mountains. He had grossly exaggerated how many peasants were ready to become revolutionaries.

He took a communist women in the mountains as his new “queen.” The author compares this time to Robin Hood in Sherwood forest. Mao set up his first soviet with a people’s council. He led guerrilla uprising against gentry to get food and weapons. He linked up with another leader Chu and Lin a General from the Kuomintang. In Mao’s Set rule for the army there is a prohibition against any looting or exploitation of the peasants.

Gradually his army fanned out, confiscating land, and distributing it to the peasants who were armed to defend that land.

In a battle in the city his wife was executed for refusing to give names of Communist leaders or renounce the cause.

Chaing Kai-chek put a price of $500,000 on Mao’s head. Yet Mao still joined with Chaing against the Japanese. He enjoyed having his red army paid to fight. The Kuomintang would have finished off the Communists if not for being diverted to fight the Japanese. In spite of his mistress having born him many children, he married an actress. The other leaders thought this very bad. They still retained some of the old morals.

The famous Long March of over 6,000 miles was to escape Chiang. The biographer likens Mao to Churchill for Mao’s courage when defeat seemed assured. On the Long March the Maoists struggled terribly eating bark and drinking their own urine. So amazed was the Community party that they survived that afterwards they saw the future of China and mankind lay with Mao. (p. 181)

My commentary: one cannot say that people will only die for God - Mao and his men risked death all the time - out of hate and love for humanity?

By 1944 the cult of personality had grown and Mao is being described as the savior of the people with his words being considered absolute. He thinks of himself as a kind of emperor (p. 271)
In 1949 Mao took Peking. He had a great desire that the world respect China -that they would see what a great people the Chinese were.

Early on Mao was restive of Russian leadership because he thought only national leaders understood their own country.

Wherever he went he wrote poetry, some quite good. Here is a line you might like: “Mountains! Piercing the blue of heaven your barbs unblunted! The sky would fall/but for your strength supporting.” (p. 169)

Many were executed in the course of land reform, battles with corruption and with counter-revolutionaries. He admitted to 700,000 killed but his enemies say 20 million. Others say even more.

There was an odd discipline in the party, such as no birthday parties, no gifts, no long toasts, no long applause, no naming places after persons.

Mao could not understand how non-communist countries like England, Norway, Sweden could have such a high standard of living for the workers since they had not gotten rid of the middle class.

After Stalin was dethroned as a hero, Mao gets into the idea of “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend” (p. 325), after which 400,000 were purged for giving their opinions. After one month of freedom, many fled he country, and others voiced such bad opinions that they had to be stopped.

Mao started pushing family planning. He also predicted the eventual end of the family when no longer needed as an economic production unit. (p. 359)

Mao began to have more and more opposition because of lack of success of his policies leading to less and less food for the hard working peasants. (p. 381) Income fell by a third. Mao started doubting and saying it would take 60 years to catch up with the U.S.

The Cultural Revolution involved bringing the army and the students in to get rid of his opponents who he saw as new rightist revisionist traitors within the party. On the basis that there was a counter-revolution going on, he purged the party with deification of Mao by the young Red Guards. He went through the streets touching the people’s hands. But he himself started seeing that the violence of the Red Guard was not the right path. He didn’t want to replace the Party with anarchy. He had to suppress them.

Mao’s closest disciple tried to organize a coup to kill him, but failed.

1972 marked the famous Nixon visit. Mao broke with his wife after she did long interviews with an American journalist without his permission.
At the end of his life Mao didn’t rate the success of his revolution over 50%. (p. 484) For this he blamed the because young people as being too soft. He worried about a full scale capitalist restoration after his death. He appointed an official from his home province to follow him. In his last conference he told his followers to be brave and get rid of their scholarly air. (p. 488)

Mao died in 1976.

Conclusion by biographer: Mao was not attracted to Marxism as such but wanted a way to bring dignity and equality to human beings caught in an outmoded social structure. (p. 490) Mao took Marxism out of Europe into the Third World to the peasant class. He was driven by hate of his father and the pain of rejection by the more educated and by the Russians. In this he was like Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin - a man with an inferiority complex. In this he identified himself with the peasants. Even in success, he was remote in personality. Because he trusted no one he became an infallible dictator. He was unable to collaborate with men of real talent. He was not as sadistic as Russian leaders in his purges. He didn’t know enough to implement his own policies successfully.

The author says that 900 million people now enjoy a better life because of the Communist state!

Key ideas of Mao:

The state comes first over the family.

Marxism cannot be abstract but must be related to the actual history and culture of the country. In China first one had to destroy feudalism and imperialism and then usher in socialism. Marxism is not a religion but a tool. (p. 231)

The end justifies the means - “for thousands of years everyone said oppression is justified, exploitation is justified, rebellion is not justified. From the time when Marxism appears on the scene, this old judgment was turned upside down.” (p. 220)

“Communism is not love, it is a hammer to destroy the enemy.” (p. 490)

You can’t be hopeful unless you fight.

Utopian - there can be heaven on earth through political change.

Mao denies human nature - there is only class nature. Genuine love of humanity can only come with an end to classes.

Anti-religious. Mao told the Dalai Lama that religion is poison and retards progress.

Mao projected a time of no wars after capitalism would be defeated.
Free choice in marriage, no family compulsion or sale of girls for wives.

Mao forced the bourgeois to become proletarians. He didn’t understand the lack of incentive that comes with collectivization. Capitalism would have to die out since everything in history is fated to die.

Be strong! One of his mottos: “failure is the mother of success.” (p. 320)

Mao correctly thought that in hard times the heads of factories and schools should live poor with the masses.

From a letter to his daughter Chiang, “Heaven will entrust you with a great duty but first you must steel your own will with pain, work with your own hands, go hungry and be worn out and throw off your undisciplined behavior. Materialists should be afraid of nothing. The road is hard but the future is always radiant. You will suffer many reverses but never turn back” (p. 428)

In evaluation of Mao, of course main protest involves killing millions for the sake of an uncertain ideology. That his philosophy is atheistic is the key to its failure. On another plane we have the problem of incentive: Liu, a leader with Mao said that one had to keep some bourgeois around because these people have lots of energy and resourcefulness. (p. 398) Also Mao started dealing with the sons and daughters of the previous army people and communist heads who had become bourgeois and soft. This led to the forcing students to work on the land. He also recognized that the communist leaders had become new bureaucrats unsympathetic to workers and peasants.

Here are some questions for you that arise out of this brief story of Mao’s career: One cannot say that people will only die for God - Mao and his men risked death all the time - out of hate and love for humanity?

Or, consider, if you were an atheist what would you want to do about suffering and exploitation? How could you overcome resistance to justice without violence?

(Slogan in US during the 1930’s: If you’re not a communist by the age of 20 you have no heart. If you’re still a communist at the age of 30 you have no head.)

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn (1918)

Solzhenitsyn was one of the most famous anti-Communist Russians of the twentieth century. Because he was too poor to study literature as a youth he specialized in mathematics and physics. He was a high school teacher before World War II, and became a driver and then a soldier until his arrest in 1945. Solzhenitsyn was arrested because anti-Stalinist correspondence was found between him and
a friend. Although there was not enough evidence to convict him, he nevertheless had to serve eight years in prison doing extremely hard manual labor until he was transferred to the research institute he later described in his famous novel *The First Circle*.

During his prison years he wrote much in secret. This enabled him to pursue his writing on the side. He tried to publish in the Soviet Union but his books were suppressed. Eventually, he was able to smuggle some of his book out to the West. He won the Nobel Prize in 1970. Exiled to Germany in 1974, he eventually settled in the United States with his family in 1976 where he lived in semi-seclusion in Vermont working on the history of the Gulag, the network of prison camps covering vast territories of the Soviet Union.

There was some shock when, during a commencement address at Harvard in 1978, Solzhenitsyn said that in spite of the horrors of Communist rule he could not wish his people to have lived in the decadent West with its vapid life-style of consumerism. On the other hand, there was great joy among Christians to see that this famous humanistic protestor against atheistic communism was turning toward God. “No one on earth has any other way left but - upward to God,” he said as quoted on an Internet site.

In 1990 he was admitted back to the Soviet Union where he has continued writing and also using television as a medium for his continued critique of the ills of society.

Here are some ideas of Solzhenitsyn:


(The Archipelago is a name Solzhenitsyn uses for the network of isles of hidden prisoners all over the Soviet Union.)

In this enterprise of intricate elaborate historical chronicling, Solzhenitsyn moves us quickly from the blueprint of Communism to its practice as seen by the victims.

Communism was to be the world solution for all injustice. So it had to work. And if it wasn’t working you needed to force people to conform to your plan. (Chervin’s analogy: think, if you will, of any situation of injustice - let us take abortion. In the middle of the night you might want to shoot abortionists, force people to be chaste, marry off all couples who are having sex - i.e. be totalitarian rather than have to keep seeing the injustice that bothers you most.)

Solzhenitsyn has a great interest in how humanity breaks forth in the most unexpected ways. He describes his own arrest when he was in the army and how a stiff, unfriendly commander took his hand and wished him well as he was being taken away.(p. 19-20)
Solzehnitsyn chronicles many, many different purges from 1917 on. One would expect imprisonment of rich landowners and state officials, but there were also peasants and intellectuals and religious people. One woman was given a ten-year sentence for writing about the forbidding of religious education: “You can pray freely, but just so God alone can hear.” Also nationalistic groups within regions, then students, also engineers.

All these arrests in the millions came under one Act, Article 58 under crimes against the state. You could be executed for refusal as a prisoner to work when in a state of starvation - the punishment was to be shot. Or even an intent to betray was enough. (See p. 60) All this was exacerbated by a system of quotas where there had to be “x” number of arrests per district so as to increase the supply of forced labor.

Note that before his death Stalin was preparing a total purge of the Jews. (p. 92)

How surprised would be enlightened people of the beginning of the 20th century to think that all the tortures of the terrible Tsars would be increased in the modern century of progress! (p. 93) Besides physical torture they would play recordings sounding like your wife screaming and tell you she would be tortured more unless you gave your fake confession. All this involved pseudo-trials.

“So what is the answer? How can you stand your ground when you are weak and sensitive to pain, when people you love are still alive, when you are unprepared?

“So what do you need to make you stronger than the interrogator and the whole trap?

“From the moment you go to prison you must put your cozy past firmly behind you. At the very threshold, you must say to yourself: ‘My life is over, a little early to be sure, but there’s nothing to be done about it. I shall never return to freedom. I am condemned to die - now or a little later. But later on, in truth, it will be even harder, and so the sooner the better. I no longer have any property whatsoever. For me those I love have died, and for them I have died. From today on, my body is useless and alien to me. Only my spirit and my conscience remain precious and important to me. Confronted with such a prisoner, the interrogation will tremble. Only the man who has renounced everything can win that victory.” (p. 130)

He referred to the philosopher Berdyaev who was arrested and did not beg or plead but simply set forth his moral and religious principles which had led him to refuse to accept the political authority established in Russia. They liberated him. An old woman who was a Christian told them that they could do nothing to frighten her. (p. 131)

“There is nothing you can do with me even if you cut me into pieces. After all, you are afraid of your bosses, and you are afraid of each other, and you are even afraid of killing me (they wanted her information about an underground Christian group). But I am not afraid of anything. I would be glad to be judged by God right this minute.” (p. 131)
What was going on in the heads of the interrogators? They are not taken from those of broad culture, or logic or empathy. They have to carry out orders and be impervious to suffering. They knew the cases were fabricated. In this they were just like the Nazis. (see p. 145-147) What motivated them was the easy life they could lead in this job, supplementary pay, promotions if they could supply many confessions.

“That is why they felt no mercy, but, instead, an explosion of resentment and rage toward those maliciously stubborn prisoners who opposed being fitted into the totals, who would not capitulate to sleeplessness or the punishment cell or hunger. By refusing to confess they menaced the interrogator’s personal standing. It was as though they wanted to bring him down. In such circumstances all measures were justified! If it’s to be war, then war it will be! We’ll ram the tube down your throat - swallow that salt water!”

The interrogators were motivated by power and greed for money. There was no limit to this because they had no sense of a higher power. (See p. 147)

Even if you are otherwise inferior in age or rank, if you have power as a Communist you can destroy anyone. This is terrific power. Also to get the women you want. You can throw the husband in prison or threaten to kill the girl’s father. Whatever.

They were also interested in looting the possessions of those arrested.

The hard question is whether under temptation one would have become an interrogator oneself? (p. 160) Solzhenitsyn reflects on how when he became an officer in the army he forgot what it was like to be a subordinate and became prideful and cruel just like the others. (p. 163)

But what the Russian communists did was bolstered by ideology. (p. 174) For this ideology justifies the interrogators deeds, so that he is honored vs. villified. “Thanks to ideology, the twentieth century was fated to experience evildoing on a scale calculated in the millions. This cannot be denied, nor passed over, nor suppressed…”

All people waver between good and evil, but when you cross a certain threshold of evil it is much harder to return to the good.

He asks how come West Germany condemned some 86,000 of war crimes but the Soviet Union never does this. How can the Soviet Union be purged of these crimes? (p.176) When Solzhenitsyn was writing this he was told he should not stir up the past.

In the chapter “First Cell, First Love” he talks about the wonderful solidarity among the prisoners after being isolated and interrogated by enemies. He speaks of the joy of saying “we” about

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yourself with others, whereas in freedom you clung to your individuality over against the hypocritical “we” of conformity. (p. 184)

“You are not alone in the world! Wise, spiritual beings - human beings - still exist.”
Theme 10

Despair of Love vs. Christian Love

Sartre vs. John Paul II

Introduction

This section is not done yet

Some Notes:

Sartre: 1905-1980

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Basic Ideas of Sartre:

atheist existentialist - “existence precedes essence”
absolute freedom vs. bad faith vs. authenticity.
in-itself - solid opaque being like the tree
for-itself free from all necessity
God cannot exist because an in-itself, for-itself is a contradiction
love as destructive appropriation
ethics as choice and self-created values.

John Paul II

Sartre thinks that what is called love between man and woman is usually destructive appropriation. John Paul II shows what real love is between man and woman. These are excerpts from *Love and Responsibility*, written when he was a philosophy professor priest.

These excerpts are from Dr. M Healy’s book of excerpts from the philosophy of John Paul II. More is available. Note how the attitudes described as ego-centric by John Paul II play a role in the play *No-Exit* and the good attitudes open a very different vista from that of Sartre’s characters.
CHAPTER I: THE PERSON AND THE SEXUAL URGE

ANALYSIS OF THE VERB ‘TO USE’:

The Person as the Subject and Object of Action—Every subject also exists as an object, an objective ‘something’ or ‘somebody’. As an object, a man is ‘somebody’—and this sets him apart from every other entity in the visible world, which as an object is only “something’. It is not enough to define man as an individual of the species (Homo sapiens). The term ‘person’ has been coined to signify that a man cannot be wholly contained within the concept ‘individual member of the species’, but that there is something more to him. Compared to inanimate objects, plants (with a rich sensual life), and even animals (with their strivings related to cognition and desire at a certain level), man (an individual being of a rational nature) is a personal subject distinguished from even the most advanced animals by a specific inner self, an inner life, characteristic only of persons. Inner life means spiritual life. It revolves around truth and goodness.

A human person, as a distinctly defined subject, establishes contact with all other entities precisely through the inner self, and neither the ‘natural’ contacts which are also its prerogative, since it has a body and in a certain sense ‘is a body’, nor the sensual contacts in which it resembles the animals, constitute its characteristic way of communication with the world. Moreover, man’s nature differs fundamentally from that of the animals in that it includes the power of self-determination, based on reflection, and manifested in the fact that a man acts from choice. This power is called free will. Because a human being—a person—possesses free will, he is his own master (sui juris). This characteristic goes with another distinctive attribute that personality is not capable of transmission, not transferable (alteri incommunicabilis). This means not only that the person is unique and unrepeateable (which is true of every entity), but also that the incommunicable, the inalienable, in a person is intrinsic to that person’s inner self, to the power of self-determination, free will. No one else can want for me. I am, and I must be, independent in my actions. In human relationships, in dealings between persons of different sexes, and especially in the sexual relationship, persons are alike the subjects and objects of action. It is now necessary to consider carefully the principles to which a human being’s actions must conform when the object is another human person.

The First Meaning of the Verb ‘to Use’—To use means to employ some object of action as a means to an end, thus subordinating that object both to the end and to the agent. Man in his various activities makes use of the whole created universe, takes advantage of all its resources for ends which he sets himself (with ethical limits as to squandering or destroying resources or causing suffering in the higher animals), for he alone understands them. But how does this apply to persons (employer-employee, officer-foot soldier, parent-child [even unborn])? Ethically, a person must not be merely the means to an end for another person. This is precluded by the very nature of personhood, by what a person is.
For a person is a thinking subject, and capable of making decisions: these most notably, are the attributes we find in the inner self or a person. This being so, every person is by nature capable of determining his or her aims. Anyone who treats a person as the means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right. Obviously the ends of the person should be genuinely good, since the pursuit of evil ends is contrary to the rational nature of the person, but a person may never be treated as the means to an end. This principle has universal validity. Nobody can use a person as a means toward an end, no human being, nor yet God the Creator. On the part of God, indeed, it is totally out of the question, since, by giving man an intelligent and free nature, he has thereby ordained that each man alone will decide for himself the ends of his activity, and not be a blind tool of someone else’s ends. God allows man to learn His supernatural ends, but the decision to strive towards an end, the choice of course, is left to man’s free will. God does not redeem man against his will...

‘Love’ as the opposite of ‘Using’—If we seek a positive statement of this moral dictum, we begin to discern love as the only clear alternative to using a person as the means to an end, or the instrument of one’s own actions. Man’s capacity for love depends on his willingness consciously to seek a good together with others, and to subordinate himself to that good for the sake of others, or to others for the sake of that good. Compared to any mere need, striving, drive or instinct as we might find in the animal world, love is exclusively the portion of human persons. To love means to free oneself from the mere utilitarian or ‘consumer’ attitude towards other persons (including employees, foot soldiers, etc.): it means to be united in a common good and in love of some form. For example, in a common love of defense of the fatherland even a foot soldier is not merely used by an officer as a blind tool, as a means to an end.

Concerning ‘woman and man’—the background to sexual ethics—here, and even especially here, only love can preclude the use of one person by another. How is it possible to ensure that one person does not become for the other—the man for the woman or the woman for the man—nothing more than the means to an end, i.e., an object used exclusively for the attainment of a selfish end? To exclude this possibility, they must share the same end. Where marriage is concerned, this end is procreation (the future generation, a family) and, at the same time, the continual ripening of the relationship between two people in all the areas of activity which conjugal life includes. But this statement of the objective purpose of marriage does not yet solve the problem, for the sexual relationship presents more opportunities than most for treating a person—sometimes even without realizing it—as an object of use. Indeed, if we take this basic relationship ‘woman-man’ in the broadest sense, and not merely within the limits of marriage, then the love of which we speak is identified with a particular readiness to subordinate oneself to that good which ‘humanity’—or more precisely the value of the person—suggests.
'The Second Meaning of the Verb ‘to Use’—Our thinking and our acts of will—and it is these which determine the objective structure of human activity—are accompanied by various emotional overtones or states, caring a positive (ranging from sensual satisfaction to emotional contentment to a profound, total joy) or negative (sensual disgust, emotional discontent, or a deep sadness) charge. These emotional-affective experiences are especially vivid in relation to a person of the opposite sex and to the sexual relationship proper. This is why the second meaning of the verb ‘to use’ looms particularly large in this area of activity. ‘To use’ (=to enjoy) means to experience pleasure, the pleasure which in slightly different senses is associated both with the activity itself and with the object of the activity. In any association between man and woman, and in the sexual relationship itself, the object of the activity is of course always a person. And it is a person who becomes the proper source of various forms of pleasure, or even of delight. But the sexuality of man is on the personal and moral level, not merely on the natural and instinctive level as in animals. Sexual morality comes into being not only because persons are aware of the purpose o sexual life, but also because they are aware that they are persons. The whole moral problem of ‘using’ as the antithesis of love is connected with this knowledge of theirs. For man, precisely because he has the power to reason, can, in his actions, not only clearly distinguish pleasure from its opposite, but can also isolate it, so to speak, and treat it as a distinct aim of his activity. His actions are then shaped only with a view to the pleasure he wishes to obtain, or the pain he wishes to avoid. If actions involving a person of the opposite sex are shaped exclusively or primarily with this in view, then that person will become only the means to an end—and ‘use’ in its second meaning (=enjoy) represents, as we see, a particular variant of ‘use’ in its first meaning. But a person of the opposite sex cannot be for another person only the means to an end—in this case sexual pleasure or delight. The belief that a human being is a person leads to the acceptance of the postulate that enjoyment must be subordinated to love. ‘Use’, not only in the first, broader and objective meaning, but also in its second, narrower, more subjective meaning can be raised to the level appropriate to an interpersonal relationship only be love. Only ‘caring’ precludes ‘using’ in the second sense as well as in the first. Thus ethics must distinguish very carefully between whatever shows ‘loving kindness’, and whatever shows not that but the intention to ‘use’ a person even when it disguises itself as love and seeks to legitimate itself under that name.

Critique of Utilitarianism—True to its etymology (‘to use’), ‘to take advantage of’), ‘utilitarianism’ puts the emphasis on the usefulness or otherwise of any and every human activity. Utilitarians regard the principle of the maximization of pleasure accompanied by the minimization of pain as the primary rule of human morality, with the rider that it must be observed not only by individuals, egotistically, but also collectively, by society. But pleasure and pain are always connected with concrete action, so that it is not possible to anticipate them precisely, let alone to plan for them or—as the utilitarians would have us do—even compute them in advance. However, the real mistake here is the recognition of pleasure in itself as the sole or at least at any rate the greatest good, to which everything else in the activity of an individual or a society should be subordinated. Whereas pleasure in itself is not the sole good, nor is it the proper aim of man’s activity, as we shall have the opportunity to see later. Pleasure is essentially incidental, contingent, something which may occur in the course of an action. Naturally,
then, to organize your actions with pleasure itself as the exclusive or primary aim is the contradiction with the proper structure of human action. Quite obviously, that which is truly good, that which morality and conscience bid me to do, often involves some measure of pain and requires the renunciation of some pleasure...

This makes for great difficulties in the various areas of human coexistence, but would seem to be a particular threat in the sphere of sexual relations. The great danger lies in the fact that starting from utilitarian premises it is not clear how the cohabitation or association of people of different sex can be put on a plane of real love, and so freed from the dangers of ‘using’ a person...and of treating a person as the means to an end. Utilitarianism seems to be a programme of thoroughgoing egoism quite incapable of evolving into authentic altruism. Pleasure is, of its nature, a good for the moment and only for a particular subject, it is not a super-subjective or trans-subjective good. It is crystal clear that if utilitarian principles are followed, a subjective understanding of the good (equating the good with the pleasurable) leads directly, though there may be no conscious intention of this, to egoism. The only escape from this otherwise inevitable egoism is by recognizing beyond any purely subjective good (i.e., beyond pleasure) an objective good, which can also unite persons—and thereby acquire the characteristics of a common good. Such an objective common good is the foundation of love, and individual persons, who jointly choose a common good, in doing so subject themselves to it. Thanks to it they are united by a true, objective bond of love which enables them to liberate themselves from subjectivism and from egoism which it inevitably conceals. Love is the unification of persons.

Moreover, love cannot be reduced to a mere harmonization of egoisms—which could never deliver one from egoism and which would leave love without objective reality. ‘Love’ in such a utilitarian conception is a union of egoisms, which can hold together only on condition that they confront each other with nothing unpleasant, nothing to conflict with their mutual pleasure. Therefore, love so understood is self-evidently merely a pretense which has to be carefully cultivated to keep the underlying reality hidden: the reality of egoism, and the greediest kind of egoism at that, exploiting another person to obtain for itself its own ‘maximum pleasure’. Each of the persons is mainly concerned with gratifying his or her own egoism, but at the same time consents to serve someone else’s egoism, because this can provide the opportunity for such gratification—and just as long as it does so. There is an ineluctable, an overwhelming necessity in this pattern (the only possible pattern when utilitarian thinking and attitudes are acted upon): if I treat someone else as a means and a tool in relation to myself I cannot help regarding myself in the same light...

The Commandment to Love and the Personalistic Norm—The commandment formulated in the New Testament, demanding love towards persons, is implicitly opposed to the principle of utilitarianism, which as we have seen is unable to guarantee the love of one human being, one person, for another. If the commandment to love, and the love which is the object of the commandment, are to have any meaning, we must find a basis for them other than the utilitarian premise and the utilitarian system of
values. This can only be the personalistic principle and the personalistic norm, i.e., that the person is the kind of good that does not admit of mere use, of being approached as a mere means to an end. In its positive form, the personalistic form confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate response is love. The foundation for the commandment to love must also be found not in a utilitarian system of values but in a personalist axiology, within whose framework the value of the person is always greater than the value of pleasure (which is why a person cannot be subordinated to this lesser end, cannot be the means to an end, in this case pleasure).

This personalistic norm, this commandment, defines a certain way of relating to God and to people. This way of relating, this attitude, is in agreement with what the person is, with the value which the person represents, and therefore it is fair. Fairness takes precedence of mere utility—although it does not cancel it but only subordinates it: in dealings with another person everything that is at once of use to oneself and fair to that person falls within the limits set by the commandment of love. The personalistic norm in the form of the commandment to love also assumes that this relation, this attitude, will not only be fair but just. For to be just always means giving others what is rightly due to them. A person’s rightly due is to be treated as an object of love, not as an object for use. Although we can correctly say that whoever loves a person is for that very reason just to that person, it would be quite untrue to assert that love for a person consists merely in being just. Still, there can be no doubt that the one who loves will, ipso facto, be just towards the other person as a person.

This interpretation of love and justice in the personalistic norm is very important for sexual morality. For in the sexual context what is sometimes characterized as love may very easily be quite unjust to a person. This occurs not because sensuality and sentimentality play a special part in forming this love between persons of different sex, but rather because love in the sexual context lends itself to interpretation (sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious) along utilitarian lines. In a sense this kind of love is wide open to such an interpretation, which turns to account the natural gravitation of its sensual and sentimental ingredients in the direction of pleasure. It is easy to go from the experience of pleasure not merely to the quest for pleasure, but to the quest for pleasure for its own sake, to accepting it as a superlative value and the proper basis for behavior. This is the very essence of the distortions which occur in the love between man and woman. It is also the basis for the distinction which St. Augustine makes between uti (intent upon pleasure for its own sake with no concern for the object of pleasure) and frui (finding joy in a totally committed relationship with the object precisely because this is what the nature of the object demands). The commandment to love shows the way to enjoyment in this sense—frui—in the association of persons of different sex both within and outside marriage.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SEXUAL URGE

Instinct or Urge? - ‘Instinct’ means a certain mode of action which automatically declares its origin. This is the reflex mode of action, which is not dependent on conscious thought. But man is by nature capable of rising above instinct in his actions: there is in man a principle which makes him capable of
considered behavior, of self-determination. Now ‘urge’ suggests the action of urging, or instigation, always felt to be to some extent in conflict with freedom. However, it can be given another meaning more suitable to man’s real nature. When we speak of the sexual urge in man we have in mind not an interior source of specific actions ‘imposed in advance’, but a certain orientation, a certain direction in man’s life implicit in his very nature: a natural drive born in all human beings, a vector of aspiration along which their whole existence develops and perfects itself from within. This is something that ‘happens in man’ (begins to take place without any initiative on his part) and this internal happening creates as it were a base for definite actions, for considered actions, in which man exercises self-determination, decides for himself about his own actions and takes responsibility for them. This is the point at which human freedom and the sex urge meet. Man is not responsible for what happens in him in the sphere of sex since he is obviously not himself the cause of it, but he is entirely responsible for what he does in this sphere.

*The Sexual Urge as an Attribute of the Individual*—every human being is by nature a sexual being and belongs to one of two sexes (hermaphroditism and other sickness or deformity does not militate against the fact that there is a human nature and that it is divided into two sexes). This fact is manifested internally but also turns outward and manifests itself in a certain natural predilection for, a tendency to seek, the other sex. Sexual attraction makes obvious the fact that the attributes of the two sexes are complementary, so that a man and a woman can complete each other. (Ultimately, through the prism of this need, one might be led to a deeper understanding of one’s own limitations and inadequacy, and even, indirectly, of the contingent character of existence.) In any case, each sex possesses some specific value for the other based on the existence of the sexual urge. But the sexual urge is not merely towards attributes of the opposite sex as such. It is always directed towards another human being—this is the normal form which it takes. If it is directed towards the sexual attributes as such this must be recognized as an impoverishment or even a perversion of the urge. The natural direction of the sexual urge is towards a human being of the other sex and not merely towards ‘the other sex’ as such. It is just because of this that the sexual urge can provide a framework within which, and the basis on which, the possibility of love arises—because the objects affected are both people. Nonetheless, love is not merely a biological or psycho-physiological crystallization of the sexual urge, though love may grow out of it and develop on that basis; love is given its definitive shape by *acts of the will at the level of the person*. The sexual urge only furnishes, so to speak, in the form of all that ‘happens’ in man’s inner being under its influence, what might be called the stuff from which action is made. Since there is nothing in all this to deprive man of the power os self-determination, the sexual urge (despite its great force) is by its nature dependent on the person and is in the control of the person; in the person, as opposed to animals, it is naturally subordinate to the will and to the specific dynamics of freedom. Thus the sexual urge can transcend the determinism of the natural order by an act of love and its manifestation must be evaluated on the plane of love: forming a link in the chain of responsibility, responsibility for love. Hence the sexual urge is an attribute and a force common to humanity at large, at work in every human being. Living in society we are continually concerned with the various forms of coexistence of the two sexes and for this
reason ethics must put these relationships on a level consonant both with the dignity of human persons and with the common good of society.

*The Sexual Urge and Existence*—Independent of love and of the personal level and though it furnishes what we may call material for love between persons (man and woman), the sexual urge shows its proper end in existence for the species of *Homo*, the constant prolongation of its existence. Now existence—of the human species and of each individual person within it—is the first and basic good of every creature. Thus we have here a fact which is of existential, and not merely biological character, and therefore is the prerogative of philosophy. This is very important when we are trying to determine the true importance of the sexual urge, which has obvious implications in the realm of sexual morality. If the sexual urge has a merely biological significance it can be regarded as something to be used. We can agree that it is an object for man to enjoy just like any other object of nature, animate or inanimate. But if the sexual urge has an existential character, if it is bound up with the very existence of human person—that first and most basic good—then it must be subject to the principles which are binding in respect of the person. Hence, although the sexual urge is there for man to use, it must never be used in the absence of, or worse still, in a way which contradicts, love for the person. Therefore, the type of love between man and woman which incorporates the sexual urge (with its proper purpose of existence of the species *Homo*, the procreation of new human persons) can take its correct shape only in so far as it develops close harmony with that proper purpose. An outright conflict with that purpose will also undermine love between persons. The importance of the existential significance of the sexual urge only emerges into consciousness when man is moved by love to take on himself the natural purpose of that urge. This is in fact the character of true conjugal love between two persons, a man and a woman, who have consciously taken the decision to participate in the whole natural order of existence, to further the existence of the species *Homo*. Looked at more closely and concretely, these two persons, the man and the woman, facilitate the existence of another concrete person, their own child, blood of their blood, and flesh of their flesh. This person is at once an affirmation and a continuation of their own love. The natural order of human existence is not in conflict with love between persons but in strict harmony with it.

*The Religious Interpretation*—A man and a woman by means of procreation (bringing a new human being into the world), participate in their own fashion in the work of creation. They are the rational co-creators of a new human being, a person. The parents take part in the genesis of a person, not merely an organism. The human body is the body of a person because it forms a unity of substance with the human spirit. The human spirit is not born merely in consequence of the physical union of man and woman in itself. The spirit can never originate from the body, nor be born and come into being in the same way as the body. The sexual relationship between man and woman is fundamentally a physical relationship, though it also should be the result of spiritual love. A relationship between spirits which beget a new embodied spirit is something unknown to the natural order. Therefore, the essence of the human person is the work of God himself. It is He who creates the spiritual and immortal soul of that being, the organism of which begins to exist as a consequence of physical relations between man and woman. Furthermore, while love owes its fertility in the
biological sense to the sexual urge, it must also possess a fertility of its own in the spiritual, moral and personal sphere. It is here that the full productive power of love between two persons, man and woman, is concentrated, in the work of rearing new persons. This is its proper end, its natural orientation. Education is a creative activity with persons as its only possible object—only a person can be educated, an animal can only be trained. This work of education may in a certain sense be called the continuous creation of a personality and is not left wholly and entirely to the parents. Rather, God himself takes part in it, in His own person, by his grace. The parents, though, if they are not to fail in their proper role, that of co-creators, must make their contribution here too. Note that when it comes to the sexual urge and all that it implies, the expressions ‘the order of nature’ and ‘biological order’ must not be confused or regarded as identical. The ‘biological order’ does indeed mean the same as the order of nature but only insofar as this is accessible to the methods of empirical and descriptive natural science, and not as a specific order of existence with an obvious relationship to the First Cause, to God the Creator.

*The Rigorist Interpretation*—This is a puritanical view (with paradoxical links to sensualist empiricism) which can easily lapse into a utilitarianism as well. It holds that, in using man and woman and their sexual intercourse to assure the existence of the species *Homo*, the Creator Himself uses persons as the means to his end. It follows that conjugal life and sexual intercourse are good only because they serve the purpose of procreation. Man and woman use—and do well to use—one another and marriage as mere means for procreation (first sense of ‘use’) while desiring the seeking of pleasure and enjoyment in intercourse (second sense of ‘use’) as wrong and impure, but a necessary evil that must be tolerated.

But the Creator, in giving men and women a rational nature and the capacity consciously to decide upon their own actions, thereby made it possible for them to choose freely the end to which sexual intercourse naturally leads. And where two persons can join in choosing a certain good as their end there also exists the possibility of love. The Creator, then, does not utilize persons merely as the means or instruments of his creative power but offers them the possibility of a special realization of love. It is for them to put their sexual relations on the plane of love, the appropriate plane for human persons, or on a lower plane. The Creator’s will is not only preservation of the species by way of sexual intercourse but also its preservation on the basis of a love worthy of human persons, according to the commandment of love. The problem for ethics is how to use sex without treating the person as an object for use. Puritanical rigorists with their one-sided spiritualism so intent on overcoming the *utii* in sex, unavoidably leave sexual enjoyment s merely an evil, but necessary, by-product of the sexual act. The only way to overcome this is through St. Augustine’s fundamentally different attitude of *frui*. There exists a joy which is consonant both with the nature of the sexual urge and with the dignity of the human persons. This joy, this *frui* may be bestowed either by the great variety of pleasures connected with differences of sex, or by the sexual enjoyment which conjugal relations can bring. The Creator designed this joy, and linked it with love between man and woman insofar as that
love develops on the basis of the sexual urge in a normal manner, in other words in a manner worthy of human persons.

The ‘Libidinistic’ Interpretation—Linked with Freud, this approach sees the pursuit of pleasure, in a narrow and subjective sense, as the primary aim or drive in human life and the sexual urge as the most intense and strongly felt experience of it. The transmission of life, procreation, is in this conception only a secondary end, an end per accidens. This almost totally negates the inner life of the person (capable of knowing the truth, comprehending the true ends, and participating in the common good of the work of creation) and reduces the person to a subject ‘externally’ sensitized to enjoyable sensory stimuli of a sexual nature. This puts human psychology on the same level as animal psychology. But a subject endowed with an ‘inner self’ as man is, a subject who is a person, cannot abandon to instinct the whole responsibility for the use of the sexual urge and make enjoyment his sole aim - but must assume full responsibility for the way in which the sexual urge is used. The libidinistic distortion is a frank form of utilitarianism. Those like Freud who have eyes merely for the subjective purpose of the urge will also logically aim at preserving in full the subjective purpose (sexual pleasure) while at the same time curbing or even suppressing the objective purpose (procreation). Utilitarians think of this as a purely technical problem, but Catholic moral teaching regards it from first to last as an ethical problem on personalist grounds: no one must take the ‘calculus of pleasure’ as his sole guide where a relationship with another person is concerned—a person can never be an object of use. That is the nub of the conflict.

Furthermore, however correct or incorrect the demographic difficulties raised by economists may be, the general problem of sexual relationships between man and woman cannot be solved in such a way as to contradict the personalist norm. We have to do here with the value of the person, which is for all humanity the most precious of goods—more immediate and greater than any economic good...

Final Observations—The Church has always taught that the primary end of marriage is procreation (providing the means of continuing existence), but that it has a secondary end of mutual help (a conjugal life for man and woman), and a tertiary aim of being a remedy for concupiscence (giving a legitimate orientation for desire). It must be stated, however, that in marriage the ends mentioned above are to be realized on the basis of the personalistic norm. Sexual morality and therefore conjugal morality consists of a stable and mature synthesis of nature’s purpose with the personalistic norm. The latter is a principle on which the proper realization of each of the aims mentioned, and of all of them together, depends—and by proper I mean a manner befitting man as a person. The same principle also guarantees that the ends will be achieved in the order of importance accorded them here, from any deviation from this is incompatible with the objective dignity of the human person. The practical realization of all the purposes of marriage must then also mean the successful practice of love as a virtue—for only as a virtue does love satisfy the commandment of the Gospel and the demands of the personalistic norm embodied in that commandment. The idea that the purpose of marriage could be realized on some basis other than the personalistic norm would be utterly un-
Christian, because it would not conform to the fundamental ethical postulate of the Gospels. For this reason we too must be very much on guard against trivialization of the teachings of the purposes of marriage.

With this in mind, it seems equally clear that the term ‘mutual help’ cannot be interpreted simply as ‘mutual love’ as if the other ends (procreation and giving a legitimate orientation to desire) were somehow distinct from ‘love’ and only ‘mutual help’ were grounded in love. Rather, all three ends in their proper order (procreation/continuing existence, mutual help/conjugal life, and remedy for concupiscence/legitimate orientation for desire) are grounded in the virtue of love and so must fit with the personalistic norm. But there is no question of opposing love to procreation nor yet suggesting that procreation take precedence over love.

These aims can, moreover, only be realized in practice as a single complex aim. To rule out, totally and positively, the possibility of procreation undoubtedly reduces or even destroys the possibility of an enduring marital relationship of mutual education. If there is an intimate cooperation between man and woman in a marriage, and if they are able to educate and complement each other, their love matures to the point at which it is the proper basis for a family. However, marriage is not identical with the family, and always remains above all an intimate bond between two people. The third purpose, a remedy for concupiscence, in its turn depends upon the other two factors for its practical realization by human beings. We must recognize once again that those who cut themselves off absolutely from the natural results of conjugal intercourse ruin the spontaneity and depth of their experiences, especially if artificial means are used to this end. Lack of mutual understanding, and of rational concern for the full wellbeing of a partner, leads if anything still more certainly to the same result.

CHAPTER II: THE PERSON AND LOVE

METAPHYSICAL ANALYSIS OF LOVE

*The Word ‘Love’*—The word ‘love’ has more than one meaning. In this book we narrow down the range of its meaning to love between two persons who differ with respect to sex. Even here it has various meanings. But love is always a mutual relationship between persons, based on particular attitudes toward the good, individually and jointly. We will do a general metaphysical analysis (love as attraction, as a desire, as goodwill). Then we will do a psychological analysis (love of man and woman takes shape deep down in the psyche of two persons, and is bound up with the high sexual vitality of human beings, requiring psycho-physiological analysis). Finally, these will culminate in an ethical analysis (love between man and woman possesses a personal character with profound ethical significance: love as virtue).

*Love as Attraction*—Love as attraction is a basic component of the love between man and woman. This is based in a concrete sense impression of the other as well as an intellectual knowledge of the other, but these are also influenced by the emotions and the will. To be attracted does not mean just
thinking about some person as a good, but involves a commitment in the will to think of that person as a good. This is based in one’s knowledge of the other but with an interpenetration of reason and will. The emotions too are present at the birth of love favoring the development of the attraction between a man and a woman with a positive emotional-affective reaction.

The kind of good or person which an individual finds attractive will depend on many factors: heredity, environment, and one’s own free choices in developing the self. But love will always go beyond just attractive qualities to the person. Nonetheless the depth and quality of the love will be affected by the kinds of qualities through which the attraction comes. Attraction is of the essence of love and is indeed love, although love is not merely attraction. Emotional-affective reactions have the power to guide and orient cognitive acts, but must not overwhelm or eliminate the role of knowledge in love. Love must be anchored in the truth of the human person in general and about the truth about this particular person. Our emotional life can color things either positively or negatively but this must be balanced by a knowledge of the truth. Our response to the other cannot be based only on partial truths about the other, such as just his/her sexual attractiveness, charm, or emotional “fit” with our needs at the moment. In responding to others as persons, we must see their inner as well as outer beauty and be attracted to and respectful of their full beauty and dignity as persons and not just as pleasing in various respects.

Love as Desire—Love as desire of also of the very essence of the love between man and woman, though love is not only desire. Desire is rooted in the fact that the human person is limited, is not self-sufficient, and therefore needs other beings (persons—ultimately God) to complete his own being. Particularly, on the natural level, man and woman need one another to complete their own being. The sexual urge or sexual desire is an indication of this objective need. But love as desire is altogether different from just desire by itself in which the other is just used as a means of satisfaction. A man may, for instance, desire a woman in this way: a human person then becomes a means for the satisfaction of desire, just as a nutriment serves to satisfy hunger. But this utilitarian attitude does violence to the dignity of the human person and to the whole truth about the human person. Love-as-desire then is not merely desire. Love is apprehended as a longing for the person, and not as mere sensual desire. It is felt as a longing for some good for its own sake: ‘I want you because you are a good for me’. If desire alone is predominant it can deform love between man and woman and rob them both of it. Therefore the true lover will strive to see that desire alone does not dominate and overwhelm all else that love comprises.

Love as Goodwill—Genuine love brings with it the fullest realization of man’s possibilities and of his existence, but of course only if it is directed toward a genuine good in a true way. A “false” love will have opposite consequences of destruction, construction and evil. Love between man and woman would be evil in this way if it went no further than love-as-desire, for love as desire is not the whole essence of love between persons. It is not enough to long for a person as a good for one self, one must also, and above all, long for that person’s good. This is love as goodwill or as benevolence and it must be at the heart of one’s response to the other person or the love will not be genuine but will
devolve back into an egoism. Thus what is primary is not ‘I long for you as a good’ but ‘I long for your good, I long for that which is good for you’. This is the deepest point of love and must finally inform love-as-desire and love-as-attraction, though the latter two are also essential to love between man and woman. Genuine love as goodwill can keep company with love as desire, and even with desire itself, provided that desire does not overwhelm all else in the love of man and woman, does not become its entire content and meaning.

The Problem of Reciprocity—Love also exists between two individuals as a single entity in which they are joined. The route from one ‘I’ (possessing its own inner self—‘a little world’ created by God) to another leads through the free will. If this love is a one-way street (unrequited love) it will be fraught with pain and suffering. But love by its very nature is not unilateral but bilateral, something shared: it involves not just two ‘I’s but a single ‘we’. This is reciprocity. This illuminates the previous discussion. The fact is that a person who desires another as a good desires above all that person’s love in return for his or her own love, desires that is to say another person above all as co-creator of love and not merely as object of appetite. The desire for reciprocity does not cancel out the disinterested character of love. Reciprocity brings with it a synthesis, as it were, of love as desire and love as goodwill.

Of course the quality and the permanence of the love depend upon the character of the good on which reciprocity or friendship is based, as Aristotle says. If it is a genuine good (an honest good) reciprocity is something deep, mature and virtually indestructible. On the other hand if reciprocity is created only by self-interest, utility (a utilitarian good) or pleasure then it is superficial and impermanent. It depends on what both persons contribute to it. If each person contributes genuine personal love—a love of the highest ethical value, virtuous love - then reciprocity assumes the characteristics of durability and reliability (a friend who will never prove false) and becomes a source of peace and joy. But if utility or pleasure is the main reason for a relationship on the part of one or both partners, then trust, peace and joy will not be the result, but suspicions and jealousies. Their ‘mutual love’ will only last as long as they are a source of pleasure or profit to one another; once this is gone, the illusion of ‘reciprocity’ will burst like a bubble. Genuine reciprocity inevitably presupposes altruism in both persons; it cannot arise from two egoisms. Two conclusions follow: 1) love must always be analyzed from an ethical point of view and 2) people should always carefully ‘verify’ their love before exchanging declarations and trying to build their lives on it.

From Sympathy to Friendship—Sympathy means above all that which ‘happens’ between people in the realm of their emotions—that by means of which emotional and affective experiences unite people. This is love at a purely emotional stage, at which no decision of the will, no act of choice, as yet plays its proper role. Only sympathy has the power to make people feel very close to one another, but there is a hint here of subjectivism and passivity.

Friendship, as has been said, consists in a full commitment of the will to another person with a view to that person’s good. There is, therefore, a need for sympathy to ripen into friendship and this process normally demands time and reflection. What is necessary is to supplement the sympathetic
emotion toward another person with an objective knowledge of and belief in the value of that person. Only on this basis can the will actively commit itself. Friendship demands a sincere commitment of the will with the fullest possible justification. However, it is also necessary to supplement friendship with sympathy, without which it will remain cold and incomunicable.

It is a mistake to leave love at the level of sympathy and to think that when sympathy breaks down love is also at an end. What lies behind this mistake is an incongruity between the feelings of the subject and objective reality: the subjective and objective shapes of love do not exactly fit. It is part of the ‘education of love’ to overcome such gaps. Love cannot be merely a matter of ‘consuming’ sympathy, or of finding an outlet for one’s feelings in it (frequently accompanied by sexual relief). No, love consists in the thoroughgoing transformation of sympathy into friendship. It is of its very nature creative and constructive, and not merely bent on enjoyment. Sympathy is always only a signal, and decidedly not a fully formed personal relationship. It must first establish itself on a firm foundation of friendship, just as friendship must be reinforced by the climate and temperature of sympathy. Sympathy and friendship are two processes which must interpenetrate without hindering each other. This is where the ‘art’ of education in love comes into its own.

Comradeship is distinct from both sympathy and friendship. It differs from sympathy in that it is not confined mainly to the emotional-affective sphere of life, but rests on objective foundations as joint work, common goals, shared concerns, etc. It differs from friendship in that it is not an expression of the principle ‘I want your good as much as I want my own’. Sharing brought about by particular objective factors is, then, the distinctive feature of comradeship. It favors the development of love’s objective side, without which it is always incomplete. The ‘we’ of comradeship lacks the cohesion and depth of friendship, but being able to live as comrades in a distinct circle develops characteristics and abilities helpful in founding and maintaining a family community and in creating of a good atmosphere for family life.

_Betrothed Love_—Betrothed love is something different from and more than all the forms of love so far analyzed, though they are also a dimension of it. When betrothed love enters into an interpersonal relationship something more than friendship results: two people give themselves to each other. The essence of this love, its decisive character, is this self-giving, the giving of one’s own person to another, the surrender of one’s ‘I’. But how is this possible if the person is untransferable, incomunicable, his own master, etc. Of its very nature, no person can be transferred or ceded to another. Yet what is impossible and illegitimate in the natural order and in a physical sense, can come about in the order of love and in a moral sense. In this sense, one person can give himself or herself, can surrender entirely to another (whether to a human person or to God), and such a giving of the self creates a special form of love which we define as betrothed love this fact goes to prove that the person has a dynamism of its own and that specific laws govern its existence and evolution. The fullest and most uncompromising form of love consists precisely in self-giving, in making one’s in alienable and nontransferable ‘I’ to someone else’s property. This is doubly paradoxical: firstly in that it is possible to step outside to step outside one’s own “I” in this way, and secondly in that the “I” far
from being destroyed or impaired as a result is enlarged and enriched—of course in a super-physical, a moral sense. Such self-surrender presupposes a mature vision of values and a will ready and able to commit itself in this particular way. Betrothed love can never be a fortuitous or imperfect event in the life of the person. It always constitutes a special crystallization of the whole human ‘I’, determined because of its love to dispose of itself in this particular way. In giving ourselves we find clear proof that we possess ourselves.

‘Self-giving’, in the sense in which we are discussing it, should not be identified (confused) with ‘giving oneself’ in a merely psychological sense, still less with surrender in a merely physical sense. Further, on the psychological level, it must not only be the woman who experiences ‘giving herself’ while the man experiences only the correlative of ‘conquest’ or ‘possession’. The acts of reciprocal self-giving, of mutual self-surrender, of mutual betrothed love must reciprocate each other in order to live up to the personalistic norm. Hence a special duty devolves upon the man: he must give to ‘conquest’ or ‘possession’ its appropriate form and content—which means that he too must give himself, no less than she does. Giving oneself only sexually, without the full gift of the person to validate it, must lead to those forms of utilitarianism which we have previously analyzed. A personalistic interpretation is absolutely necessary in this context. Thus, the moral code which has the commandment to love as its center finds itself in perfect agreement with the identification of marriage with betrothed love, or rather—looking at it from and educational point of view—with the treatment of marriage as the result of this form of love.

When a woman gives herself to a man as she does in matrimony this—morally speaking—precludes a simultaneous gift of herself to other persons in the same way. Sexual intercourse has the effect of limiting betrothed love to a single pair of persons, though at the same time it gains in intensity. Moreover, only when it is so limited can that love open itself fully to the new persons who are the natural result of marital love between man and woman. There can be no question of a sexual giving of oneself which does not mean a giving of the person—and does not come in one way or another within the orbit of those demands which we have a right to make of betrothed love. These demands are derived from the personalistic norm. Betrothed love, though of its nature it differs from all the forms of love previously analyzed, can nevertheless not develop in isolation from them, in particular goodwill and friendship. Without these allies it may find itself in a very dangerous void, and the persons involved in it may feel helpless in face of conditions, internal and external, which they have inadvertently permitted to arise within themselves or between themselves.
Theme 11

Suffering as Proof of Atheism vs. God as the Answer to Suffering

Albert Camus vs. C.S. Lewis

Incomplete – Notes:

Reading

From Camus - *The Plague*

C.S. Lewis - *The Problem of Pain*
Albert Camus (1913-1956)

Notes from Biography Portrait of Camus by Morvan Lebesque (N.Y.: Herder and Herder, 1971)

Camus was born in Algeria in 1913. He moved to France and became a journalist. During World War II he was active in the French Resistance. Dates of his most famous writings include: The Stranger, 1941; The Myth of Sisyphus, 1942; The Plague, 1947; The Rebel, 1951 and The Fall, 1956. Camus died in car accident 1960 after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. His work was described at that award ceremony as illuminating the problems of human conscience of our times."

Camus’ basic issue was how we can have ethical commitment and personal goodness without God. In The Stranger Camus shows how indifferent and self-centered someone can be without God. In The Plague he draws us a picture of the goodness a man could have without a religious basis. He was trying to get across, perhaps, how kindness is a self-evident virtue in a world of suffering.

Here are some notes by me concerning the problem of suffering from an agnostic standpoint, and some related quotations from The Plague, translated by Stuart Gilbert (N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1945).

The Plague is an existentialist novel. The plot deals with a devastating modern plague in the 1940’s taking place in the Algerian town of Oran. The plague causes terribly painful deaths in epidemic proportions. The plague is symbolic of the evils both in human nature and those of World War II. The contrast is between a Christian philosophy of life and that of agnostic/atheistic humanism. The Christian philosophy of life is expressed primarily by the ideas of a Catholic priest, Fr. Paneloux, a Jesuit. The “new” humanism Camus lauds is represented by Dr. Bernard Rieux who expends heroic energies in trying to help the victims of the plague as the main medical officer of the town and also in his personal treatment of hundreds of patients.

Here is a description of the practical hedonistic atheism of most of the townspeople:
“Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world; yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise....”

“When a war breaks out, people say: ‘It’s too stupid; it can’t last long.’ But though a war may well be ‘too stupid,’ that doesn’t prevent its lasting. Stupidity has a knack of getting its way; as we should see if we were not always so much wrapped up in ourselves....”

“A pestilence isn’t a thing made to man’s measure; therefore we tell ourselves that pestilence is a mere bogey of the mind, a bad dream that will pass away. But it doesn’t always pass away and, from one bad dream to another, it is men who pass away, and the humanists first of all, because they haven’t taken their precautions.” (pp. 34-35)

Here is a description of the numb Stoicism of Dr. Rieux as he continues to give his all to the unbearably sick people of the town:

“Lifting the coverlet and chemise, he gazed in silence at the red blotches on the girl’s thighs and stomach, the swollen ganglia. After one glance the mother broke into shrill, uncontrollable cries of grief. And every evening mothers wiled thus, with a distraught abstraction, as their eyes fell on those fatal stigmata on limbs and bellies; every evening hands gripped Rieux’s arms, there was a rush of useless words, promises, and tears; every evening the nearing tocsin of the ambulance provoked scenes as vain as every form of grief. Rieux had nothing to look forward to but a long sequence of such scenes, renewed again and again. Yes, plague, like abstraction, was monotonous; perhaps only one factor changed, and that was Rieux himself. Standing at the foot of the statue of the Republic that evening, he felt it; all he was conscious of was a bleak indifference steadily gaining on him...” (p. 83)

Here is an excerpt from the first sermon Fr. Paneloux gave to try to explain to the full congregations of parishioners why God would allow such a terrible suffering to come upon them:

“Calamity has come on you, my brethren, and my brethren, you deserved it...The first time this scourge appears in history, it was wielded to strike down the enemies of God. Pharaoh set himself up against the divine will, and the plague beat him to his knees. Thus from the dawn of recorded history the scourge of God has humbled the proud of heart and laid low those who hardened themselves against Him. Ponder hthis well, my friends, and fall on your knees.” (pp. 87-88) He adds that the
people had come to rely on mercy for their sins instead of repenting. God got sick of waiting for the town to change. “God is not mocked. You believed some brief formalities, some bending of the knee, would recompense Him well enough for your criminal indifference. These brief encounters could not sate the fierce hunger of His love….And this is why, wearied of waiting for you to come to Him, He loosed on your this visitation…Now, at last, you know the hour has come to bend your thoughts to first and last things.” (p. 89)

Months later at the slow agonizing death of a child, the same priest admits that faith is not simply the just response to God Almighty, but something won over severe struggle with the mystery of suffering. Till the end, Dr. Rieux serves at great risk out of a human care for those in pain without hope in immortality for them or reward for himself.

On the Problem of Suffering:

John Paul II from Easter Vigil and Other Poems (p. 72)

“When I contain the dual weight of terror and hope and reach depths transculent as sky, then no one will say that I simplify.”

NEXT READ C. S. LEWIS’ THE PROBLEM OF PAIN TO SEE HOW HE ANSWERS CAMUS AND OTHER DOUBTERS AS TO WHETHER A GOD OF LOVE IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE PAIN IN THIS WORLD.
SUGGESTED INCOMPLETE READING LIST

FOR THE THEMES OF THE BATTLE FOR THE 20TH CENTURY MIND

Theme 1: On Subjectivity vs. Objectivity in Philosophy of Religion:
Main Readings:
  William James - Varieties of Religious Experience
  G.K. Chesterton - Orthodoxy
Supplementary:
  William James: The Will to Believe
  William James: A Pluralistic Universe
  William James: Pragmatism

Theme 2: On Atheism vs. Theism:
Main Readings:
  Bertrand Russell: Autobiography
  Bertrand Russell: Analytic Philosophy from his own History of Western Philosophy, An Outline of Philosophy
  Bertrand Russell: Why I am not a Christian.
  Etienne Gilson: God and Contemporary Thought
    The Unity of Philosophical Experience
    Being and Some Philosophers
God and Philosophy

Elements of Christian Philosophy

Theme 5: Woman

Main Readings:

Chervin, Ronda: “Philosophical Reflections on the Feminine and Masculine Human Nature.”

De Beauvoir, Simone: The Second Sex, Translated and Edited by H. M. Parshley (N.Y.: Random House, 1989 - originally published in English in 1952)


Supplementary Readings:


Friedan, Betty: The Feminine Mystique

John Paul II: Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women


Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: Man and Woman

Little, Joyce: Church and Chaos (?)

Theme 6 : Psychoanalysis.....

Main Readings:

Freud, Sigmund: A General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis (Great Books OLCC library)

Jung, Carl: Modern Man in Search of a Soul


Supplementary Readings:

Freud, Sigmund: *Outline of Psychoanalysis*

Freud, Sigmund: *The Interpretation of Dreams*

Freud, Sigmund: *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Freud, Sigmund: *Moses and Monotheism*

Freud, Sigmund: *Totem and Taboo*

Dempsey, Peter J.R.: *Freud, Psychoanalysis, Catholicism*

Eysenck, H.J., *Sense and Nonsense in Psychology* (in our OLCC library)

Jung, Carl: *Psychological Types*, 1921

Jung, Carl: *Psychology and Religion*, 1940

Jung, Carl: *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, 1957


Stern, Karl: *The Flight from Woman* (call Amazon.com)

Baars, Conrad


Theme 7: Social Engineering, Free Will...
Main Readings:


Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: *Ethics.*

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: *Morality and Situations Ethics.*

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: *Transformation in Christ.*

Supplementary Readings:

Skinner, B.F.: 

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: *Chastity and Married Love?.


Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: *The Art of Living.*

Bergson, Henri: *Time and Free Will.*

Low, Abraham: *Self-Help through Will Training.*

Rand, Ayn: *The Fountainhead.*

Theme 8: New Age...

Main Readings:


Merton, Thomas: *The Seven Story Mountain.*

Merton, Thomas: *No Man is an Island.* (N.Y.: Doubleday Image, 1955)
Supplementary Readings:

Hesse, Herman: *Siddhartha*.

Percy, Walker: *Love in the Ruins*.

Von Speyr, Adrienne: *The Handmaid of the Lord*.

John Paul II: *Threshold of Hope*.

John Paul II: The Way of the Pilgrim - edited by French

Theme 9 Violence...

Main Readings:

Hitler, Adolf: *Mein Kampf*.


Supplementary Readings:

Mao:

Solzehnitsyn, Alexander: *The Cancer Ward*.

Solzehnitsyn, Alexander: *The Gulag Archipelago*.

Solzehnitsyn, Alexander: *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. 
Maritain, Jacques: The Person and the Common Good.

Cleaver, Eldridge: Soul on Ice.


King, Martin Luther, Jr.: Stride Toward Freedom.

King, Martin Luther, Jr.: The Strength to Love.

King, Martin Luther, Jr.: Why We Can't.

King, Martin Luther, Jr.: Where Do We Go from here: Chaos or Community.

King, Martin Luther, Jr.: The Trumpet of Conscience.

King, Martin Luther, Jr.: A Testament of Hope - the Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr. edited by James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: Harper, 1986)

Halecki, Oscar, Eugenio Pacelli: Pope of Peace (on reserve OLCC library)

Peace in Our Day - U.S. Bishops

La Carré, John: The Little Drummer Girl.

Theme 10: Love...

Main Reading:

Sartre, Jean-Paul: No-Exit.

John Paul II: Excerpts from Love and Responsibility.

Recommended Reading:

Sartre, Jean-Paul: Nausea.

Sartre, Jean-Paul: Being and Nothingness.

Sartre, Jean-Paul: The Wall.
Sartre, Jean-Paul: *Portrait of an Anti-Semite*.
Sartre, Jean-Paul: *The Words*.
Sartre, Jean-Paul: *Existentialism is a Humanism*.
Camus, Albert: *The Stranger*.
Gironella, Jose Maria: *The Cypresses Believe in God*.
O’Brien, Michael: *Sojourners*.

Theme 11: Suffering...

Required Reading:
Camus, Albert: *The Plague*.

Recommended Reading:
Camus, Albert: *The Stranger*
Camus, Albert: *The Fall*
Camus, Albert: *The Myth of Sisyphus*
Camus, Albert: *The Rebel*
Lewis, C.S.: *Till We Have Faces*.
Lewis, C.S.: *A Grief Observed*
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Main 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Philosophical Schools

Pragmatism: James, Dewey

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Phenomenology: Husserl, Scheler, Von Hildebrand, Stein, Wojtyla

Logical Positivism and Linguistic Analysis: Wittgenstein, Ayer, Russell

Marxism: Marx, Engels

Existentialism: Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Marcel, Buber, Camus, Sartre

Neo-Thomism: Maritain, Gilson, Lonergan, Wojtyla, Philippe
THE BATTLE FOR THE TWENTIETH CENTURY MIND

by Ronda Chervin, Ph.D.

Introduction

2002. What a time to chronicle the philosophical struggles of the twentieth century! What tragic heroes our popes and saints have been, valiantly striving to hold the walls of a fortress of faith amidst a sea of blood from wars, revolutions, and abortions. And so they strove that even a remnant of the faithful might survive to lead the renewal of the faith! So dramatic was the battle for the mind of mankind between the dates of 1900-1999 that one might label those years “the age of ideologies.”

It seems to me, one whose life has so far spanned 1937-2002, that there were eleven major themes of philosophical battle characteristic of 20th century thought. The issues are outlined on the contents’ page that follows. As you scan the list of themes and thinkers, you might come up with this question: “Why should a Christian read the erroneous and often evil ideas of some of the leaders represented in The Battle for the 20th Century Mind?” Why steep oneself in the reflections of people like Hitler or Mao?”

In reply, let me share an insight that sustained my courage while wading through such writings. For each proponent of a false ideology, it appears that the Holy Spirit raised up one or more champions of true philosophy. And these truths in are powerful enough to provide a permanent antidote to false thinking. Read on and see for yourself!
Theme 1

Religion of Experience vs. Religion of Doctrine

James vs. Chesterton

Introduction

Our first theme concerns a change of emphasis at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in the West. Previously most believers thought of the doctrine of their faith as primary in religion. Due to the currents we will be examining in this chapter, there was a shift in the twentieth century to thinking of religion more in terms of individual experience.

Before going into concepts on either side of this controversy, it will be well to remind ourselves of the mood of flamboyant optimism that characterized the turn of the century. People were amazed at advances in medicine, helpful inventions such as railroads, automobiles, gramophones, telegraph, and telephones. Against the backdrop of evolutionary theories about biological process, such inventions led to a belief in almost inevitable progress for mankind. It was not until the horrors of the first World War hit Europe that this mood of hope would begin to give way to fear and horror.

For some the sense of progress was linked to abandonment of seemingly gloomy religious dogmas of traditional Christian churches such as original sin, predestination, the desperate need for salvation and, especially, the doctrine of hell. Many American thinkers of the nineteenth century, especially the Transcendentalists were keen on inviting their followers to a more joyful spirituality based on feeling the presence of God in the beauty of nature. Delight in God was to supplant fear of him. William James, one of our key thinkers about the theme of experience vs. doctrine in religion, inherited some of his presuppositions from the Transcendentalists.

By contrast, other thinkers of the nineteenth century were recapturing the emphasis on doctrine of the past, precisely past as an antidote to religious liberalism. In the view of leaders such as John Henry Cardinal Newman, true joy and hope in God could only come from a response to the God whose revelations were enshrined in dogma. Reliance on subjective feelings about God detached from objective truth could only destroy the grounds for faith. G.K. Chesterton, one of the key thinkers whose ideas we will be exploring in this chapter, was keen on reliance on experience with an objective doctrinal analysis of religion. A clear definition of what subjectivity and objectivity means in
general, may help you to begin your evaluation of the ideas of those fighting in this arena of the battlefield during the twentieth century. The word “subjectivity” is sometimes used in a good way to contrast an individual with a general perspective. For example, a general statement would be that: “Most people in the United States favor freedom over coercion.” A more subjective matter would be the reasons why you, as an individual, happen to have a special love of freedom such that dying for it would seem axiomatic to you.

The word “subjectivism,” in its philosophical meaning is more pointed. Subjectivism is the theory that all we can know about reality is our subjective experience of it. According to subjectivism there is no way we can make valid statements about reality in general. No one could make the claim, for example, that freedom is always to be chosen above obedience to authority. The only statement that could be advanced in favor of freedom would be a subjective one such as: “When someone has his foot on my neck, I know I’d rather be free!”

What does the word “objectivity” mean? In a general way it refers to a correct assessment of the nature of the real world “out there” vs. the subjective erroneous views of an individual about that same reality. The claim that: “You view the world with rose colored glasses because you are afraid to look at how it really is objectively,” is an example of a contrast an objectivist would make. Objectivism would be the theory that what can be shown to be real in the external world around us is more valid than any subjective impressions of an individual.

What do subjectivity and objectivity mean in the context of experience and doctrine in religion? Subjectivity refers to the interior experience of the divine within the individual person; objectivity refers to what comes to us from the “other side,” thoughts, or acts of divine beings believed to have impact upon us as subjects. Before dealing with the thought of opposing thinkers on this matter, I want to make this battle more vivid to you by the consideration of some common experiences.

You are spending some time alone at the beach when suddenly the ocean impresses you as so beautiful that you shout out praise of the God who created the sea. You are so glad to be alive to enjoy the sublime sight of the ocean that your doubts about God disappear.

Compare such an experience with the usual manner in which some Catholics might recite the Creed at the appointed time between the homily and the offertory! Even if you don’t agree with them, Can you understand why some philosophers might think that doctrinal statements, such as those in the Creed, are not as important as the personal experience of individuals?

On the other hand, consider the conversion of a materialistic atheist. After reading the New Testament for the first time, he or she becomes convinced that Jesus was truly resurrected from the dead and is able also to open the gates of heaven to his followers. Attending a Mass one Sunday with a friend, our new believer might speak forth the Creed for the first time with trembling lips: “I believe in Jesus Christ, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father...who was
crucified...for us men and for our salvation....” How much more real to him or her is this Jesus of the Creed than any glowing sentiments of the past he or she might have experienced before conversion in the presence of natural beauty!

Do we have to choose between experience and doctrine in religion? Why did so many 20th century thinkers believe that such a choice was necessary? As you read the words of our contenders - subjectivist vs. objectivist - see whether you want to choose sides or form a synthesis of the best in each writer’s philosophy.

William James (1842-1910)
The first thinker we will consider on the theme of experience vs. doctrine in philosophy of religion is William James. The subjectivism of William James was to have a remarkably powerful influence on the rest of the 20th century.

A bit about the life of William James. William came from one of the most famous families of intellectuals in American history. Henry James, Sr. was a notable religious leader. Henry James, the brother of William, became one of the foremost literary figures of the English language. William was one of the founding fathers of pragmatism, a philosophy emphasizing experience as the test of all ideas.

Henry James Sr., the father of William and Henry, was greatly influenced in his convictions by the Swedish Christian mystic, Swedenborg (1688-1772). The writings of Swedenborg swept England and the United States during the nineteenth century. From Swedenborg, William’s father took the conviction that God is not over against man as someone to bargain with or beg from. Instead, according to Henry, Sr., God wants us to open ourselves to His love and then share that love with all mankind.

William James, our philosopher, graduated from Harvard University with a degree in medicine. During his long life he taught anatomy, studied art, and then branched out to psychology, philosophy and religious studies. It is important to know that as a young adult William James suffered greatly from suicidal depression. A conversion experience, marriage and fatherhood liberated him eventually from these agonies. William James was a leading light as a Harvard professor of psychology and philosophy. Toward the end of his life he was influential in promoting the professional study of psychic phenomena.

In the study of James’ philosophy of religion, it is good to start with an essay called “The Will to Believe.”(1) In almost every anthology of American philosophy you will find this article. James directed it against the idea that the truths of science precluded belief in a personal, loving God. Since James had been saved from severe melancholia by his conversion, he was eager to defend religious belief. In the essay “The Will to Believe” he showed that far from being an ignorant, superstitious idea, religious belief could be justified on the basis of evidence. Whereas atheistic scientists pride themselves on their open-mindedness, James retorted that it is those who rule out believe in God who are not being open-minded.

Here is the gist of James’ argument in the essay, “The Will to Believe”:

Of the many questions a person might occupy his or her mind with resolving, one should first consider these polarities:

“live vs. dead issues
momentous vs. trivial options
forced vs. open choices”(2)

To use an example from James, a dead issue is probably one such as “How do I know there isn’t an elf in the room?” It is a dead issue because nobody much worries about such a thing these days. Whereas in the pagan era people thought they saw elves, it is rare that any but the Irish still think so.

A trivial option, I would offer is whether to choose Coke or Pepsi. It just doesn’t matter much. Deciding whether or not to have an abortion, however, no one would think of as trivial.

An open choice might be whether to use one long distance telephone service or another since you can go back and forth a long time on such a matter. This contrasts with a forced choice such as whether or not to take a pain-killer right now with strong side-effects.

What about the issue of whether there is a God or not? This is not a dead issue but a live one, since everyone has to face it eventually. It is momentous, not trivial, because right now it is claimed that belief in God will change your life for the better. And it is forced rather than open because to sit on the fence is really to choose against God.(3)

Why did James think that you can’t sit on the fence about God? The agnostic, who thinks that we can’t know if God exists or not, thinks he or she can sit on the fence forever. James compares this stance with that of a man who would hesitate all his life to marry the woman he loves in case he would later be disappointed. He should realize that his option is live, momentous and forced because failing to decide is really deciding not to marry her. In the same way, failing to decide if you believe in God or not is really deciding for not believing since you will act much like an unbeliever in your daily life.

In “The Will to Believe,” James further argued that in the case of a live, momentous and forced option which cannot be decided by reason alone:

“The open-minded person should not think that it is better to be a sceptic for life. The sceptic likes to make it seem as if he or she is being intellectually honest, whereas the believer is making an illegitimate leap,”(4) but this scepticism is not really a matter of intellect but more about will and emotion. The sceptic thinks that it is ridiculous to be duped by hope and then find out one day there is no God. But, James argues, it is just as bad to be duped by fear of being ridiculous into not believing in God if there is a God.

(This command by the sceptic) “that we shall put a stopper to our heart, instincts, and courage and wait - acting of course meanwhile more or less as if religion were not true - till doomsday, or til such time as our intellect and senses working together may have raked in evidence enough.....is a sort of idol.”(5) The idol would be of being a pure dispassionate mind instead of your real self which is passionately needy.
James further pointed out that scientists themselves have to reach out with insufficient evidence in order to test a hypothesis. If they could never act when there was some adverse evidence, there could be no science at all.

The reasoning in James’ essay “The Will to Believe” opened the door to considering that in matters which didn’t seem to yield a clear objective answer, it was valid to go with the will and the emotions.

The main text of James concerning subjectivity in religious belief is The Varieties of Religious Experience: The Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Edinburgh 1901-1902(6) In the introduction to Varieties...Joseph Ratner - a Jamesian philosopher, says that the key to the book is the idea that individual experience alone has value in religion. The objective question as to whether God actually exists, James thought could only come from the analysis of lived experience, not from the doctrines of the religions. Experience, James thought, establishes a presumption in favor of the reality of the divine. Reason does not exactly prove that the divine is real in the way people would like it to.

The mentality of William James concerning religion is popular even today at the beginning of the twenty first century. For this reason I will present here some quotations from Varieties of Religious Experience so that you can see for yourself the persuasiveness of his view and also its limitations.

James insisted that he was only interested in personal religion not in institutional religion; only in what people report of their personal experiences of the divine, especially how religion overcomes unhappiness.

“Religion, therefore, as I now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.” (7)

Note how subjective is James’ way of defining religion. The fact that the majority of mankind has always joined in communal religious practices does not count for James since he, himself, preferred a solitary way of connecting with the divine. He thought that the belief that there are unseen realities comes not from what is learned in church, but rather from a sense of presence of something other than the human. This explanation, though true in part, by-passes revelation and religious traditions based on such alleged revelation. For instance, most Catholics would say that they were taught to believe in invisible divine realities such as God, Jesus, Mary, angels, the saints. True, some can remember distinct moments of sensing the presence of these beings around them but certainly not all believers base their conviction on striking mystical experiences.

Just the same, one of the reasons for the acceptance of the experiential approach is the inspiration that comes with hearing accounts of extraordinary conversion experiences of others. Here is one of James’ illustrations of the power of such moments of personal revelation:
“I remember the night, and almost the very spot on the hilltop, where my soul opened out, as it were, into the Infinite, and there was a rushing together of the two worlds, the inner and the outer...I stood alone with Him who had made me, and all the beauty of the world, and love, and sorrow, and....I did not seek Him, but felt the perfect unison of my spirit with His...for the moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exaltation remained...My highest faith in God and truest idea of him were then born in me.” (8)

The Varieties of Religious Experience is full of insightful chapters concerning religious experience. One that I find helpful is a contrast he made between what he called the religion of healthy-mindedness and that of “the sick soul.” What he called the religion on healthy-mindedness comes from gratitude for the gifts of life. (9) It is characteristic of people who not only usually feel enthusiasm, freedom and happiness but who

“when unhappiness is offered or proposed to them, positively refuse to feel it, as if it were something mean and wrong. We find such persons in every age, passionately flinging themselves upon their sense of the goodness of life, in spite of the hardships of their own condition...from the outset their religion is one of union with the divine...their souls are in affinity rather with flowers and birds and all enchanting innocencies than with dark human passion, who can think no ill of man or God, and in whom religious gladness, being in possession from the outset, needs no deliverance from any antecedent burden.”

On the contrary, sickness of soul, James believed, comes from reflection on the insecurity of natural goods, failure, pessimism, hopelessness. Sick souls are greatly in touch with the problem of evil and are often melancholy. Sick souls have a great need for supernatural comfort. (10)

“There are others for whom evil is no mere relation of the subject to particular outer things, but something more radical and general, a wrongness or vice in his essential nature, ...which requires a supernatural remedy. .. There are men who seem to have started in life with a bottle or two of champagne inscribed to their credit; whilst others seem to have been born close to the pain-threshold, which the slightest irritants fatally send them over.”

Those with sick souls are much prone to depression and despair. For such people changes in their natural condition do not suffice to bring about happiness. Often the self is divided as was Augustine before his conversion. Some conversions are sudden but others are slow. The value of conversion depends not on the process but on the fruits. Intellectual beliefs become full of power after conversion experiences. The world appears new. Here is a description of a man who had become a total alcoholic and finally a homeless person:

“As I sat there thinking, I seemed to feel some great and mighty presence. I did not know then what it was. I did learn afterwards that it was Jesus, the sinner's friend...He said 'Pray.' I did pray. (He went to the Mission and heard the witness stories of others saved from drink.) When the invitation was given, I knelt down with a crowd of drunkards...Oh, what a conflict was going on for my
poor soul! A blessed whisper said, ‘Come; the devil said, ‘Be careful.’ I halted but a moment, and
then, with a breaking heart, I said, ‘Dear Jesus, can you help me?’ Never with mortal tongue can I
describe that moment. Although up to that moment my soul had been filled with indescribable
gloom, I felt the glorious brightness of the noonday sun shine into my heart. I felt I was a free man.
O, the precious feeling of safety, of freedom, of resting on Jesus ...From that moment till now I have
never wanted a drink of whiskey, and I have never seen money enough to make me take one. I
promised God that night that if he would take away my appetite for strong drink, I would work for
him all my life. He has done his part, and I have been trying to do mine.” (11)

It seems to me much to the credit of William James, and very American, to be, as far as I
know, the only philosopher, to publish such homey and heartfelt narratives. It shows a positive side of
the subjective approach. By honoring religious experience, it enables the listener or reader to be
kindled by another’s witness.

William James believed that it was a proof of how good an experiential approach was that you
could then understand such phenomena as holiness as a proof that religion works. In his chapters on
holiness, he offered the reader beautiful examples of permanent alteration of character through
deepened religious experience. He described the sense of the reality of the higher power, peace of
mind, charity, equanimity, fortitude, purity of life, asceticism, obedience, and the poverty of the saints
in a remarkable way for a non-Catholic. Among many men and women from different religions whom
he deemed to be saints, he included John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila.

In a memorable passage about the ascetical way, James pointed out that the Western world
had become too soft.

“Some men and women, indeed, there are who can live on smiles and the word ‘yes’ forever.
But for others (indeed for most), this is too tepid and relaxed a moral climate. Passive happiness is
slack and insipid, and soon grows mawkish and intolerable. Some austerity and wintry negativity,
some roughness, danger, stringency, and effort, some ‘no! no!’ must be mixed in, to produce the
sense of an existence with character and texture and power.” (12)

Without religious ascetism or the military, people will invent new ways of experiencing
challenge. I find it fascinating that people who don’t have time for daily Mass use the very same time
period for jogging or weight lifting.

To return to the question of holiness as a validation of religion, one could ask whether the
value of saintliness can be judged without prior consideration of whether God really exists? It has to
be, according to James. You have to start with the values you cherish and judge the saints
accordingly. He lauds the saints for their:

“...steadfastness of soul with which no other can compare. In social relations his serviceability
is exemplary; he abounds in impulses to help. His help is inward as well as outward...instead of
placing happiness where common men place it, in comfort, he places it in a higher kind of inner excitement, which converts discomforts into sources of cheer and annuls unhappiness. So he turns his back upon no duty, however thankless; and when we are in need of assistance, we can count upon the saint lending his hand with more certainty than we can count upon any other. Finally, his humble-mindedness and his ascetic tendencies save him from the petty personal pretensions which so obstruct our ordinary social intercourse, and his purity gives us in him a clean man for a companion.” (13)

Perhaps you have detected a paradox involved in James’ experiential approach. The saint believes that the accomplishment of heroic virtue comes directly from the grace of a real God. But James wants to say that whether there really is such a God outside of consciousness is not certain. Since being in contact with what one takes to be God has a luminous quality, is philosophically reasonable and morally helpful, James thinks everyone should hope that it is true. Apparently, if you were as unsure as James claims you ought to be about the object of adoring worship, you could not be the kind of person he thinks is the noblest.

What Catholics would call private revelations, according to James, have authority for the one who experiences them if not for sceptical observers. Mystical experience strengthens hope. Qualities of the mystical are ineffability, a sense of illumination, transiency, passivity. The great part is that they open us up to a consciousness different than the purely rational. It is experience which leads us to believe. We can never, according to James get to God through logical reason or metaphysical proofs. (13)

About arguments from the philosophy of St. Thomas for God’s existence, James insisted that since the critique of Kant’s critique of such proofs was devastating. (14)

James:

“Causation is indeed too obscure a principle to bear the weight of the whole structure of theology. As for the argument from design, see how Darwinian ideas have revolutionized it.” We have just as much disorder as order in the universe - considering earthquakes, etc. (15)

Naturally given his subjectivism, James cannot accept the idea of one true faith, as willed by God. Concerning the plurality of religions, James writes not about truth but rather about such secondary matters as individual taste, the need for beauty, and the desire for companionship as the main reasons for religious institutions. He thought that even though Protestantism was more spiritually profound, the Catholic Church would win out because of its appeal to human nature with “all its sensory childlike aspects.”

In spite of James’ patronizing attitude to some Catholic practices, as a psychologist, James had a good word to say for confession.
“It is part of the general system of purgation and cleansing which one feels oneself in need of, in order to be in right relation to one’s deity. For him who confesses, shams are over and realities have begun; he has exteriorized his rottenness. If he has not actually got rid of it, he at least no longer smears it over with a hypocritical show of virtue -- he lives at least upon a basis of veracity...We English-speaking Protestants, in the general self-reliance and unsociability of our nature, seem to find it enough if we take God alone into our confidence.” (16)

In the final chapters of The Varieties of Religious Experience, James sums up his experiential subjectivist attitude: “Does God really exist? How does he exist? What is he? are so many irrelevant questions. Not God, but life, more life, a larger, richer, more satisfying life, is, in the last analysis, the end of religion. The love of life, at any and every level of development, is the religious impulse.” (17)

In what he calls his “over-belief” James says that he personally thinks there is a region outside the sensible. He even writes that we belong to this region more than to the seen region. Since we are changed by forces from that region:

“We have no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal...God is the natural appellation, for us Christians at least, for the supreme reality, so I will call this higher part of the universe by the name of God...the universe, at those parts of it which our personal being constitutes, takes a turn genuinely for the worse or for the better in proportion as each one of us fulfills or avoids God’s demands...God is real since he produces real effects.” (18)

James admitted that most religious people went further than he did concerning belief. Such believers have a positive conviction about salvation in the sense of another realm where the good will be victorious. And in his over-belief James made his personal venture that such an eternal life does exist. He also believed that the supernatural can intervene in this world. He was open to immortality.

I would now like to offer you my critique of the experiential approach of William James.

In his philosophy of religion William James makes many fine points. This famous American philosopher had a beautiful reverence for the experience of others. He was truly open-minded in that way. In fact, the reading of his books has often been a bridge between atheism and belief in an objective doctrinal religion. When I was a college student at a secular university, The Variety of Religious Experience was the only book I read that gave me hope that religious belief might be justified. In my subsequent conversion powerful religious experiences played a large role, to be followed by a more reasoned conversion to the objective doctrines of the Catholic faith.

Some aspects of James’ philosophy of religion will be indirectly countered when you read about the thought of G.K. Chesterton in the second half of this chapter. For now, here are some of the main errors and limitations intrinsic to his way of thinking.
It seems as if James failed to understand that a person cannot pray in a personal manner or be holy in the traditional way, except if he or she truly believes that God exists apart from the self and subjective experience. Most devout Jews, Moslems and Christians do not pray not to a vague divine energy, but to the same personal God who created us and the world. Isn’t it inconsistent to accept the description of someone’s experience, but deny that person a hearing for his or her dogmatic convictions?

Furthermore, there is a need for and objective metaphysical basis for religion. How can James hold that some religious experience is objectively good, and then deny a source for that goodness equally objective? To refute James’ objections to proofs for God’s existence as having no validity since Kant, would go beyond the scope of this chapter. More about this will be discussed in the next one about doubt and conviction. For now it is enough to state that Kant’s dismissal of the proofs on the basis of the denial of knowledge of causality involves basic contradictions.

Critics of James find his dismissal of revelation arbitrary in the extreme. How strange it is to find him delighting in Christian conversions of others yet never addressing why he cannot accept Christian doctrine himself.

To conclude this part of the chapter on the experiential vs. the doctrinal approach to religion, I would like to point out why the study of James’ philosophy is relevant for our times.

In the United States there is a tendency to downgrade doctrine and dogma in favor of just the kind of individualistic spirituality affirmed by William James. New Agers tend to base their spirituality on experience exclusive or reason or faith. Such an approach to religion is obviously attractive to many.

From the standpoint of evangelization, it is essential to show appreciation for the personal religious experience of a person one wishes to bring further. This can be followed by advancing the objective claims of the God of Revelation. The second part of this chapter will sharpen the contrast.

End Notes on William James:


2. See Ibid.

3. See Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p. 31

8. Ibid., p. 66

9. Ibid., see p. 79ff.

10. Ibid., p. 134ff.

11. Ibid., p. 201

12. Ibid., p. 299

13. Ibid., p. 369-370

14. See Ibid., p. 433

15. See Ibid., p. 435, 437

16. Ibid., pp. 462-463

17. Ibid., pp. 506-507

18. Ibid., p. 516
G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

G. K. Chesterton was probably the most influential Catholic apologist - defender of the faith, for 20th Century English speaking peoples. (1) Chesterton was baptized in the Anglican Church of England. He earned his living primarily as a journalist and speaker. By 1914 Chesterton wanted to become a Catholic but waited until 1922, trying to bring his wife into the Church with him. Before his conversion Chesterton was a rebel and a sceptic. He disliked authority because he thought it necessary to think everything through by himself. Eventually he deserted subjectivism when he found that Christianity espoused the real truth about the meaning of life.

Always one to shock his opponents with unexpected answers to their sceptical questions, Chesterton reported that his motive for becoming a Catholic was to get rid of his sins. (2)

In 1908 Chesterton wrote the most famous of his books entitled Orthodoxy. (3) Chesterton’s forte was the presentation of eternal truths in a fresh way. As you will see, his writing was full of surprise, paradox and metaphor. In the introductory chapter of Orthodoxy Chesterton said that many people would not like his book. About this sad prediction he quipped: “I have written the book, and nothing on earth would induce me to read it!”

The excerpts from Orthodoxy that follow are either exact quotations or paraprases. They will demonstrate Chesterton’s transition from an individualistic mind-set to an objective approach to reality and to religion. Since Chesterton’s objectivism is so witty and humorous, his ideas may at first seem obscure. If you read them slowly, however, you will soon find yourself part of an exciting intellectual adventure.

“I have discovered of my truths not that they weren’t true but that they were not mine. When I fancied that I stood alone I was really in the ridiculous position of being backed by all Christendom. It may be, Heaven forgive me, that I did try to be original; but I only succeeded in working out a dim copy of Christian traditions.” (4)

To understand what Chesterton means about originality in the above passage a contemporary reader might consider films such as Star Wars or E.T. In many ways the “original” characters in these movies are weak renditions of God or the incarnate God-man, Jesus.

When Chesterton found Christianity to be the doctrinal truth about reality he realized that it was a misnomer to talk about “my philosophy.” “…I did not make it. God and humanity made it; and it made me.”(5)
One of the most intriguing concepts of Chesterton was that the modern belief in ones own self, so characteristic of the experiential subjective approach, was not only foolish but crazy.

“Most people think that believing in oneself is what is most important. I think that only those in mental institutions completely believe in themselves, as in thinking they are sure they are Napoleon. Instead what is a sign of sanity is believing in what is outside the self: the objective world.

“Complete self-confidence is not merely a sin; complete self-confidence is a weakness... Modern masters of science are much impressed with the need of beginning all inquiry with a fact. The ancient masters of religion were quite equally impressed with that necessity. They began with the fact of sin – whether or not man could be washed in miraculous waters, there was no doubt at any rate that he wanted washing...but certain religious leaders in London, not mere materialists, have begun in our day not to deny the highly disputable water, but to deny the indisputable dirt. Certain new theologians dispute original sin, which is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved....” (6)

Chesterton explains further how certain seemingly persuasive philosophical theories of the twentieth century are really insane. Determinism is one of these. It is the conviction that since every finite effect has a cause, nothing we do can be free. It must have a compelling cause which we could isolate if only we had the time to figure it out. If I say I choose this man because I loved certain traits in his character, the determinist would claim he or she could show that I had to choose this man because of things in my past that forced me to, such as a desire to compensate for missing love from a father who had similar traits. We will have a chapter about this theory later. For now, here is Chesterton’s original response:

“Determinism is such a theory of logical madmen. An ordinary man sees that whistling or rubbing ones hands is a free act. Only lunatics think that everything has a (paranoid) cause. The madman thinks that whistling is a signal to a murder. Madmen advance unanswerable arguments for their manias, such as no one thinks I am the King of England because there is an imposter on the throne. What the madman needs is to come out of his tiny world into the larger cosmos where everything doesn’t revolve around him.” (7)

Note that it is a quest for objectivity vs. subjective experience, as in the philosophy of religion of James, that characterized the revival of Catholic thought in the first half of the 20th century. As Chesterton put it:

“A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed. Nowadays the part of a man that a man does assert is exactly the part he ought not to assert - himself. The part he doubts is exactly the part he ought not to doubt – the Divine Reason.”(8)
Scepticism denies all reason as well as authority. We are on the verge of denying all possibility of arriving at any truth. Authority in religion is for the sake of avoiding this terrible outcome.

“The pragmatist tells a man to think what he must think and never mind the Absolute. But precisely one of the things that he must think is the Absolute. This philosophy, indeed, is a kind of verbal paradox. Pragmatism is a matter of human needs; and one of the first of human needs is to be something more than a pragmatist...” (9)

Notice that a subjectivist like James cannot come up with real answers to our most burning questions about the meaning of life. This depends on a belief in truth and, ultimately, in a God whose absolute being is the source of all truth.

Many subjectivists also deny that there can be any perennial truth, that is truth that is valid for every century. Here is how Chesterton ridicules the subjectivist belief that Christianity might have been good in the past but must be outdated in the forward looking 20th century:

“You might as well say that a certain philosophy can be believed on Mondays, but cannot be believed on Tuesdays. You might as well say of a view of the cosmos that it was suitable to half-past three, but not suitable to half-past four. What a man can believe depends upon his philosophy, not upon the clock or the century. If a man believes in unalterable natural law, he cannot believe any miracle in any age. If a man believes in a will behind law, he can believe any miracle in any age.” (10)

And here are some of the most often quoted passages from Chesterton to counteract the idea that the creativity of individualism is more important than the solidity of doctrine:

“This is the thrilling romance of orthodoxy. People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. It was the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stoop this way and to saw that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic.

“The Church in its early days went fierce and fast with any warhorse; yet it is utterly unhistoric to say that she merely went mad along one idea, like a vulgar fanaticism. She swerved to left and right, so as exactly to avoid enormous obstacles. She left on one hand the huge bulk of Arianism, buttressed by all the worldly powers to make Christianity too worldly. The next instant she was swerving to avoid an orientalism, which would have made it too unworldly. The orthodox Church never took the tame course or accepted the conventions; the orthodox church was never respectable.

“...it is always easy to be modernist...To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom - that would have been simple. It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to
Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.” (11)

What did Chesterton have to say about the temptation to dispense with the institutional Church in favor of following the inner light as James’ philosophy can sometimes influence readers to do?

“Of all horrible religions the most horrible is the worship of the god within. Any one who knows anybody knows how it would work; ...That Jones shall worship the god within turns out ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon, anything rather than the Inner Light; ...let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if he can find any in the street, but not the god within. Christianity came into the world firstly in order to assert with violence that a man had not only to look inwards, but to look outwards, to behold with astonishment and enthusiasm a divine company and a divine captain. The only fun of being a Christian was that a man was not left alone with the Inner Light, but definitely recognized an outer light, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners.” (12)

If Orthodoxy is the most famous non-fictional book by Chesterton, the concepts to be found in The Everlasting Man (13) are equally important for the defense of doctrinal religion over against experience as the main criteria for belief.

For example, a great puzzle to sceptics about doctrinal religion is how it could be that one of them makes a claim to truth when obviously peoples of the past believed in what we now know to have been myths. Replies Chesterton:

“But he who has most sympathy with myths will most fully realize that they are not and never were a religion, in the sense that Christianity or even Islam is a religion. They satisfy some of the needs satisfied by a religion; and notably the need for doing certain things at certain dates; the need of the twin ideas of festivity and formality. But though they provide a man with a calendar they do not provide him with a creed. A man did not stand up and say ‘I believe in Jupiter and Juno and Neptune, etc.,’ as he stands up and says ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty; and the rest of the Apostles Creed.” (14)

“Certainly the pagan does not disbelieve like an atheist, any more than he believes like a Christian. He feels the presence of powers about which he guesses and invents. St. Paul said that the Greeks had one altar to an unknown god. But in truth all their gods were unknown gods. And the real break in history did come when St. Paul declared to them whom they had ignorantly worshiped.

“The substance of all such paganism may be summarized thus. It is an attempt to reach the divine reality through the imagination alone; in its own field reason does not restrain it at all.”” (15)
“Only as the whole society grew in age and experience, there began to appear that weakness in all mythology... This religion was not quite a religion. In other words, this religion was not quite a reality. It was the young world’s riot with wine or love-making; it was not so much immoral as irresponsible; it had no foresight of the final test of time. Because it was creative to any extent it was credulous to any extent.”

“Theology is thought, whether we agree with it or not. Mythology was never thought, and nobody could really agree with it.”

At a later point in his argument in defense of Christian doctrine, Chesterton explains that:

“The Church Militant is thus unique because it is an army marching to effect a universal deliverance...What that universal yet fighting faith brought into the world was hope. Perhaps the one thing common to mythology and philosophy was that both were really sad; in the sense that they had not this hope even if they had touches of faith or charity.”

Having regaled you with characteristic quotations from the writings of Chesterton, it is now time to turn to evaluation. Chesterton’s philosophy of objective doctrine in religion is one of the most brilliant defenses of orthodox religion ever propounded. The style of Chesterton’s writings can sometimes strike people as more humorous than profound. There is no comparison with the systematic philosophical teachings of thinkers as St. Augustine or St. Thomas. Yet Chesterton’s many books influenced some 20th century people more than the classics because of the brilliance of his mind and the freshness of his rhetoric.

Chesterton’s debunking of rationalism, the theory that only what the mind can prove clearly and distinctly is real, and scepticism, the theory that we can’t know anything for certain, were important to Catholics in the academic world whose faith could otherwise be undermined by those currents of thought predominating well into the 1960’s. His descriptions of his conversion from an individualistic subjective viewpoint to universal dogma is a permanent antidote to a purely experiential approach.

End Notes on Chesterton

1. Most of the biographical details in this chapter are taken from Michael Ffinch, G.K. Chesterton (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986)

2. Ibid., p. 287

4. Ibid., p. 12

5. Ibid., p. 9

6. Ibid., p. 14

7. Ibid., see p. 19

8. Ibid., p. 31

9. Ibid., p. 36


11. Ibid., p. 167-168

12. Ibid., p. 168-169


14. Ibid., p. 119

15. Ibid., p. 121

16. Ibid., p. 188

17. Ibid., pp. 190-191

18. Ibid., pp. 298-299

Conclusion

It will be obvious to the reader that the author of *The Battle for the 20th Century Mind* considers objectivity to be the theory with the most truth on its side. I believe that even to appreciate subjective experience, it is necessary to see it as a response to a reality outside the subject. What would we think of a person who sat on a sofa dreaming about the beauty of the experience of love but didn’t think it important to ever love anyone definite outside him/herself?

On the other hand, belief in and admiration of the objectively existing transcendent divine need not lead to lack of interest in the human experience of God. Ideally the subjective and objective elements in religion form not a contrast but a pair.
Theme 2

Doubt of God vs. Conviction of God

Russell vs. Gilson

Introduction

Most intellectuals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries believed in God but had doubts about specific teachings of their rabbis, priests, and pastors. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, many young people of the educated classes had become either atheists or agnostics.

On the front lines of the battle for the 20th century mind was scientific materialism, the growth of which was greatly stimulated by Darwinist speculations. What was the young person to make of the apparent discrepancy between the Biblical view of creation and evolutionary theory?

From another direction, there was the influence of militant Marxists who taught that religion was “the opium of the people,” a sort of drug to keep them content in spite of the horrific injustices they suffered. Most people thought Marxist dreams of a perfect society based on waking up the poor to the benefits of shaking off oppression through violence were off base. Just the same, they were often shaken by communist rhetoric about religion. Could it possibly be true the faith of their fathers was naive? Could religion actually be a brake on the progress of the human race, deflecting energy from the alleviation of poverty with soothing thoughts of the after-life?

Such difficulties with belief in God gained strength at a time when philosophical doubt about God was rampant at the universities. In previous centuries the traditional proofs for God’s existence were presented as wisdom. In the twentieth century institutions of higher learning those proofs were mostly presented as quaint notions of the Middle Ages. As a result of the influence of enlightenment philosophers such as Hume and Kant, there was scepticism about any but scientific knowledge. Faith was relegated to the private sector.

In this chapter, we will see such trends impacting Bertrand Russell, one of the major intellectual forces on the side of atheism of the 20th century. Brought up as a Christian, he would come to the conviction that the only things we can be sure even exist are those that can be known through the senses. Accordingly God, being by definition non-sensate could not be proven or disproven.
Among Russell’s peers, God and the soul were considered mere figments of the imagination. Philosophical approaches such as logical positivism and linguistic analysis contributed to this scepticism. It was thought that the only future for philosophers was to give up speculating about the meaning of the life and the universe and confine themselves to engendering criteria for evaluating scientific theories or problems stemming from language. A famous example is the way that the twentieth century English philosopher Gilbert Ryle, tried to explain away the reality of our immaterial minds. Suppose someone had never seen a university. He visits. You show him the auditorium, the labs, the gym, etc., and he then says: ‘all well and good, but where is the university?’ He is making what Ryle called a category mistake in language, thinking the university is something different from its parts. Similarly, if you describe what the brain does, the mind is not something separate, as traditional philosophers thought, but just, according to Ryle, an overall word for the parts of the brain in action!

What were the theists doing about this frontal attack on the foundations of all religious belief? Often thrust into a defensive position in academe, believers were challenged to meet the arguments of atheists and agnostics in a new, creative manner. A huge impetus was the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, Aeterni Patris (1879) concerning the renewal of Catholic philosophy. This renewal was to be an antidote to the atheistic teachings flooding the universities. Catholic philosophers and theologians got to work reviving the perennial metaphysics, philosophy of being, of St. Thomas Aquinas. Metaphysics could then be seen again as a foundation for the traditional proofs for God’s existence. Arguments for God’s existence came to be expressed in ways that would refute the objections of contemporary atheists. I have chosen for our study some writings by Etienne Gilson, a foremost representative of what was called Neo-Thomism.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

Bertrand Russell was the author of some forty books on philosophy and also on political issues of his day such as the ethics of war, colonialism, and nuclear disarmament. He was probably the most influential non-theistic English-speaking philosopher of the 20th century. In 1950 Russell won the Nobel Prize for literature.

Here is some autobiographical data (1) of interest:

Bertrand was an orphan whose mother died when he was two and whose father died when he was three and a half. In his youth he experienced great loneliness. He and his brother were brought up by his grandmother. I mention this fact because some psychologists such as Karl Stern and Paul Vitz have noticed that quite a number of atheistic thinkers have been orphaned or otherwise separated from loving maternal influence.
In his autobiography Russell claims that there were three passions that governed his life, longing for love, seeking knowledge, and compassion for the sufferings of others. You might not expect the last phrase from an atheist!

Bertrand’s father was a free-thinker. His mother ran a philosophical salon. When Bertrand’s father died he left two tutors for his sons who were instructed to be sure to protect the lads from harmful religious belief! After the death of that father, against his stated wishes, the court awarded Bertrand to his religious grandparents because they were part of the English nobility. The boy moved to a large castle-like house and grew up not remembering what his parents were like. His grandmother, who loved him deeply, was a Presbyterian who became a Unitarian at the age of seventy. She was liberal in politics but extremely strict in morality. Her fearlessness, public spirit, contempt for convention, and indifference to the opinion of the majority influenced Bertrand to be willing to belong to small minorities.

Bertrand grew up very lonely since his brother was older and was away in boarding school. Bertrand was very fearful he might never meet anyone he could talk to. He spent his youth less with people than with nature, books and mathematics.

Russell loved Euclid and found mathematics ecstatic! But he disliked the fact that you had to agree to axioms to proceed vs. questioning the axioms as well. Such thorough critique he would later accomplish himself in his famous book *Principia Mathematica* written with Alfred North Whitehead. In this book he proved that mathematics is reducible to formal logic.

Bertrand’s grandparents took him to church, but by about fifteen he started studying arguments for God, freedom and immortality, and fell into scepticism. The first widely held belief he doubted was the existence of free will. He thought that if everything is caused by matter, then the will, which cannot be matter, could not have any influence on the body as in the will deciding to move your hand. The human body is a machine. Still he didn’t see himself as a pure materialist since he thought that consciousness itself was not material. By age seventeen he doubted immortality as well.

He still believed in God since he thought that the Thomistic argument from causality was valid. Roughly that argument is that since every effect has a cause so must the entire world and that cause would be God. Later on, thinking about the question of who made God led him to become an atheist. This process from doubt to atheism, the notion that there is certainly not a God took Russell a long time and initially made him unhappy, but eventually he was glad to be done with the whole matter. Russell thought that since religious philosophy doesn’t involve the type of evidence you have in science, theological ideas should not even come up for evaluation.

As a young adult, Russell’s scepticism led him into despair. The only reason he didn’t commit suicide in his loneliness was because he wished to know more of mathematics and didn’t want to hurt his grandmother. Many years later Russell wrote that society is in chaos primarily because there is so little Christian virtue left.
Going back to Russell’s entrance into the life of the university, he soon realized that scepticism has consequences. What he had been taught to abhor as a Christian boy, now seemed virtuous. He saw he was being led into sin. Evolutionary ideas about having been descended from apes lowered his idea about human behavior. For a while he thought it better not to spread his sceptical ideas. Here is a famous philosophical joke that was circulated in those days concerning abstract metaphysical subjects: “What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind.”

Another story which illustrates the academic mind of this period is an answer Russell got to a question he used to ask his friends: “If you had the power to destroy the world, would you do so?” This was to see how pessimistic people were. One of his friends answered in the presence of his wife and child “What? Destroy my library? – Never!”

As a professor, Russell fell in love with an American girl whose family moved to England. You must not think that there is a straight line from disbelief in God, or free-thinking as it was then called, and sexual sin. Russell reports that even though deeply in love he felt no conscious desire for physical relations. He proposed without ever kissing her or even holding her hand. Both husband the wife were virgins. She was a suffragette and total abstinence speaker. Her mother was so radical a feminist even in those times that it is reported she disliked the Deity for being called “He!”

In 1901 after seven years of marriage, Russell fell out of love with his wife. For nine years after that they still lived together. He fell in love with another man’s wife and had an affair with her for many years.

A great theme for discussion at that time was whether one could be good without believing in God. Russell insisted one could. A list for how to be good in this way included tithing the poor, abstinence from liquor, diet, reading poetry or spiritual reading every day, punctuality, tidiness. He believed in inner discipline vs. exterior discipline or total spontaneity.

Russell had a huge crisis when the wife of his great philosophical comrade, Whitehead, had a heart attack in his presence. Until then he had kept to matters of the intellect and had avoided deeper issues such as the meaning of death. Witnessing the heart attack Russell reported that within five minutes he decided that loneliness was terrible, and that only a high type of love such as religious preach could alleviate it. He became convinced that any action not motivated by love was wrong such as war in the world and bullying in school. These reflections were followed by a longing to help children. When Russell did have his own children with his wife Dora, the couple opened their own private school. It did not succeed largely because of discipline problems. (2)

During World War I, Russell was a pacifist. In 1916 he was convicted and fined for anti-war activities and spent 6 months in prison. He was always an individual thinker. It would be erroneous to imagine that he followed a liberal political line uncritically. For example, when communism was all the rage he rejected the socialist belief that the State was the answer to social problems. He saw how social theory led people to tolerate Soviet Russia, and predicted the horrors of Bolshevism.
Russell thought that the eradication of suffering would have to come not from State programs, but from changing men and women to be more rational, cooperative and kind. (3) In spite of general pacifistic attitudes, during World War II Russell thought war was justified since living under Hitler would be hell.

Russell married four times and had many affairs. Always interested in political matters, he ran unsuccessfully for parliament several times. He taught in the United States in the late 1930’s at City College until his appointment was revoked on the basis that he was morally unfit because of his behavior with women.

Russell won the Nobel Prize in 1950. During the 50’s and 60’s Russell was involved in anti-war protests and anti-nuclear protests and was imprisoned in 1961 for nuclear disarmament protests. He died at 97.

Here are some quotations from various works of Bertrand Russell:

(Russell described himself as a “rational sceptic” defined as

“withholding judgment where the evidence is not sufficient, or, even more so, when there is contrary evidence” (4)

Russell considered religion to be in the main harmful. He was especially against religious objections to contraception, since he thought that world poverty and war could never be eliminated without contraception. Another remedy he favored was the killing of the sacred cows for food to reduce hunger in India.

In 1927 in an article entitled “Why I am Not a Christian,”(5) Russell tried to refute the traditional arguments from First Cause and from Design in these ways:

If you ask who made the world then you would have to ask, who made God?

“If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause. If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God, so that there cannot be any validity in that argument...There is no reason why the world could not have come into being without a cause; nor, on the other hand, is there any reason why it should not have always existed. There is no reason to suppose that the world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is really due to the poverty of our imagination. Therefore, perhaps, I need not waste any more time upon the argument from the First Cause.

“You all know the argument from design: everything in the world is made just so that we can manage to live in the world, and if the world was ever so little different we could not manage to live in it. That is the argument from design. It sometimes takes rather a curious form; for instance, it is argued that rabbits have white tails in order to be easy to shoot. I do not know how rabbits would
view that application. It is an easy argument to parody. You all now Voltaire's remark, that obviously the nose was designed to be such as to fit spectacles...since the time of Darwin we understand much better why living creatures are adapted to their environment. It is not that their environment was made to be suitable to them, but that they grew to be suitable to it, and that is the basis of adaptation. There is no evidence of design about it. (6)

"When you come to look into this argument from design, it is a most astonishing thing that people can believe that this world, with all the things that are in it, with all its defects, should be the best that omnipotence and omniscience has been able to produce in millions of years. I really cannot believe it. Do you think that, if you were granted omnipotence and omniscience and millions of years in which to perfect your world, you could produce nothing better than the Klu Klux Klan, the Fascisti, and Mr. Winston Churchill."

In the selections from Gilson that follow you will see how theists show what is false in Russell's reasonings. Concerning the problem of evil and suffering in the world as an argument against the existence of a God of love, for an answer see the last theme in this book.

In Russell's History of Western Philosophy (7) he has this to say about Thomas' Five Ways. After the briefest of summaries, Russell lauds Thomas for the fairness of his way of presenting arguments of opponents.

"These merits, however, seem scarcely sufficient to justify his immense reputation. The appeal to reason is, in a sense, insincere, since the conclusion to be reached is fixed in advance." (8)

I wonder if Russell would want to universalize such an observation. Would he think that belief that England is an island makes the evidence of the geography insincere?

Russell thought that only those who accept Aristotle's metaphysics will accept the Thomas' proofs.

"All of these, except from the teleology of lifeless things, depend upon the supposed impossibility of a series having no first term. Every mathematician knows that there is no such impossibility; the series of negative integers ending with minus one is an instance to the contrary. But here again NO Catholic is likely to abandon belief in God even if he becomes convinced that Saint Thomas's arguments are bad; he will invent other arguments, or take refuge in revelation."(9)

Russell's critique illustrates that if one gets eliminates metaphysics, of course, one cannot evaluate metaphysical arguments. Such arguments purport to be about realities, not about mathematical symbols for them. For example, numbers such as two and four can be seen as mere symbols. As words they are surely symbols. But having two children or four children is not a matter of mere mathematics! There is a real (metaphysical) difference!
What did Russell think about Christ? In the article “Why I am Not a Christian,” he has some intriguing things to say, such as:

“... teachings such as turn the other cheek, give all you have to the poor, and judge not, were excellent, but these were the precepts least popular among Christians! (10)

Here are some more observations of Russell about atheism, taken from “A radio program on the Existence of God” with Fr. Frederick Copleston, S.J., the famous Thomistic philosopher, on the BBC radio in 1948 (11)

Copleston:

Would you say that the non-existence of God can be proved?

Russell:

No, I should not say that: my position is agnostic.

During this radio talk, Copleston used a version of the argument from contingency to a necessary being. Roughly this proof insists that if everything in the world is dependent on something else, there could be no foundation for being without one absolutely necessary being: God. When Russell replied that the world could just be there without the need for a cause, Copleston responded:

“Well, the series of events is either caused or it’s not caused. If it is caused, there must obviously be a cause outside the series. If it’s not caused then its sufficient to itself, and if it’s sufficient to itself it is what I call necessary. But it can’t be necessary since each member is contingent (dependent) ...the proposition that the world is simply there and is inexplicable can’t be proven by logical analysis. (12)

Very quickly in the debate it was clear that Russell did not accept metaphysical statements at all, believing only in truths of fact and analytical propositions. (13)

What, then, do atheistic-agnostics like Russell do about fear of death? He replied, that whereas young men may be justified in feeling oppressed by the thought of an early death, being cheated of the best things in life, an older person would be ignoble to fear the end. His ego should be receding so that he is merged with the universal life around him, happy to think that his life goals will be carried on by others.

Asked what he would do if he had to meet God after denying His existence all his life, he replied:
“Why, I should say, ‘God, you gave us insufficient evidence.’” (14)

In evaluating the thought of Russell, it is important to note the his rejection of the existence of God and of Christian truth did not mean the rejection of all Christian values. Russell held onto the theistic legacy by insisting on some trans-cultural moral values such as social justice, concern for the poor, and desire to eliminate the horrors of war.

On the other hand, Russell’s rejection of metaphysics and consequent rejection of a First Cause leaves his philosophy in limbo. Yes there are moral values but how significant can these be if the universe and all human beings will die with no hope of eternal life? Without a source of perfect love from God, how can human beings love each other with the fidelity necessary for family stability?

End Notes on Russell

1. Most of the information here is taken from Bertrand Russell on God and Religion edited by Al Seckel (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books: 1986) Some information is taken 3 from Internet and from The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1951)

2. See Seckel, Bertrand Russell on God and Religion, p. 27)

3. Ibid., p. 22

4. Ibid., p.10

5. Ibid., p. 57

6. Ibid., p. 61

7. History of Western Philosophy (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1945)

8. Ibid., p. 455 ff.

9. Ibid., p. 462

10. Bertrand Russell on God..., p. 65

11. Ibid., pp. 123-146

12. Ibid., pp. 131-132

13. Ibid., see p. 33
14. Ibid., p. 11
Etienne Gilson (1884-1978)

Gilson, pronounced with a soft “Gi,” (as in Jill) was a Canadian layman. He taught at the Medieval Institute at the University of Toronto and then at Notre Dame University from 1948 until 1977. Gilson came to love the philosophy of St. Thomas while researching Descartes’ intellectual antecedents. He was considered to be one of the greatest of the neo-Thomists to revive Catholic philosophy in the 20th century. Among Gilson’s greatest books are Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages and Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages.

For the purpose of juxtaposing Gilson against Russell in The Battle for the 20th Century Mind I will excerpt from Gilson’s incisive commentary on Medieval philosophy. This would likely be dismissed by atheistic and agnostic philosophers as too antiquated to have any relevance to 20th century scientific perspectives. Instead I will quote from a chapter of Gilson’s, “God and Contemporary Thought,” (1) which takes on exactly the limitations of that scientific mentality when it comes to the issue of God’s existence.

In that chapter, Gilson noted that many contemporary philosophers take for granted that the only real knowledge comes from science rather than from reasoning:

“Since (according to them) God is not an object of empirical knowledge, we have no concept of him. Consequently God is no object of knowledge, and what we call natural theology (that is, philosophy of God) is just idle talking.” (2)

Behind the rejection of metaphysics, philosophy of being, according to Gilson, is the elimination of the concept of real causality in the sense of knowing why anything exists in the first place. In order to get to a philosophical understanding of the real God, it is necessary to go back to Aquinas.

Here is my summary of the causal argument for God’s existence:

“All around us we see an orderly world of effects springing from previous causes. Nothing just happens for no reason whatsoever. What seven-year-old child can convince his mother that the milk spilled over the kitchen floor because it just ‘happened’ to go there without any cause!

“Nothing can just cause itself, because it would have to exist before itself, which is a contradiction.

“You may think that causes might go back and back infinitely with no beginning. To this Aquinas argued that such an imaginary backward look explains nothing. Unless there is one First Cause, which we call God, nothing can take place, for each of the subsequent causes dependent on
some original cause to start the whole train of causality going. (The word “infinite” is a description, not a cause. Infinity is not a substantial reality that can cause things just a word for things.)

“You might ask now: ‘If everything has to have a cause, who caused God?’ The basic answer Aquinas would give is simple. The types of beings that need causes are of the kind that are destructible, that come to be and pass away. God is by definition an absolute being. He has no beginning or end, so He doesn’t need a cause.” (3)

You might think that the whole cosmos is eternal, without beginning or end. Of that we certainly have no scientific proof and many scientists nowadays think in terms of a Big Bang that started the universe with an absolute beginning 15-20 billion years ago. (4)

Before referring to other proofs for God’s existence, I want to quote this interesting comment by Gilson:

“Quite apart from any philosophical demonstration of the existence of God, there is such a thing as a spontaneous natural theology. A quasi-instinctive tendency, observable in most men, seems to invite them to wonder from time to time if, after all, there is not such an unseen being as the one we call God...God spontaneously offers himself to most of us, more as a confusedly felt presence than an answer to any problem, when we find ourselves confronted with the vastness of the ocean, the still purity of mountains, or the mysterious life of a midsummer starry sky... There is no more solitary solitude than that of a man in deep sorrow or confronted with the tragic perspective of his own impending end. ‘One dies alone,’ Pascal says. That is perhaps the reason why so many men finally meet God waiting for them on the threshold of death.

“What do such feelings prove? Absolutely nothing. They are not proofs but facts, the very facts which give philosophers occasion to ask themselves precise questions concerning the possible existence of God.”(5)

“...the only problem is for us to determine the truth value of this notion. At first sight, the shortest way to test it seems to judge it from the point of view of scientific knowledge. But the shortest way might not be the safest one. This method rests upon the assumption that nothing can be rationally known unless it be scientifically known, which is far from being an evident proposition...the simple truth may be that while human reason remains one and the same in dealing with different orders of problems, it nevertheless must approach these various orders of problems in as many different ways.

“If, speaking in the order of pure natural knowledge, the proposition ‘God exists’ makes any sense at all, it must be for its rational value as a philosophical answer to a metaphysical question.

“...Why nature exists is not a scientific problem, because its answer is not susceptible of empirical verification....”(6)
If a scientist, such as Sir James Jeans, decides that it is more rational to think of the universe not as an eternally existing system but rather as a creation of an intelligent God, this is not because he is doing science but because he has started dealing with the metaphysical question of why the universe exists at all.

A typical example is the notion of design at the root of the fifth argument for the existence of God of St. Thomas. Here is my summary:

“All around us we see order and purpose in nature. To use an example most of us would consider fairly awesome, take the human eye, so intricately ordered in its myriad parts to make it possible to see. Can order such as this come about by coincidence? Thomas uses the example of an arrow hitting a target. Since arrows are not intelligent conscious beings, it cannot hit the target by figuring it out. It requires the intelligent archer to get it there. If you saw an archery competition and the arrow hitting the target hundreds of times, would you accept the idea that it all happened by chance? If you add up all the examples of purposeful design in the universe wouldn’t an intelligent designer seem more likely than chance as the reason behind it all?

Yet, according to Gilson, some scientists “...deliberately prefer to the simple notions of design, or purposiveness, in nature, the arbitrary notions of blind force, chance, emergence, sudden variation, ...because they much prefer a complete absence of intelligibility to the presence of a nonscientific intelligibility.” (7)

“...To reject metaphysical answers to a problem just because they are not scientific is deliberately to maim the knowing power of the human mind. If the only intelligible way to explain the existence of organized bodies is to admit that there is design, purposiveness, at their origin, then let us admit it, if not as scientists, at least as metaphysicians. And since the notions of design and purpose are for us inseparable from the notion of thought, to posit the existence of a thought as cause of the purposiveness of organized bodies is also to posit an end of all ends, or an ultimate end, that is, God.”(8)

In the absence of the metaphysically conceived God, we have instead gods such as blind evolution and benevolent progress. What we need is to come back to Leibniz’s question – “Why should there be something rather than nothing?”

“...the only conceivable answer is that each and every particular existential energy, each and every particular existing thing, depends for its existence upon a pure existence. In order to be the ultimate answer to all existential problems, this supreme cause has to be absolute existence. Being absolute, such a cause is self-sufficient; if it creates, its creative act must be free. Since it creates not only being, but order, it must be something which at least eminently contains the only principle of order known to us in experience, namely, thought.” (9)

The quotations given here will give you an idea of the richness of the mind of Gilson.
The precision of Gilson’s thought and the truth of his proofs of God’s existence leave no room for critique. One might, however, suggest that for use in evangelization Gilson’s work needs to be supplemented. The philosophical apologetics of thinkers such as Peter Kreeft explain the same truths in a manner more accessible to intelligent but less scholarly readers. Books such as The Intellectuals Speak Out About God(10) and The New Story of Science (11) provide excellent quotations from theistic scientists refuting seeming objections to the arguments given above by evolutionists. Sometimes such books go out of print but you can easily find them in the public library through inter-library loan.

End Notes to Gilson

1. See “God and Contemporary Thought,” from Etienne Gilson, God and Philosophy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941)
2. Ibid., p. 109
3. Ronda Chervin, “A Contemporary Look At Old Arguments for God’s Existence” (New Hope, Kentucky: Faith Guild pamphlet #4004)
4. For more about science and proofs for the existence of God, see Ibid.
5. Gilson, pp. 115-116
6. Ibid., p. 119
7. Ibid., p. 130
8. Ibid., p. 131-132
9. Ibid., pp.139-140

Conclusion

It is important for evangelists to be aware of how plausible atheism or agnosticism can seem to a person with an inadequate background in metaphysics. The seeds of scepticism were already deeply planted in the academic culture of the English university where Russell studied. In spite of the logical bent of his mind, this young man, like many in our times was not able to work his way out of the labyrinth of scepticism about foundational matters concerning being and cause.
Christian evangelists need to study the refutations of such doubt in detail. True philosophical principles which underlie the proofs for God’s existence of the tradition can be found in books written by believing philosophers on the subjects of metaphysics and natural theology. (See the Appendix for recommendations). Such writings usually include answers to objections made by those who erroneously believe that science and belief are contradictory.
Theme 3

Human Authenticity vs. Relatedness in God

Heidegger vs. Buber

Introduction

By the middle of the 20th century in Europe and a bit later in the rest of the world, it was common to hear people making judgments about the “authenticity” of others. Talk about “the good guys vs. the bad guys” was gradually being replaced by contrasting labels such as non-conformist vs. conformist and real people vs. phonies.

The category of “authenticity” came largely from the writings of Martin Heidegger, a German phenomenologist. Heidegger refused to affirm or deny the reality of God. His philosophy of the human person proposed an authenticity to be judged only in terms of life on earth. The authentic individual Heidegger introduced was one who confronted reality head-on without denial of its tragic elements. The authentic person was one free from illusions and pretensions. He or she was free from the sort of self-deceit that sets in with conformity to the mores of society. For example, in our culture the word “death” is used as infrequently as possible in connection with the self. It is as if we think everyone will die but ourselves. Such a way of talking is inauthentic because untrue.

Even though Heidegger did not use the term, his perspective is called agnostic since it leaves open the question of God’s existence rather than affirm it (theism) or deny it (atheism). However, the second half of the century was much influenced by theistic proponents of wholeness, integration, relatedness and the healing love of others. It was out of the depth of the encounter with the personal God of love that a hopeful personal life was to emerge. A key figure in theistic existentialism, an umbrella name for philosophies interested in the way crises in human existence lead to insight, was the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. I will excerpt in this chapter from his writings.

In spite of stark contrasts between agnostic and theistic concepts of the person, there are also points of agreement. All human beings, whether doubters or believers, have to experience the full gamut of human emotions from hope to despair, from joy to anguish. Still, the reality of God and hope for life after death makes a great difference in a person’s reaction to those emotions.
You might consider this analogy. Imagine two similar men standing in a room. There are mirrors on each of two opposite walls of the room. One mirror is dark reflecting an image that is murky and depressing. The other mirror is illumined by a projecting light in such a way that the image of this man is bright and clear. Such is the difference between the agnostic view of the person and the theistic view.
Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Martin Heidegger, born in 1889, came from German peasant stock. This is reflected in the earthy images that embellish his writings. “Thinkers trace furrows across the field,” is an example. Martin was brought up a Catholic. He studied the classics and medieval philosophy and went to the seminary. His thesis was on Duns Scotus. Losing his faith in God led Heidegger out of the seminary into the study of contemporary philosophy. It was the philosophy of Husserl, the phenomenologist, that most influenced Heidegger away from sceptical ideas about reality to a fascination with being.

Heidegger would eventually become a writer and a university professor. Throughout World War II Heidegger was a member of the Nazi party. His involvement with the party and his support of its worldview are undisputed. Even more disturbing than his active participation in Nazism, Heidegger never attempted to account for his support of the Nazis outside of calling his involvement with them “a blunder.”

Eventually, Heidegger retired to the Black Forest region of Southern Germany. His masterpiece is Being and Time (1927), a huge tome with the issue of time as the center of man’s self-definition. Heidegger died in 1976.

Heidegger thought of man as earthbound, time bound, radically finite, limited. Man lives in a world where God is “absent.” According to Heidegger, man is estranged from Being itself. What is this mysterious “Being” Heidegger talks about? He doesn’t mean some neutral sense of is-ness but rather the “to-be” of what is. You might understand this in terms of those precious moments where you emerge from the business of coping with life and just drink in the marvel of the fact that something is, such as a flower or a tree. William Barrett whose books about existentialism introduced this movement to the United States, says that Being = the is of what-is. It is sheer presence, as the poet and artist experience it. In poetry we surrender to the wonder of being. Another commentator says that the Being of which Heidegger speaks is not an abstract concept but rather the ultimate ground in which all entities share, in virtue of which they are all beings.

Instead of approaching metaphysics in a Thomistic manner, Heidegger wants to approach it phenomenologically - that is receiving the nature of realities without preconceptions. In this way he hopes to get to what human existence is, in itself. We must let things be and let them reveal themselves. In this he follows the word in Greek for truth, which is “a-lethia”: revelation or unhiddenness. Heidegger contrasts this way of seeing truth about being from the Platonic way of seeing truth as a quality of the intellectual judgment. The Platonic way of seeing truth helps us to master reality but it takes away from the poetic grasp of the things themselves.
Heidegger uses the word “Dasein” meaning being-there, to describe the nature of the human being. A few direct quotations from the philosopher himself will give you an idea of the strange but evocative way Heidegger expressed the truth as he saw it:

“The entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term “Dasein” (being-there).” (6)

More simply, beings other than man such as animals or plants or rocks are not aware of being where they are. They do not inquire about the meaning of their existence.

“Absolute mystery, mystery as such, pervades the whole of man’s Dasein….”(7) (Lemay, p. 109)

According to Heidegger, the key to the understanding of the being of man is the way we are haunted by “nothing.” If I didn’t exist I would be nothing and so would the others around me should they not have existed. It is against the background of the nothingness that could have been, instead of the presences of ourselves and others, that we enter into wonder about the fact that we exist.

“Only because Nothing is revealed in the very basis of our Dasein (human way of existing) that is it possible for the utter strangeness of what-is to dawn on us. Only when the strangeness of what-is forces itself upon us does it awaken and invite our wonder. Only because of wonder, that is to say, the revelation of the Nothing, does the “Why?” spring to our lips. Only because this ‘Why?’ is possible as such can we seek for reasons and proofs in a definite way.”(8)

Man is not essentially pure ego but being-in-the-world. To be is to stand outside oneself in the world of my care and concern, as in the phrase my heart goes out to you. This field of being is called Dasein, being-there. Being-there is receptivity, for example, going on a vacation and taking in the beauty around one vs. going on vacation and just playing cards.

Another characteristic of Dasein’s (human’s) being is the “thrownness” of this entity into its “there.” (9) We have no control over whether we will be born an Eskimo or a Puerto Rican or a Pakistani or a German or an American. Given the fact that we are thrown into existence vs. choosing to be and where we shall be brought up, etc., we don’t understand why we are here and where we are going.

Authenticity has to do with being who I am vs. submerging myself as part of the group. Inauthenticity is a lot like the idea of “denial.” I should not be in denial of the fact that I can die at any moment. That means accepting radical contingency, dependency. Without water I will die in very short order. The knowledge that I may die at any moment forces me to decide who I am and what I need to do as an essential project. This is called resoluteness. It is related to what Heidegger calls Care with a capital “c,” - that is, being responsible for the world I am in.
Our life is made up of mood or feeling, understanding, and speech. Mood equals attunement to where we are: joy, sadness, or dread. It leavens and permeates our whole existence. According to Heidegger, our fundamental mood is anxiety, because of our contingency. Anxiety doesn’t come from a specific fear about something but simply from finitude and contingency, that is the fact we are not necessary, absolute, beings, as the concept of God must be if such a being exists. Where such a God is eternal, timeless; the “not yet” of the future and the “no longer” of the past permeate our existence.

Time is in us. The present is what divides the past and the future. Heidegger gives priority to the future. It is into the future that we project our being. We orient ourselves toward the future by what we take out of the past. Heidegger thinks that there are special aspects of human life that take their meaning from a relation to time such as death, care, anxiety, guilt.

The philosophy of Heidegger is full of interesting formulations, such as that speech is communing with one another through language. The house of Being is how Heidegger defines language. By means of speech we become the guardians of Being.

Critiquing Heidegger is important since his influence was so great on philosophy and theology of the second half of the twentieth century. Barrett wrote in The Irrational Man that Heidegger was a pure thinker whereas he needed to be more of a whole man who needed to be saved. Since we are actually full of self-deceit, we always need mercy. Part of being authentic is to realize this, but since Heidegger does not let God enter the picture, where is the mercy to come from?

Lemay, at the end of his book on the German philosopher says, “Heidegger stands as a great embarrassment for philosophers. The key focus of recent years, however, has been to decide whether or not his philosophy somehow reflects his political ideology, to see if Being and Nazism are somehow related. The most evident place that supports a connection is his account of human beings. “If humans are Dasein, meaning they have no common essence, then there is no reason to expect that a particular group of Dasein will respect the rights of another. The only sense of security a Dasein has comes from (his/her) given society. Consequently, Heidegger’s account of Dasein can lead to absolute nationalism. “I’m a German, and you’re not; therefore you are a threat.” Here we see how such a view easily lent itself to the Nazi platform, which stated that Germans are a unique race, a superior people...

“Heidegger was a nasty character, or as one prominent American philosopher put it, a German red neck. At this point we can only wait to see if Heidegger the philosopher can be rescued from Heidegger the political figure.”(10)

To turn to the question of contemporary relevance, I believe Heidegger’s emphasis on authenticity as related to the truth of the human condition is still valid. Of course it is usually good to
avoid drifting with the crowd and instead to exercise one’s own freedom to choose what really counts. Heidegger’s way of describing truth as openness to being is inspiring as an antidote to pragmatism and work-a-holism. His philosophy can open people to a more contemplative attitude toward life. At the same time, Heidegger’s seeming denial of our need for salvation is crippling. Ultimately Heidegger is self-redemptive. We can especially understand this as we move to a different theistic European approach, that of Martin Buber.

End Notes to Heidegger


2) See Heidegger for Beginners, about Heidegger’s Nazi involvement.


4) Ibid., p. 137


6. Heidegger for Beginners, p. 110

7. Ibid., p. 109

8. Ibid., p. 110

9. Ibid., p. 111

10. Ibid., p. 110?

Martin Buber (1878-1965)

Martin Buber was a Jewish philosopher, born in Vienna. (1) He studied philosophy and art in Austria and Germany. Although steeped in Jewish thought, he also studied German literature, some
Christian philosophy and the mystical tradition of the Church. As a young man, Buber became a
Zionist. Unlike some Zionist leaders, Buber wanted the richness of Jewish culture to have an influence
of all mankind. He was against the type of nationalism characteristic of most countries in the world.
Instead he thought in terms of the collaboration of all mankind under God. Buber was much
interested in reviving the Chasidic tradition of Jewish mysticism and also devoted an enormous
amount of time to a new translation into German of the Old Testament. When forced out of his
university post in Frankfurt, Germany by the Nazis, he left for Israel where he taught philosophy at
Hebrew University from 1938-1951.

_I and Thou_, was Buber’s most famous book (published originally in the 1920's and then in
English as a second edition by Charles Scribner’s Sons in 1958. (2) An impetus for _I and Thou_ was an
incident that happened to Buber in his role as professor. A student came to his office. He responded
to the student’s questions in a courteous professional manner. Right afterwards the student
committed suicide. Shocked, Buber realized that more was required in his encounters with others
than a courteous professional manner. The young man might have been saved had he seen the
student not just as a student but as a unique person worthy of love, so that he might have sensed the
emotions lying behind the questions.

Moving from the incident to a generalization about relationships, Buber came to clarify the
difference between what he called the I-it and the I-Thou.

Here are some excerpts from _I and Thou_ which introduce this distinction:

“I perceive something. I am sensible of something. I imagine something. I will something. I
feel something. I think something. The life of human beings does not consist of all this and the like
alone. This and the like together establish he realm of *I*.“(3)

“If a man lets it have the mastery, the continually growing world of *I* overruns him and robs
him of the reality of his own !…”(4)

“But the realm of *Thou* has a different basis. When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing
for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every *I* is bounded by others; *I*
exists only through being bounded by others. But when *Thou* is spoken, there is no thing. *Thou* has
no bounds. When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his
stand in relation.”(5)

The distinction between the I-it and the I-Thou is not precisely identical with closeness and
distance in relationships. I can have people I call friends who are fairly close but who I relate to
primarily for the sake of avoiding loneliness or to have someone to do things with. In the case of a
deep I-Thou love, at least at its highest moments, there is no question of using the other for a
purpose. To be with this person is the purpose. Presence is more important than what is being done
or said. As Buber insists, such a relationship calls from me an “I” that is different from the ordinary
daily person of myself who interacts with other persons and things in a more casual manner. Whereas Heidegger’s authentic individual is defined by his choices, in Buber’s view it is the relation of loving and being loved that draws out the authentic self. In this way, relationship is essential to being.

In *What is Existentialism*, Barrett contrasts Heidegger and Buber in an interesting manner:

“...the primacy of the “is” for Heidegger over verbal forms like “I am” and “thou art” inevitably suggests a comparison with Martin Buber’s famous concept of the I-Thou relation. According to Buber, I find reality only when I am able to say Thou to another person, and in so saying my own I is really born. For Heidegger, the I can meet the thou only because There is --i.e., can meet only within some encompassing region of Being. After all, I have to meet thee somewhere; in relation to somewhere; in relation to something, and in some context. Buber speaks from a strictly human and personal point of view, Heidegger from the neutral point of view of the ontologist, the philosopher of Being.” (6)

What Buber calls the Thou a gift. I cannot just will to have a Thou in my life or make a relationship into an I-Thou. But when it comes toward me I can refuse it or speak the word Thou to it. And this is a deep act of my being. In fact it is the deepest act. The primary word I-Thou can be spoken only with the whole being...I become through my relation to the Thou; as I become I, I say Thou. (7)

All real living is meeting. “Feelings are “entertained”: love comes to pass. Feelings dwell in man; but man dwells in his love. Love does not cling to the I in such a way as to have the Thou only for its “content,” its object; but love is between I and Thou.”(8)

Man, Buber thought, has a need to be confirmed by other humans. An animal does not need to be confirmed, for it is what it is without accountability based on freedom of choice. By contrast a human hopes that others will confirm him or her “secretly and bashfully watching for a Yes which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another. It is from one man to another that the heavenly bread of self-being is passed.”

What we now call personalism, influenced by Buber’s philosophy, is reflected in the way John Paul II defines love as the sincere gift of self, as will be seen in later portions of this book.

Already you may be wondering whether it is possible for a human being to dwell in this I-Thou level given the necessities of daily life among impersonal things and people who are mostly strangers.

“(Man) knows that his mortal life swings by nature between Thou and It, and he is aware of the significance of this. It suffices him to be able to cross again and again the threshold of the holy place wherein he was not able to remain; the very fact that he must leave it again and again is inwardly bound up for him with the meaning and character of this life. There, on the threshold, the
response, the spirit, is kindled ever new within him; here, in an unholy and needy country, this spark is to be proved. What is called necessity here cannot frighten him, for he has recognized there true necessity, namely destiny.”(9)

Ultimately the possibility of man’s personhood being defined as a relation of love depends upon the God of love. In love man finds God. Finding God does not mean ceasing to relate to other humans. Instead, God leads us out again to the others, helping us to relate to them as Thou’s rather than its.

“Men do not find God if they stay in the world. They do not find Him if they leave the world. He who goes out with his whole being to meet his Thou and carries to it all being that is in the world, finds Him who cannot be sought.” (10)

Buber’s concept of I and Thou is beautiful and inspiring. It can cause a real conversion both in religious practice and in love of others. In some readers, however, Buber’s concept of I-Thou can produce an unfruitful straining after what can only come as a gift. Such an exalted view of the possibilities of the deepest love can sometimes lead us to devalue the gift of more ordinary friendship and the comfort of the help of others less intimate. For some the vision of mystical ecstatic friendship can make for restlessness in marriage and family life.

The concept of the I-Thou relationship has enormous relevance for our times. The tendency to see people as obstacle courses or people to be manipulated and processed is an illustration of I-it attitudes. Even people with good objectives can wind up treating people in an I-it manner because of activism and workaholism. In periods of spiritual stagnancy, some believers may go for years relating to God as if he were a thing, perhaps a dispenser of blessings, but not one to relate to intimately. It is necessary to pray for the grace to overcome obstacles to a true experience of God’s personal love for oneself as an individual person.

End Notes to Buber:

1. For biographical information about Buber see Werner Manheim, Martin Buber (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1974)


3. Ibid., p. 4

4. Ibid., p. 46
5. Ibid., p. 4
7. See *I and Thou*, p. 11
8. Ibid., p. 14
9. Ibid., pp. 52-53
10. Ibid., p. 79

Conclusion

It is impossible for the Christian evangelist to try to bring others to the true faith without any reference to the concept of the person held by the other and by oneself. Many agnostics are trying to “tough it out” by being authentic without the help of God or the vista of an eternal life of union with God. The mentality of such an agnostic differs radically from that of your lay-back pleasure-seeker who doesn’t want to be bothered to get up early on Sunday morning to go to Church! Agnostics will only be willing to talk to you, a Christian, if they first perceive that you are as serious about life and as authentic in your decisions as they are. Through love of friendship and sacrificial deeds of love you may help them to see how much richer personal life is for a Christian.

Many cannot believe in the Person of Christ and his promises because they think all this is too good to be true. They need to be healed of cynicism by the depth of the I-Thou love you extend them. You can deeply wound a seeker if he or she thinks of you as simply wanting to rack up merit through evangelization, and I-it attitude. By contrast, your I-Thou love will draw from them the hidden "I" that is longing for the closeness that true believers in Christ can offer. Never must an on-looker think that your prayer is mechanical, as if God were the ultimate It to be manipulated or given lip service to, rather than a God deserving of ultimate reverence, filial devotion, and self-donation.
Theme 4

Modern vs. Traditional Education

Dewey vs. Lewis

Introduction

By the late 1940's in the larger cities of the United States it was clear to many parents that a quiet revolution had taken place in public education. Children were still learning penmanship and their sums. Spelling bees were still the highlight of the week, but everything else was changing rapidly. In the briefcase the ten year old brought home from school one would no longer find pretty “paint by number” pictures of cows in fields. Instead there might be some abstract design representing no known entity at all! Gone were Latin primers or stories from the Greek myths. Instead there might be a textbook on problems of American democracy. There would still be a column of simple grades such as A,B,C or, God forbid, D or F, on the report card next to subjects such as math, science, English, or home economics. But there would also be notations of S for satisfactory, U for unsatisfactory or E for excellent under headings such as “adaptability,” or “cooperation”!

Under the proud title of progressive education, a gradual shift was taking place from education conceived as the learning of basic skills, facts, and, hopefully, a little wisdom. The new education was, instead, to be a preparation for an ever-changing world destined to replace the static expectations of previous generations. It was thought that what was needed was not young people chock full of out-dateable information, but rather imaginative, flexible minds able to operate under constantly developing new conditions of life. Method was to replace truth. The genius behind the philosophy of the shiny new textbooks and fascinating new methods was the influential philosopher, John Dewey, of the pragmatic school of American thought. As you will see, his educational revolution flowed directly from his rejection of any absolute claim to unchanging truth.

Across the Atlantic, however, there was a mind that was working to reverse the trend set into motion by thinkers such as John Dewey. The mind belonged to the person of C. S. Lewis. Tutored by a brilliant progressive atheist, Lewis, once converted to what he called “mere Christianity,” was to spearhead the return to the principles of traditional education. A classicist by trade, as well as a philosopher, apologist and author of popular theological novels, C. S. Lewis wrote a small book entitled The Abolition of Man de bunking the premises of progressive education. He claimed that the
substitution of subjective experience, experimentation, and pragmatic motives, for the traditional ideal of heroic nobility would be the ruin of future generations. There is probably no single writer who more greatly influenced, after his death, the flight from the public schools into home-schooling at the end of the 20th century than C. S. Lewis. On the other hand, a student commented after reading this chapter in draft form that perhaps it was Dewey who indirectly led to home-schooling. His thinking led to a curriculum so vapid that parents reacted by devising their own!

On what side will you come down in this field of the Battle for the 20th Century Mind?
John Dewey (1859-1952)

Born in Vermont, New England, John Dewey lived to become the foremost American philosopher of the pragmatist school. Influential as he was as a philosopher, he was equally so in the sphere of education. (1)

The small booklets that I will be referring to about education published by John Dewey in the early 1900's were reprinted in 1956 after some twenty-five printings. In the introduction the editor, Leonard Carmichael, points out that it was characteristic of John Dewey not to be a “cloistered academician” but a man of influence on real people in society. He has been called the father of progressive education. (2)

Carmichael also calls him an instrumentalist and defines this position as meaning that “Truth was a dynamic series of ideas, beliefs and other processes which were the instruments by means of which the purposes of life can be achieved...His conclusions stand or fall on his theory of human nature. (3)

Before the time of Dewey, education was thought to provide the building blocks of fixed knowledge. Dewey thought it was static to hand on to each new generation a definite body of subject matter. Instead he wanted what was called a more child-centered school - the emphasis being on the real interests of the child and learning through doing. Key words were experimentation and naturalism. He was against the idea of strengthening the mind through disciplines unrelated to life. Carmichael says that nowadays it is better seen that the study of language and math does strengthen the mind and therefore contribute to the ideal of a flexible intellect.

With great significance, Carmichael notes that after two World Wars and the menace of communist dictatorship we understand better than Dewey did what happens when instrumentalism is used by dictators to try to get rid of any fixed values.

Here are some ideas and quotations from the booklets compiled from lectures originally given by Dewey in the early 1900’s. Note, often in these excerpts we see Dewey evaluating the theories and practices of others in order, later, to come to his own more moderate conclusions. As you read you might relate these theories to what you experienced in your education.

From The Child and the Curriculum:

"The fundamental factors in the educative process are an immature, undeveloped being; and certain social aims, meanings, values incarnate in the matured experience of the adult. The educative process is the due interaction of these forces. Such a conception of each in relation to the other as facilitates completest and freest interaction is the essence of educational theory." (4)
“...the narrow but personal world of the child against the impersonal but infinitely extended world of space and time; second, the unity, the single wholeheartedness of the child’s life, and the specialization and divisions of the curriculum; third, an abstract principle of logical classification and arrangement, and the practical and emotional bonds of child life.

“From these elements of conflict grow up different educational sects. One school fixes its attention upon the importance of the subject-matter of the curriculum as compared with the contents of the child’s own experience. It is as if they said: Is life petty, narrow, and crude? Then studies reveal the great, wide universe with all its fullness and complexity of meaning. Is the life of the child egoistic, self-centered, impulsive? Then in these studies is found an objective universe of truth, law, and order. Is his experience unfocused, vague, uncertain, at the mercy of the moment’s caprice and circumstance? Then studies introduce a world arranged on the basis of eternal and general truth; a world where all is measured and defined. Hence the moral: ignore and minimize the child’s individual peculiarities, whims, and experience. They are what we need to get away from. (5)

This theory leads to an ideal of maximum information and facts conveyed in an orderly manner without reference to the child’s lived experience. By contrast, the other sect of opinion says that

“The child is the starting-point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal. It alone furnishes the standard...Personality, character, is more than subject-matter. Not knowledge or information, but self-realization, is the goal. To possess all the world of knowledge and lose one’s own self is as awful a fate in education as in religion. Moreover, subject-matter never can be got into the children from without. Learning is active. It involves reaching out of the mind. It involves organic assimilation starting from within...The source of whatever is dead, mechanical, and formal in schools is found precisely in the subordination of the life and experience of the child to the curriculum. It is because of this that “study” has become a synonym for what is irksome, and a lesson identical with a task.”(6)

The purport of the booklet by Dewey is that both these theories are limited. What is needed instead is that experience and facts become integrated (7) by moving from the child’s experience into what he is studying seen as the experience of the race.

We should not think of the child’s experience as fixed, but rather as in motion day by day. Neither should we think of the subject-matter as fixed. Instead we should be thinking of mutual interaction. (8)

In this harmless seeming paragraph we get to the heart of Dewey’s educational revolution:

“There is, then, nothing final about a logical rendering of experience. Its value is not contained in itself; its significance is that of standpoint, outlook, method. It intervenes between the more casual, tentative, and roundabout experiences of the past, and more controlled and orderly experiences of
the future. It gives past experience in that net form which renders it most available and most significant, most fecund for future experience.”

Can you see that this theory eliminates the notion of absolute truths to be understood and explored in favor of method and skills? Of course Dewey doesn’t deny all content or truth with a small “t,” but he presupposes that such truth is always changing. (9)

On the other hand, Dewey could have been right to react against a type of education of the past so formal that it lacked

“Any organic connection with what the child has already seen and felt and loved...A symbol which is induced from without, which has not been led up to in preliminary activities, is, as we say, a bare or mere symbol; it is dead and barren.” (10)

“The second evil in this external presentation is lack of motivation...there is no craving, no need, no demand.” (11) This is in contrast to education based on real needs of the child for clarification because the facts presented relate to his actual daily experience.

“...when material is directly supplied in the form of a lesson to be learned as a lesson, the connecting links of need and aim are conspicuous for their absence.” (12) Thirdly, the material is often so sifted that there is no actual inquiry, only dead facts to be memorized.

From *The School and Society*:

Dewey begins by stating that important as it is to view education from the standpoint of how a particular beloved child is developing, it is equally important for a democratic country to be concerned with the impact of education on society. (13)

“Here individualism and socialism are at one. Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself.” (14)

The new education, as it was then called, should be seen as part of social evolution. Dewey points to industrialism, world markets, move to the cities, shift from the home as the center of most activities with children participating in character-building work and knowledge of animals and farming to most of these activities taking place outside the home. On the other hand we have the advantages for the city child of

“Increase in toleration, in breadth of social judgment...greater accuracy of adaptation to differing personalities, contact with greater commercial activities.” (p. 12)

Schools try to combine the best of both these worlds by classes in shop-work, sewing, cooking, etc. These should be taught not just to render the pupil more efficient, but to build the idea of community, team-work as happens so spontaneously with group sports. Cooking and shop work
are more lively because the children do it together as a team vs. at individual desks where selfishness and competitiveness is almost encouraged. (p. 15)

“...a comparison of results in the recitation or in the examination to see which child has succeeded in getting ahead of others in storing up, in accumulating, the maximum of information. So thoroughly is this the prevailing atmosphere that for one child to help another in his task has become a school crime.” (p. 15-16)

By contrast, with group activities the students are expected to help each other and want to encourage each other to contribute to the project.

“Of course, order is simply a thing which is relative to an end. If you have the end in view of forty or fifty children learning certain set lessons, to be recited to the teacher, your discipline must be devoted to securing that result. But if the end in view is the development of a spirit of social co-operation and community life, discipline must grow out of and be relative to such an aim.” (p.16-17)

Plato says that a slave is one whose actions do not express his own ideas, but those of some other man. Education - should not just be rote. (p. 23)

The old type of education “appeals for the most part simply to the intellectual aspect of our natures, our desire to learn, to accumulate information, and to get control of the symbols of learning; not to our impulses and tendencies to make, to do, to create, to produce, whether the form of utility or of art.” (p. 26)

“When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious.” (p. 29)

In critique of Dewey’s basic philosophy of education, I rate his concern for the whole person, the experience of the child, and his interest in experimentation as positive. His ideal of flexibility also has merits. I, myself, was educated in public schools devoted to Dewey’s concepts. On the positive side, those merits of his philosophy resulted in a boundless joy in creativity and self-expression, these traits benefiting me as a teacher, speaker and writer. Friends and colleagues brought up under strict rote learning ask me how I manage to be so prolific. I reply that it comes from an early de-emphasis on perfection in style or speech. I just say or write what I think is true without much care about correctness. They find themselves paralyzed by the inculcation of the idea that if you don’t want to do something perfectly don’t do it at all!

Negative would be Dewey’s atheism, his denial of moral absolutes, and his lack of interest in many Christian virtues. These problems had vast consequences for education in the rest of the 20th
Can we not see springing from progressive education a system where children learn to be efficient and proficient without any goal for their skills in terms of unchanging human or religious values? Dewey’s optimism about the future of society, leaving out of account the effects of original sin, contributed greatly to failure to deal adequately with evil tendencies. Such a philosophy can be seen as coming to root eventually in unbridled hedonism and its consequences in an addictive culture with the abandonment of sexual responsibility and eventually the wholesale killing of unwanted babies.

The result of pragmatic methods of education has certainly been a loss in the area of knowledge of the past. Most students in the United States have less background in the area of liberal arts than students of former centuries. At the same time, education has become almost an idol in our culture. Instead of strengthening a theological world view, education is often a substitute, with the reward being not heaven but success in the world. So much is this upward mobility sought that even religious parents send their children to schools they know will tear down the belief of the young people, if only success in the world is guaranteed.

End Notes for Dewey


2. The Child and the Curriculum, p. vi.

3. Ibid., p. vii

4. Ibid., p. 4

5. Ibid., pp. 7-8

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Lewis was brought up in an Irish Protestant home but without much religious training. He was tutored by an atheistic logician. In young adulthood he converted to what he called “Mere Christianity,” though he attended Anglican services. Lewis was an Oxford and later Cambridge professor of classics as well as a popular writer of fiction and of apologetics. Famous books of C. S.
Lewis include *Mere Christianity, Problem of Pain, The Screwtape Letters, The Chronicles of Narnia, Great Divorce, The Abolition of Man, Miracles, Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, That Hideous Strength, Till We Have Faces*. His unusual late marriage to an American woman became the subject of a popular film Shadowlands made many years after his death.

Some of the main themes of the philosophy of life of C. S. Lewis were the objectivity of truth and the importance of nobility of character and heroic virtue. A famous way Lewis formulated the case for Christianity was that it was illogical to think of Jesus as a wonderful human being, a wisdom figure, etc. Since Jesus clearly claims divinity, he is either a liar, a madman, or the real thing. Since no one thinks he was a liar or a madman he has to have been what he said he was, the divine son of God.

In Lewis’ book *The Abolition of Man* written in 1947 (1) he critiqued the philosophical presuppositions behind modern education. Lewis began his book with an analysis of an ordinary text used in schools for young people of around high school age. He noticed that the authors of this primer had what we would call today a hidden agenda. They were interested in shifting the students interest from the real objective world to subjective emotions. They thought that when someone makes a statement that seems objective it is really subjective. For example, if someone says that sunset is sublime, they are not reporting about the sunset, but rather about their own feelings. Presumably there are no such things as sublime realities, only “sublime feelings.”

The textbook is echoing certain popular philosophical theories such as emotivism which claim that there are no ethical absolutes. Take pre-marital sex. If someone claims that this is objective wrong, according to emotivists, they are really only expressing their own distaste for sex. Lewis showed how absurd this seemingly innocuous theory really was. In the presence of what someone thinks is sublime, Lewis argued, he doesn’t have sublime feelings but rather humble feelings and a desire to venerate. Those feelings of humility and veneration refer to an objective reality that is sublime.

“If I say ‘you are contemptible, I don’t mean that I have contemptible feelings, but rather that I have angry feelings...Making all values subjective...makes them trivial.”

You see, if you tell someone he or she is contemptible then you must give a good reason based on intrinsic values, such as your having committed a mean act. But if all it means to blame someone is that I have mean feelings, there is more moral issue, only a psychological question about why I might be over-reacting.

According to Lewis, education bent on debunking noble sentiments ends in making the students into cynics instead of people capable of noble emotions. If someone is lauding goodness and you say he or she is just naive, that is cynical. We ought to laud true goodness, not debunk it. Of course there is such a thing as thinking someone is generous, for example, when this person is just looking for tax write-offs. But, as Lewis expresses it, critiquing bathos (sentimental drivel) the book
winds up leaving only shrewdness. (2) The authors of the textbook Lewis critiques think that their students are too naive and sentimental whereas most of them are cold and vulgar. In any case, Lewis thought that “The right defense against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments.” (3)

As in the philosophy of Von Hildebrand, which we will study later, Lewis emphasized the idea that there really are attitudes and deeds that merit our admiration. Plato and Aristotle insisted that young people had to be taught to love what is good and hate the evil. People who do not realize these differences are like color-blind people.

Getting back to the nature of education, whereas the old traditional kind initiated people into the world of true values, the new education just programs people.

“The old dealt with its pupils as grown birds deal with young birds when they teach them to fly: the new deals with them more as the poultry-keeper deals with young birds - making them thus and for purposes of which the birds know nothing.”(4)

In the type of progressive education influenced by Dewey, in many ways falls under Lewis’ critique. Public school students often lost the idea of the heroic and were molded to be flexible open-minded citizens able to express our opinions, irrespective of any true values. The mentality became sophistic as they learned to debate successfully on any side, no matter how false or loathsome. For the traditional virtue of love was substituted democratic tolerance.

Lewis asked in The Abolition of Man whether anyone could be asked to sacrifice his life for his country on the basis of the new kind of debunking education? One might reply that the protests against the war in Vietnam answered that question. Young men were asked to sacrifice not because of some absolute value of patriotism but because it is useful for the country to have soldiers. How natural that they would ask why, and then, why me?

In the past, by contrast, ethical norms crossing over many different cultures are self-evident premises rather than conclusions to be proven. You have to see that it is better to do good, to love your neighbor as yourself, etc. Without such values, education easily becomes a conditioner or programmer of whatever values the most powerful wish to wield. (5)

In his novel, That Hideous Strength, (6) Lewis fleshes out this concept depicting in horrible detail the types of manipulative individuals who will fill the void created by subjectivism at the university level. With no set of absolute values you have education as a programmer of whatever values the most powerful wish to wield.

“...critics may ask ‘Why should you suppose they (the future programmers) will be such bad men?’ But I am not supposing them to be bad men. They are, rather, not men (in the old sense) at all. They are, if you like, men who have sacrificed their own share in traditional humanity in order to devote themselves to the task of deciding what ‘Humanity’ shall henceforth mean. ‘Good’ and ‘bad,’
applied to them, are words without content: for it is from them that the content of these words is henceforward to be derived...Man's final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man.” (7)

    In the absence of acknowledged good all we have is “I want.” (8) Only an absolute rule that is above us can overarch rulers and ruled alike to prevent tyranny. The new educational programmers will liquidate unsocial elements and laud only integration and dynamism vs. nobility and diligence. Traditional virtues such as thrift will be viewed only as sales-resistance. (9)

    It must be obvious that I think that Lewis' ideas about the defects of progressive education with its scepticism, relativism, and abandonment of objective truth and value, are excellent.

    In his effort to defend traditional education, however, I wonder how well he saw how a certain kind of defense of patriotism led into English colonial exploitation. And, for all the creative teachers of the classics, such as Lewis, himself, what of those who taught students to learn by rote with no ostensible result but boredom and eventual rebellion?

End Notes for Lewis:

2. Ibid., p. 15
3. Ibid., p. 24
4. Ibid., p. 32
5. See p. 72 ff
6. Th at H i d e ou s Stren g th (New Yo rk: S cribn er's, 1 99 6)
7. Abolition, pp. 76-77
8. Ibid., p. 78
9. See Ibid., pp. 84-85

Conclusion

    After finishing the chapter about education for The Battle for the 20th Century Mind I was left with some questions that might be in your minds as well: What can be salvaged from progressive
educational ideals? Is there a trend today in public schools to return to some of the classical ideals Lewis thought so important? In what ways does home-schooling, as generally practiced, exemplify ideals both of Dewey and of Lewis?
Theme 5

The Independent vs. the Religious Woman

De Beauvoir vs. Stein

Introduction

“Women’s Lib!” Can you remember the first time you heard those words? Probably not, if you are younger than fifty. That’s because, a few decades after it’s founding in the early sixties, the term “women’s liberation,” evolved into the now more familiar “feminism.”

I was in my thirties when I first heard that a women’s lib movement, similar to the black liberation movement, was gaining momentum. I recall women and men laughed their heads off - that is how absurd the notion first seemed. Little could we imagine at its inception that women’s lib would revolutionize the relationship between many women and men of future generations!

To consider changes in the United States since the onset of 1950’s feminism, just think about how rare it was before that time to see a father change a diaper or to walk up to the desk of a woman banker. On the negative side, could abortion on demand have won the day without underlying feminist premises?

The mother of feminism in the United States was undoubtedly Betty Friedan whose book, The Feminine Mystique, became an instant best-seller. A sharp observer and participant in the middle class suburban life-style of the forties and fifties, Friedan exploded the myth that all women would be happy if only they had a nice house, a garden, and a few children to raise. If her diagnosis of the miseries of isolated nuclear family life in the suburbs was astute, her remedies were more controversial. Going for career first, with pre-marital sex and contraception as part of the package, emotionally bankrupted many enthusiastic women’s libbers.
The grandmother of feminism was acknowledged to be the French woman existentialist philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir. Her study, The Second Sex, provided an exhaustive treatment of the historical and philosophical roots of oppression of women. Reading The Second Sex, with its wealth of factual data and fascinating anecdotal material, left most women scholars both stunned and furious. Examples would be reading direct quotations from male philosophers about the inferiority of women, or peasant husbands in some cultures routinely beating up their wives every night to let out the frustrations of the day.

When abortion was legalized and became a vital part of the agenda of most feminist organizations, there was a backlash. It took the form of vehement espousal of traditional feminine roles among conservative women and male authority figures. Some conservative religious groups, Jewish and Christian, urged mothers to stay at home even if it meant going on welfare. Strict interpretations of Pauline “headship” of males over females were taught by some Christian churches as absolutely necessary to combat emasculation of men and masculinization of women.

Those women and men, who wanted to avoid extremes, often became confused. Consider the plight of a businessman in his fifties. He had always called “the girls” in the office “honey” or “sweetheart” and gotten a smile in return. Suddenly his secretaries demanded to be called “women,” and regarded the word “honey” as an affront, something to document for their sexual harassment suits as the first demeanor of their “male chauvinist bosses! On the other side, how was a wife who had always jumped to satisfy the most trivial demands of her husband, suddenly to become an assertive modern woman with her own goals outside the home?

Comic relief came from watching the old-fashioned Archie and Edith Bunker and the younger Gloria and “Meathead” live out these conflicts in exaggerated caricature each week on All in the Family. Tragically, however, those spouses who failed to arrive at compromise often found themselves divorced over issues involving legitimate and, sometimes, illegitimate assertion of feminine rights.

Catholics who were neither fundamentalist about traditional roles nor revolutionary were looking around for some kind of middle ground. They found insight and wisdom in the many books, lectures, and workshops based on Christian principles offered from the 70’s onward about how women and men should relate to each other. Among these, I believe that the writings of St. Edith Stein stand at the top of the list. Based on lectures given in Europe before World War II, the writings of Stein helped women to understand how devotion to Christ could transfigure the relations of women and men so marred by original sin. Available before feminism became popular among English speaking peoples, these writings were reprinted again as an antidote to the prevailing confusion.

Our study of the theme of atheistic and Christian philosophy of woman will focus on De Beauvoir and Stein but will also include thoughts taken from the writings of their activist counterparts: Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood will be contrasted with those of Joan Andrews, foremost woman leader of the pro-life group Operation Rescue.
Reading first the article by me: “Philosophical Reflections on the Feminine and Masculine and Human Nature” will help you understand where the other writers fit in the broader picture.
Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986)

Born in Paris, De Beauvoir was a strong Catholic as a youth because her mother was devout. Her father, however, was pagan in his morals. Simone gradually lost her faith during her teen years. After studying with Jean Paul Sartre, the atheistic French existentialist, her doubts were augmented. Since they did not believe in marriage, they life-time companions, instead, though each had other relationships. De Beauvoir taught and wrote about philosophy. She also wrote novels. As early as 1936, De Beauvoir became interested in studying the nature of woman. She did voluminous research both in Europe and the United States for her book, The Second Sex, which includes biological, historical viewpoints, psychological and sociological data and theories, as well as chapters about prostitution and religion.

The Second Sex is an important book, full of interesting insights and speculations even if it is basically flawed by a false philosophy of the meaning of life.

Here are just a very few summaries and excerpts from The Second Sex, translated and edited by H. M. Parshley (N.Y.: Random House, 1989) - originally published in English in 1952):

In the introduction, De Beauvoir points out that the sexes are not symmetrical because man is the paradigm of the human person and woman is the second sex, or, the other.

“She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other.” (p. xxii)

As such, oppression of all sorts is justified. One reason women do not rise up against oppression is because they don’t define themselves as a “we” with other women, but instead define themselves as daughter, sister, wife, mother, of fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. (see p. xxv) The main reason women do this is existential - that is, on De Beauvoir’s theory, because in this way they can enjoy dependence and avoid economic risk. They also can avoid the pain of having to make free choices about their lives. (see p. xxvii) Through the economic independence coming with the industrial revolution, there was a chance to break free of this oppressive nexus.

By contrast, De Beauvoir’s goal is to change the ideas of society in such a way as to promote comradely equality. Men would ultimately gain by losing the slave and gaining a companion. (see p. xxxi)

A key factor is realizing that there is no such thing as an essence - woman. It is up to women to create who woman will be. Ideas such as the eternal feminine are concocted by men to make women think that the domesticity which serves them, is beautiful.
“Men have presumed to create a feminine domain - the kingdom of life, of immanence - only in order to lock up women therein.” (p. 65)

De Beauvoir thinks that women’s reproductive role ties her to life vs. transcendence of life through significant projects. In sexuality the woman is receptive, waiting, passive, and this contributes to his dominance.

Pregnancy is like having a parasite living inside followed by the baby nourishing itself at the expense of the body of the mother when nursing, She describes the pregnant mothers as having within themselves: “A hostile element - it is the species gnawing at their vitals.” (p. 30)

By contrast, the male’s sexuality is not enslaving: “...the male seems infinitely favored: his sexual life is not in opposition to his existence as a person.” (p. 32)

De Beauvoir presupposes that it is better to avoid loving inter-dependence in favor of independence. The closeness of the babe in the womb to the mother is demeaned in favor of work-projects.

Historical chapters in *The Second Sex* chronicle the oppression of women in detail. While someone might question her conclusions, others might need to be enlightened about prevalence of female infanticide in some cultures, extreme penalties for infidelity. De Beauvoir admits that there was some amelioration of women’s plight in Christian countries. (see p. 99 ff.) After the French revolution key issues became the vote and independent employment, largely because machines enabled the weaker sex to work side by side with men without a discrepancy of physical strength. (see p. 113) De Beauvoir writes with regret that because of her enslavement to reproductive functions woman still worked for the family rather than for herself and the progress of mankind. She is delighted that in the 20th century, through contraception women are

“Protected in large part from the slavery of reproduction, she is in a position to assume the economic role that is offered her and will assure her of complete independence.” (p. 121)

Simone De Beauvoir has many good insights. Concerning the comment by a psychologist that little girls climb trees to compete with boys: nonsense, De Beauvoir replies. Little girls climb trees because it is fun.

De Beauvoir has interesting descriptions about negative relationships. Following Jean Paul Sartre, her mentor, De Beauvoir thinks that many so-called love relationships actually involve destructive appropriation of the other person’s freedom. (What Buber would call the I-it.) There are men who, indeed, seek in a woman a combination of prostitute and slave.

Or, to treat of feminine distortions, De Beauvoir writes this about the relationship of some mothers to their sons:
“She would have him be of unlimited power, yet held in the palm of her hand, dominating the world, yet on his knees before her” (p. 517)

Concerning the smothering mother, she writes:

“...the mother makes herself the slave of her offspring to compensate for the emptiness of her heart and to punish herself for her unavowed hostility. Such a mother is morbidly anxious, not allowing her child out of her sight; she gives up all diversion, all personal life, thus assuming the role of victim; and she derives from these sacrifices the right to deny her child all independence.” (p. 514)

Here is how De Beauvoir reacts to the theory that women who are ambitious are really only substituting work for a child. De Beauvoir claims that such a theory is as prejudiced as to think necessarily that a woman who has a child is substituting this for an important work she could otherwise do. It ignores the fundamental freedom to define oneself. (see p. 523)

De Beauvoir’s idea I believe to be a distortion. It presupposes that any kind of work is equally important as children are. There is false metaphysics here. Not that work is not important but it is usually a means to and end; whereas a child is an end.

In a prophesy of day-care, De Beauvoir states that the answer to women working outside of the home at interesting occupations but not neglecting their children is to have care for the children outside the home. (see p. 525)

De Beauvoir thinks of marriage as a trap. Men and women should always feel free to break off a relationship. Otherwise they are unfree and insincere.

“...sentiment is free when it depends upon no constraint from outside, when it is experienced in fearless sincerity. The constraint of ‘conjugal love’ leads, on the other hand, to all kinds of repressions and lies.” (p. 473)

She seems to be blind to the reality of true love in real marriage.

In the concluding chapter of The Second Sex, De Beauvoir states that whereas in the past woman wanted to entrap man into her little domestic world,

“Today that combat takes a different shape; instead of wishing to put man in a prison, woman endeavors to escape from one; she no longer seeks to drag him into the realms of immanence but to emerge, herself, into the light of transcendence. Now the attitude of the males creates a new conflict: it is with a bad grace that the man lets her go. He is very well pleased to remain the sovereign subject, the absolute superior, the essential being; he refuses to accept his own companion as an equal in any concrete way. She replies to his lack of confidence in her by assuming an aggressive attitude...each free being wishes to dominate the other.” (p. 717-718)
Note that the final lines of the book reinforce the male as the paradigm just by the use of the word “brotherhood”:

“It is for man to establish the reign of liberty in the midst of the world of the given. To gain the supreme victory, it is necessary, for one thing, that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood.” (p. 732)

Not “sisterhood”?

In critique of the basic ideas of Simone de Beauvoir I would say that her descriptions of the life of men and women do, indeed, mirror the distortion of all relationships after the fall. Bad relationships between men and women do involve oppression, from both sides. But De Beauvoir’s philosophy is cold. Having lost a God of love, there is no metaphysical center of reality such as could make self-giving beautiful. By making the masculine the paradigm, unwittingly the woman can only be worthy by becoming masculine which is really anti-woman. Because there is no creation by God, therefore the worth of a person is not in pro-creating new human beings, destined for eternity, but in productivity for the earth.

St. Edith Stein (1891-1942)

A daughter in a large devoutly Jewish business family in Germany, Edith Stein became an atheist as a student. Study of philosophy led her into the circle of Catholic students and eventually to a conversion. As soon as she was baptized Edith wanted to become a Carmelite nun, but her director insisted she continue as a teacher and lecturer. When the Nazi persecution of Jewish people, including converts, made it impossible for Edith to retain her teaching job, her director suggested that she enter the convent. Eventually the Nazis sent all Jewish converts they could find in Holland where she had fled to the concentration camps. She died in Auschwitz. She was canonized recently.

Edith Stein wrote her thesis on the phenomenon of empathy. She also wrote a large book on metaphysics and wrote on spirituality. However, she is most famous for lectures later published on the subject of woman. The following excerpts are from her Essays on Woman compiled from lectures given before she entered Carmel. This excerpt is here with permission and is translated from the German by Freda Mary Oben, Ph.D. Copyright © 1987, 1996 Washington Province of Discalced Carmelites ICS Publications 2131 Lincoln Road, N.E. Washington, DC 20002-1199 U.S.A.

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ON THE NATURE OF WOMAN

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“The vocation of man and woman is not quite the same in the original order, the order of fallen nature and the order of redemption. Originally they were both required to preserve their own similarity to god, their dominion over the earth and the preservation of the race....After their fall their relationship is changed from a pure communion of love to one of governing and subordination tainted by lust. The hard struggle for existence has been assigned primarily to man, the labour of birth to woman. But there is a promise of redemption, because woman is to fight evil, and the male sex will be exalted in the Son of Man who is to come. The Redemption will restore the original order. The superiority of man is revealed in the fact that the Saviour came into the world as man. The feminine sex is honoured in that he was born of a human mother. A woman becomes the gate through which God entered into the human race. Adam was the human type that pointed to the future divine-human king of creation....

“If we attempt to describe the nature of man and woman on the basis of natural knowledge, we shall receive a vivid interpretation of what the Word of God has suggested to us...

“Man’s body and mind are equipped for fight and conquest, in accordance with his original vocation to subject the world and be its king and master. Thus there is a threefold urge in him: he wants to subdue it by knowledge and thus make it his own, but also to possess it with all the enjoyments it offers, and lastly to make it his own creation by forming it. It is due to the limitation of human nature, which it shares with every created thing, but even more to the deterioration of all his powers in the state of original sin, that man is unable to achieve in equal measure all that is implied in his dominion over the earth. If the desire for knowledge is strong in him and he uses all his energy to satisfy it, he will to a great extent be forced to renounce the possession and enjoyment of the good things of life as well as creative work. But if he is wholly intent on making a small world of his own creation, whether as a farmer, an artist or a politician etc...pure knowledge and the enjoyment of the good things of life will have to take the second place. And in each of these spheres the single achievement will be the more perfect, the more restricted the field of activity. Thus just the desire to produce as perfect a work as possible will lead to onesidedness and cause the other talents to atrophy...

(Man can also become tyrannical.) “This change of kingship into brutal tyranny shows itself also in man’s relation to woman. According to the original order she was given him as a companion and helpmate. Hence she is equipped in the same way as he in order to assist him in dominating the earth: she, too, is capable of knowledge, enjoyment and creative work...This indicates a form of co-operation in which the woman could develop her gifts by the side of man in their common tasks, while he would be preserved from becoming inordinately one-sided by the harmonious development of her gifts. But in the state of punishment after the fall this companionship was changed into a state of domination which is often brutally enforced. The natural gifts of a woman and their best possible development are irrelevant, and she is exploited as a means to an end in the service of work or for the satisfaction of a man’s desire. So it may easily come about that the tyrant becomes the slave of lust, and thus the slave of the slave who is to satisfy it.
“The perversion of the relations between man and woman is connected with that of the attitude towards posterity. Procreation was originally meant to be the task of both. Since, owing to their differences, both depend on completing each other, this dependence is even more emphasized in their relationship to their children. On the one hand their undeveloped nature of the child makes it necessary to nurse and protect it and to guide its growth. Owing to the close physical relationship between mother and child and woman’s special capacity for sharing and devoting herself to another’s life, she will have the principal part in its education, which will also be helped by her stronger instinct for the harmonious development of human talents. On the other hand, the demands of motherhood make it imperative that man should protect and care for mother and child. Moreover, because he is more energetic and gifted for outstanding achievements, he has also a duty to instruct. And finally, because he is king of all creation, he has also to care for the noblest of all earthly creatures...The vocation of the father may be abused in many ways. On the one hand he may shun his duties, in the lowest form by abusing sexual intercourse for the mere satisfaction of his instincts, without giving any thought to his descendants, perhaps even at their cost. On a higher level he may indeed shoulder his material responsibilities, but neglect his share in their education. On the other hand there is the danger that a father will perform his duties brutally, restricting the mother’s responsibilities to the merely physical sphere and depriving her of her higher tasks, while he himself violently represses all the legitimate aspirations of the new generation.

“All weaknesses in man’s nature that cause him to miss his original vocation are rooted in the perversion of his relation to God. He can only fulfill his principal task of being the image of God, if he seeks to develop his powers in humble submission to his guidance. He must seek knowledge in the form and within the limits sanctioned by God; he must enjoy God’s creatures reverently and gratefully for his glory; he must do creative work in order to complete creation in the way God has assigned to man’s free action. This would mean truly to be a finite image of the divine wisdom, goodness and power. If man says to God ‘I will not serve,’ his relation to all other creatures will be perverted. We have the exact parallel in the nature of woman. According to the original order her place is by the side of man to subdue the earth and bring up posterity. But her body and soul are less suited for fight and conquest, but rather for nursing, protecting and preserving. Of the threefold attitude to the world that consists in knowing, enjoying and creatively shaping, the second is usually best suited to her. She seems more capable than man of reverently enjoying creatures...This is evidently connected with her function of preserving and fostering posterity. It is a sense of the importance of the organic whole, of specific values and of individuals. This renders her sensitive and clear-sighted for whatever wants to grow and develop and requires individual understanding. This sense of what is organic benefits not only her posterity but all other creatures, especially the opposite sex; it makes her an understanding companion and help in the enterprises of another. Hence, according to the original order of nature, man and woman evidently complement each other in this way: man’s vocation is primarily to govern; his fatherhood is not subordinated to or co-ordinated with this, but included in it; whereas woman is primarily called to be a mother, her share in the government of the world being in some way implied in that.
“Just as a woman’s knowledge, enjoyment and action do not differ in principle from those of a man, the same forms of perversion appear in both. They are rooted in the desire to gain possession of things by violence and thus to spoil or even destroy them...Since women are less gifted for abstract thought and creative action than for the possession and enjoyment of good things, there is the danger that they may become completely absorbed in these. If now the reverent joy in things is perverted into greed, a woman on the one hand anxiously collect and preserve useless things, on the other sink into a life of sloth and self-indulgence. This in its turn will tend to corrupt her relationship with man. If their free companionship is threatened by his tendency to brutal despotism, she will become even more his slave by surrendering herself to her own instincts. On the other hand, her anxiety to preserve her property may also lead to a domineering attitude towards man. Her relation to her children shows similar characteristics. If a woman leads a merely sensual life she will seek to escape the duties of motherhood as much as the man those of fatherhood, unless she is preserved from this by an instinctive desire for children and an equally distinctive attachment. If a woman anxiously seeks to retain her children as if they were her property, she will try in every way to tie them to herself (also by curtailing as far as possible the rights of their father), and thus prevent their free development. By refusing to serve her husband, her children and all creatures in loving reverence, and so to further their natural development for God’s honour and their natural happiness, she will prevent development and destroy happiness.

“Again the root of the evil is the perversion of her relation to God. In the fall woman rebelled against God and exalted herself above man by corrupting him, therefore she was punished by being subjected to him...

“We have this indicated how nature, and hence the original vocation of man and woman, can be realized: this is possible only if both once more become children of God. The redemptive work of Christ assures our adoption if we ourselves do what is in our power. The Israelites of the Old Covenant did what they were asked to do by faithfully following the Law and awaiting the Messiah. For women this meant that they were humbly to be subject to men, to preserve their purity and to discipline their sensuality more strictly than men. They were to long for children in order to see in them God’s salvation, and to bring them up faithfully in the fear of the Lord. Man, on the other hand, had to carry out the prescribed services of prayer and sacrifice, he had to obey the moral and social commandments, look after the well-being of his family and honour his wife as the mother of his children.

“In the New Covenant man takes part in the work of redemption by the most intimate personal union with Christ; he clings to him by faith, because he is the way of salvation who has revealed the truth and offered the means to attain beatitude; by hope which confidently expects the life promised by him; and by love which seeks to approach him. This love will try to know him ever more clearly; it will contemplate his life and meditate his words and want to be united to him most intimately in the holy Eucharist. It will share his mystical life by following the Church’s Year and its
liturgy. This way of salvation is the same for both sexes; it redeems both, as well as their mutual relationship.

“Redemption did not restore fallen nature to its original purity by one stroke. Christ has placed salvation into the soil of mankind like a seed that must grow with the inner and outer growth of the Church and in every individual soul. Being “on the way” like pilgrims bound for the heavenly Jerusalem, we experience in ourselves the fight of corrupt nature with the germ of grace that wants to grow in us and strives and is able to expel whatever is unhealthy. All around us we see the fruits of original sin in its most frightening forms, especially in the relationship of the sexes. Every trace of their high vocation seems to be lost in a life of unfettered licentiousness; the sexes are fighting each other for their rights, deaf to the voice of nature and of God. Yet we also see that things can be different where grace is efficacious. In Christian marriage man sees his task of being the head of his small community in his duty to ensure as well as he can their material well-being and progress; he will contribute his share so that each member may become the best that nature and grace can make it. This means that he will at times have to come forward and give a lead, at others to remain in the background, or again to intervene and oppose. If inclinations and talents stir spontaneously in his wife and children, he will allow them to develop and give them all the help he can. If he has to do with weaker natures and gifts, if he notices a lack in courage and self-confidence, he will try to bring out the hidden talents. It is one of his duties to develop the intellectual and spiritual side of his wife, and not to let her be immersed in a mere life of the instincts. He may do this by permitting her to share in his own work, or by encouraging obvious tendencies to independent activity. If he takes both possibilities away from her, seeking to confine her to a circle that is too narrow for her gifts, or even only to a life of the instincts, he will have a large share in the consequences that will result from this. He will be responsible for the fact that her higher life will atrophy, for pathological disturbances and her tendency to become too strongly attached to her husband and children, which will be a burden to them, and, moreover, for the dreariness of her life once she is left to face it alone. The same holds good for her relation to her children. On the other hand it belongs to his duties as master of the house to look after the order and harmony of family life. It is part of his duty to exhort each member not only to look after the development of his own personality, but according to his position in the household, to practice consideration to others and the self-denial that his duties entail. And, finally, his concern for the well-ordered natural life of the individuals and the family should not lead him to neglect their supernatural life. A man is meant to imitate Christ as the Head of the Church in his own small circle. Therefore he should regard it as his highest duty to set them an example in following Christ and to further, to the best of his ability, the life of grace that is stirring in them. This he will achieve the better the more closely he himself is united to the Lord.

“The domestic burden which these demands place on a man in addition to his professional duties outside his home would be too heavy for him if he were not assisted by the companion who is called to shoulder more than half of it. She wants not only to develop her own personality without hindrance, but desires the same for those around her. Thus her husband will find in her his best adviser not merely for the guidance of herself and their children, but also for his own life. Indeed, he
will often be best able to fulfill his duties in this respect if he lets her do things in her own way and submits to her leadership. Care for the order and beauty of the whole household is also among the natural feminine duties, since all need a harmonious atmosphere for their proper development. The feminine nature is particularly receptive to what is morally good and loathes everything that is mean and vulgar. It is thus protected against the danger of temptation and of being submerged in a wholly sensual life; this is in harmony with the mysterious prophecy of a victorious fight of the woman against the serpent, which was fulfilled by the victory which the queen of all women had won on behalf of all mankind.

“Closely connected with this is the feminine receptivity to divine things. A woman desires to be personally united to the Lord and to be wholly filled and guided by his love. In a rightly ordered family life, therefore, the moral and religious education will mostly be the task of the woman. If her life is completely anchored in the life of Jesus, this will be her best protection against the danger of losing the right measure in her love for her family and her surroundings; she will not cut the ground from under her feet, on which she has to stand to be a support for others. Independent objective interests of her own would in the natural sphere counterbalance this dangerous tendency to lose herself in another’s life; but these alone would lead to the opposite danger of her being unfaithful to her feminine vocation. Only if she entrusts herself wholly to the guidance of the Lord will she be sure to be led safely between Scylla and Charybdis. For whatever is given to him is not lost, but will be preserved, purified, elevated and given the right measure.

“These last suggestions lead to the question of a non-domestic profession and to the relationship of man and woman in the professional life. In view of the events of the last decades we may regard as closed that period of history which assigned to women only domestic duties, and to men the struggle of existence outside the home. Today it is not too difficult for us to see how this development could actually come about. The scientific and technical achievements which progressively replaced human labour by the work of the machine relieved women of many burdens, so that they desired to use the energies that had been released in other spheres....Eventually the (German) revolution (1918) brought about a sudden reversal also in this sphere, and the economic depression forced even those to take up a job who had until then given no thought to a professional training.

“In connexion with our former discussions we shall first have to ask whether women’s professional activities outside the home are opposed to the orders of nature and grace as such. I think the answer is No. It seems to me that the original order provided for a common activity of man and woman in all spheres....The fact that the original order was changed after the fall does not mean that it was completely abolished, just as the human nature had not become wholly depraved, but preserved its original powers, though they were weakened and liable to error. All man’s powers exist also in the feminine nature, even though they normally appear differently apportioned. This is surely a sign that they would be used in an occupation suited to them. It is only reasonable and in accordance with nature to transcend the circle of domestic duties where this is too narrow to allow of
a full development of one’s gifts. The limit beyond which we may not go, however, seems to me to be reached if the professional activities endanger the domestic life, that is the educational community of parents and children. Even in the case of man I think the divine order is violated if his professional work absorbs him to such a degree that he is completely cut off from his family life. This will even be more so in the case of a woman. Therefore we must consider as unhealthy a state of affairs in which married women are normally forced to take up work outside the home which makes it impossible for them to attend to their domestic duties. In a time when the average woman would marry and be wholly absorbed in her household duties it could be considered normal that she should be restricted to the domestic sphere.

“Owing to the fall the destiny of woman has changed. First, her powers were largely restricted by the difficulties of providing even for the most primitive needs of life. In this respect the technical developments have brought a change for the better. Secondly, she was subjected to man, the scope and kind of her actions were made dependent on his will; but this was not necessarily in accordance with reason, because his intelligence and will are not infallible. Moreover, the harmony between the sexes being disturbed by the fall and both male and female natures corrupted, the subjection necessarily became the occasion for a struggle to be given opportunities for action.

“The redemptive order restored the original state of things. The more it is realized in human beings, the more harmoniously will the sexes work together also in regulating their professional life. Moreover, the redemptive order brings about a fundamental change in the position of women by setting up the ideal of virginity. This breaks with the Old Testament principle that a woman can work out her salvation only by bringing forth children. Indeed, even in the Old Dispensation this principle has been set aside in the case of certain individuals called to extraordinary deeds for the people of God, such as Deborah and Judith. Now this is made into a normal way, so that women may consecrate themselves to God alone and engage in manifold activities in his service. The same St. Paul in whose writings we have sometimes found such strong evidence of Old Testament views has also said quite clearly (I Cor 6) that in his opinion it is good for men and women to marry, but that it is better for both to remain unmarried; and he has frequently praised the achievement of women in the first Christian Churches.

“Before passing on to examine the vocation of men and women to the service of God, we would consider whether, according to the order of nature, professions should be distributed between the sexes in such a way that some would be reserved to men, others to women (and still others might be open to both). In my view this question, too, has to be answered in the negative. For there are strong individual differences, so that some women closely approach the masculine, and some men the feminine type. Hence every “masculine” profession may also be very satisfactorily filled by certain women, and every “feminine” one by certain men. Therefore I do not think legal barriers should be erected in this matter, but adequate educational and vocational guidance should aim at a suitable choice of profession and eliminate undesirable elements by insisting on the necessary qualifications. For the average man and woman a division between the professions will come about quite normally,
since evidently, owing to their natural differences, they will be suited for different kinds of work. Physical strength, predominantly abstract reasoning or independent creative work will be required in the “masculine” professions, that is in heavy manual work, industry, agriculture; in the exact sciences such as mathematics, physics and technology; further in mechanical offices and administrative work, and in certain—not in all—branches of art. A sphere for genuinely feminine work exists wherever sensibility, intuition and adaptability are needed, and where the whole human being needs attention, whether it has to be nursed or educated or helped in any other way, perhaps by understanding it and assisting it to express itself. This means that a woman will find congenial work in the teaching and the medical professions, in all kinds of social work, in those branches of scholarship whose object is man and his activities, and in the arts that represent men; but also in business, in national and communal administration insofar as these have to deal mainly with people...

“To belong to God and to serve Him in the free surrender of love is not the vocation of a few chosen ones, but of every Christian. Every one of us, whether consecrated or not, whether man or woman, is called to follow Christ. The further he progresses in this way, the more Christlike he will become. Now Christ embodies the ideal of human perfection, in him there are no defects, the advantages of the male and female natures are united in him, the weakness abolished. Therefore his faithful disciples will also be increasingly elevated above the limitations of their nature: in saintly man we see tender gentleness and a truly motherly care for the souls entrusted to them, in women manly courage, firmness and decision. Thus if we follow Christ we shall be led to fulfill our original human vocation. We shall mirror god in us, the Master of Creation, by protecting and preserving all creatures in our care, the Father, by generating and forming children for his Kingdom in spiritual fatherhood and motherhood. But this transcending of natural barriers is the highest effect of grace; it can never be achieved by carrying on a self-willed struggle against nature and denying its barriers, but only by humble subjection to the divine order.”

From THE ETHOS OF WOMEN’S PROFESSIONS

“Is it possible to speak of a special profession of women or even of a multiplicity of professions? Radical feminist leaders, especially in the beginning of the movement, have denied the first question and claimed all professions of their sex. Their opponents will not admit the second; they recognize only one vocation, the “natural” one. The subject requires a discussion of both points of view. We must first ask whether there is a natural vocation of woman, and what is the psychological attitude it requires.

(Only unusual problems) could blind a person to such an extent to make her deny the palpable fact that the body and soul of a woman have been formed for a particular purpose. The clear, unshakable word of scripture says what daily experience has taught from the beginning of the world:
woman is destined to be the companion of man and the mother of men. For this her body is equipped, and her psychological make-up, too, conforms to it. It is again a fact of experience that a psychological peculiarity exists; it also follows from St. Thomas' principle that the soul is the form of the body. Where the bodies are so fundamentally different, there must also be a different type of soul, despite the common human nature. We would outline this typically feminine psychological attitude quite briefly, since it is really quite familiar to all of us.

"Woman tends toward the living and personal; she wants the whole. To cherish, to keep and protect, this is her natural, her authentically maternal desire. The dead thing, the "object", interests her in the first place insofar as it serves the living and the personal rather than for its own sake. This is connected with another feature: every kind of abstraction is foreign to her nature. The living and personal which is the object of her care, is a concrete whole and must be cared for and encouraged as a whole, not one part of the expense of the others, not the mind at the expense of the body or vice versa, neither one faculty of the soul at the expense of the others. This she tolerates neither in herself nor in others. And to this practical attitude corresponds her theoretical endowment: her natural way of knowledge is not so much notional and analytical, but envisaging and sensing the concrete. This natural equipment enables a woman to nurse and bring up her own children; but this fundamental attitude is not confined to them; it is also her way of meeting her husband and all those who come near her.

"This maternal character is matched by her gift of companionship. To share in another's life, to take part in all that concerns him, in the greatest as well as the smallest things, in joy and in sorrow, but also in his work and problems, this is her special gift and her happiness. Man is absorbed in "his cause" and expects others to be interested in, and ready to serve it. He normally finds it difficult to enter into the personalities and interests of others. But this is natural to woman, and she is able sympathetically to penetrate into spheres which are in themselves foreign to her, and for which she would never care if a personal interest did not attract her to them. This gift is closely connected with her maternal vocation. If a person takes a lively interest in another, the latter's capacities and performance will be increased. It is a truly maternal function even, and especially, needed by mature people; it will be given also to one's own children the more they grow up, replacing the lower functions.

"... for the feminine nature is as much stained by original sin as human nature in general, and thus hindered in its pure development. Unless its evil tendencies are opposed, they will lead to typical perversions. The personal tendency is usually unwholesomely exaggerated; on the one hand woman is inclined to be extravagantly concerned with her own person and to expect the same from others; this expresses itself in vanity, desire for praise and recognition and an unrestrained urge for self-expression and communication. On the other hand we shall find an unmeasured interest in others that shows itself as curiosity, gossip, and an indiscreet longing to penetrate into the intimate lives of other people. The tendency towards wholeness easily leads her to frittering away her energy, it makes her disciplined to discipline her individual talents properly and leads to superficial nibbling in
all directions. In her attitude to others it shows itself in a possessiveness far exceeding what is required by her maternal functions. Thus the sympathetic companion becomes the interfering busybody that cannot tolerate silent growth and thus does not foster development, but hinders it. Thus joyful service has been replaced by lust for governing. Only too many unhappy marriages have been caused by this aberration, by which many mothers have also estranged their grown-up or even their growing children.

“If, by contrast, we would paint the picture of the purely developed feminine nature, of the wife and mother as her natural destiny would have her be, we shall look to the immaculate Virgin. Her life is centered in her Son. She waits for him to be born in blissful expectancy, she protects His childhood, she follows him in his ways, whether closely or from a distance, according to his wishes. She holds his dead body in her arms and carries out his last will. But all this she does not according to her own liking. She is the handmaid of the Lord, who fulfills the task to which God has called her. Therefore she does not treat her Child as her property: she has received him from the hand of God, and she places him again back into his hand, offering him in the temple and accompanying him to his death on the Cross.

“If we consider the Mother of God as a wife we shall be struck by her silent, limitless trust that counts on the same limitless confidence, and faithfully shares the other’s sorrow. In everything she is subject to God’s will that has given her husband as her human protector and visible head.

“In the image of the Mother of God we see the fundamental attitude of soul that corresponds to the natural vocation of woman. She is obedient to her husband, trusts him and takes part in his life, furthering his objective tasks as well as the development of his personality. She faithfully nurses and cherishes her child, developing hid God-given talents. She treats both with selfless devotion, silently retiring into the background when she is not needed. All this is based on the conception of marriage and motherhood as a vocation that comes from God, and must therefore be fulfilled for God’s sake under His guidance. How is it possible for a woman to reach such moral heights in mind as well as deed, seeing that in her fallen nature such powerful instinct oppose this end and urge her on to other ways? A good natural remedy for all typically feminine weakness is through objective work. This demands in itself the repression of exaggerated personal interests; besides, it combats superficiality not only in one’s own sphere of work, but provokes a general aversion against this failing. It requires submission to objective laws, hence it is a good training in obedience. But it must not lead to the sacrifice of the pure and praiseworthy personal attitude and to one-sided specialization and enslavement by one’s particular subject, which is the typical perversion of the masculine nature. This natural remedy is very effective, as is shown by the maturity and harmony of many women of high intellectual culture, and of others who have been trained in the discipline of strenuous professional work through the circumstances of their life...

“We now approach the second main question: are there women’s professions other than the natural one? Only prejudiced blindness could deny that women are capable of filing other professions
than that of wife and mother. The experience of the last decades, and really the experience of all times has proved this. We may well say that in case of need every normal, healthy woman can do a job. And, conversely, there is no profession that could not be practiced by a woman. If fatherless children have to be provided with a breadwinner, if orphaned brothers and sisters or old parents have to be supported, a woman ready to make sacrifices can achieve the most astonishing things. But individual gifts and inclinations, too, may lead to the most varied activities. Indeed, no woman is only “woman”; every one has her individual gifts just as well as a man, and so is capable of professional work of one sort or another, whether it be artistic, scholarly, technical or any other. Theoretically this individual talent may extend to any sphere, even to those somewhat outside women’s scope...

“Over and above this, however, we may say that also professions whose strictly objective requirements do not suit the feminine nature and could rather be considered as specifically masculine, may yet be practiced in a genuinely feminine way. We are thinking of working in a factory, in a business office, in national or municipal administration, in legislation, in a chemical laboratory or in a mathematical institute. All this needs concentration on things devoid of life, or is concerned with abstract thought. Yet in the great majority of cases the work will involve being together with others at least in the same room, often in the same division of labour. And with this we have at once an opportunity for developing all the feminine virtues. One may even say that precisely here, where everyone is in danger of becoming a piece of the machine, the development of the specifically feminine can become a beneficial counter-influence. In the soul of a man who knows that help and sympathy are awaiting him at his place of work, much will be kept alive or aroused that would otherwise be dwarfed. This is one way of feminine individuality forming professional life in a mode different from the average man’s...

“...When working out laws and decrees a man might perhaps aim at the most perfect legal form, with little regard to concrete situations; whereas a woman who remains faithful to her nature even in parliament or in the administrative services, will keep the concrete end in view and adapt the means accordingly.

“Thus it might be a blessing for the whole social life whether private or public, if women penetrated increasingly into the most different professional spheres, especially if they preserve the specifically feminine ethos. Here again the Mother of God should be our example. Mary at the wedding of Cana: her quietly observing eyes see everything and discover where something is missing. And before anyone notices anything, before there is any embarrassment, she has already remedied the situation. She finds ways and means, she gives the necessary directions, everything quietly and without attracting attention. Let this be the example of woman in the professional life. Wherever she is placed, let her do her work quietly and efficiently, without demanding attention or recognition. And at the same time she should keep a vigilant eye on the situation sensing where there is something lacking, where somebody needs her help. And rectifying things as far as possible without being noticed. Then, like a good angel, she will always spread blessing.
"We have now surveyed the sphere of feminine activities in the domestic as well as in the public life, indeed, a rich and fertile field. Yet this does not exhaust her capacities. Today as at all times since the foundation of Christ’s Church the Lord has called his chosen ones from their families and professions to his own service. Can the religious vocation be regarded as a specifically feminine one? Both men and women receive this call, which is supernatural. For it comes from above and asks a person to rise above the earthly sphere. And thus it looks as if here the natural differences might carry no weight. Yet there is the theological principle that grace does not destroy, but that it perfects nature. Thus we may expect that in the religious vocation, too, the feminine nature will not be eliminated, but will be integrated and made fruitful in a special way. Beyond this it is possible that, like the natural professions, the religious life, too, may make special demands that appeal to the feminine nature in a special way. The religious vocation implies the complete surrender of the whole human being and of its whole life to the service of God. Religious are bound to use all the means suited to promote this end, such as renunciation of property, of vital human ties and of their own will. This may be achieved in many forms, that is to say the Lord may call His own to serve Him in many different ways. They may silently contemplate the divine truth or solemnly celebrate the liturgy; they may spread the faith by the apostolate, or devote themselves to works of mercy. Thus the religious body consists of many different members. If we examine the various activities of religious, and how they are apportioned to the sexes, we shall find that they are differently related to them according to their differences. We may safely consider contemplation and liturgical prayer as transcending the difference of sex, since they are truly angelic activities. The spreading of the faith, since it is included in the priestly vocation to teach, is predominantly the task of men, though women, too, are active in this sphere, especially in the teaching orders. Works of charity, on the other hand, and the sacrificial life of atoning satisfaction, appeal quite definitely to the feminine nature. In the older orders which have men’s and women’s branches, the work is normally divided in such a way that the men are engaged in the outside activities such as preaching and giving missions, whereas the women devote themselves to the silent apostolate of prayer and sacrifice, although the education of the young was added to their tasks at an early age. The active women’s congregations of modern times are generally engaged in thoroughly feminine activities in the fields of education and charitable work. Thus today, when the majority of feminine communities devote themselves to external activities, the work of the religious Sisters is materially scarcely different from that of the women “in the world”. The only difference is the “formal’ one, that in religious life all is done under obedience and for the love of God.

"We would now examine how this formal element of the religious life is related to the nature of woman. The motive, principle and end of the religious life is complete surrender to God in self-forgetting love. The religious puts an end, as it were, to his own life, in order to make room for the life of God. The more completely this is realized, the richer will be the divine life that fills the soul. Now the divine life is an overflowing love that needs nothing for itself, but gives itself freely, mercifully condescending to every needy creature. It is a love that heals the sick and restores to life what is dead, that protects and fosters, nourishes, teaches and forms. It mourns with the mourning and
rejoices with the joyful; it makes itself the servant of every being, so that it may become what the Father has destined it to be; in one word: it is the love of the divine Heart.

It is the deepest desire of a woman’s heart to surrender itself lovingly to another, to be wholly his and to possess him wholly. This is at the root of her tendency towards the personal and the whole, which seems to us the specifically feminine characteristic. Where this total surrender is made to a human being, it is a perverted self-surrender that enslaves her, and implies at the same time an unjustified demand which no human being can fulfill. Only God can receive the complete surrender of a person, and in such a way that she will not lose, but gain her soul. And only God can give himself to a human being in such a way that he will fulfill its whole being while losing nothing of his own. Hence the total surrender which is the principle of the religious life, is at the same time the only possible adequate fulfillment of woman’s desire.

“Now the divine love that enters the heart which is surrendered to God is a merciful love that would serve, awaken and foster life. It completely corresponds to what we have affirmed to be the professional ethos demanded of woman.

“What practical consequence follows from this? It certainly does not follow that all women who would fulfill their vocation should become nuns. But it does follow that the fallen and perverted feminine nature can be restored to its purity and led to the heights of the vocational ethos such as the pure feminine nature represents, only if it is totally surrendered to God. Whether she lives as a mother in her home, in the limelight of public life or behind the silent walls of a convent, she must everywhere be a “handmaid of the Lord”, as the Mother of God had been in all the circumstances of her life, whether she was living as a virgin in the sacred precincts of the Temple, silently kept house at Bethlehem and Nazareth, or guided the apostles and the first Christian community after the death of her Son. If every woman were an image of the Mother of God, a spouse of Christ and an apostle of the divine Heart, she would fulfill her feminine vocation no matter in what circumstance she lived and what her external activities might be.

“If I were to end here, the demands I have outlined, which are so frighteningly different from the average life of the present-day woman, might seem the dreams of the starry-eyed idealist. I must therefore add a few words on how they can be carried out in practice. We will therefore calmly face the contrast between the average life of modern women and our demands. Many of the best are almost crushed by the double burden of professional and family duties; they are always busy, worn out, nervous and irritable. Where are they to find the interior calm and serenity in order to be a support and guide for others? In consequence there are daily little frictions with husband and children despite real mutual love and recognition of the other’s merits, hence unpleasantness in the home and the loosening of family ties. In addition, there are the many superficial and unstable women who want only amusement in order to fill the interior void, who marry and are divorced, and leave their children either to themselves or to servants no more conscientious than the mothers. If they have to take a job they regard it only as a means to earn their living and to get as much enjoyment out of life as possible.
In their case one can talk neither of vocation nor of ethos. They are like dry leaves blown by the wind. The breaking up of the family and the decline of morals is essentially connected with this group and can only be stemmed if we succeed in diminishing its number through suitable educational methods. Finally we would consider the by no means negligible number of those who take up a profession that corresponds to their talents and inclination. Nevertheless, many of them will discover after their first enthusiasm is spent that their expectations have not been fulfilled, and will be longing for something else. This may often be due to the fact that they were trying to do their work “just like a man”. They have not sought—or perhaps not found—the means to make their feminine characteristics fruitful in their professional work. Then the nature that has been denied and repressed will assert itself...

“If we look behind the walls of convents we shall find that even there the average nun does not realize the ideal in its fullness. It is true, at all times there have been religious who did not take in the full meaning of their vows, or who were ready for the complete sacrifice in the first enthusiasm of youth, but could not keep it up. They will usually be a torment to themselves and a burden to their community. Add to this the difficulties produced by modern circumstance; there is, for example, the twofold burden of the nun who has to keep up to the standard of the contemporary demands made on a nurse, a teacher or a social worker, while at the same time fulfilling the obligations of her religious life. Only too often she will lose the right attitude under this twofold strain, in the same way as the wife and mother who has a job.

“Yet, despite this sad picture of the average, true heroines may still be met in all spheres of life, working real miracles of love and achievement in their families and professions, as well as in the cloister. We all know them from the records of the Church, but also from our own experience; there are the mothers who radiate warmth and light in their homes, who bring up nine children of their own, showering blessings on them for their own lives as well as for coming generations, and who still have a large heart for the needs of others. There are the teachers and office staff who support a whole family out of their salary, do domestic chores before and after their professional work, and still have time and money for all sorts of Church and charitable activities. There are the nuns who spend their nights praying for souls in danger, and take up voluntary penances for sinners. Where do they all find the strength to perform tasks which one might often think impossible for nature, and yet preserve that unalterable peace and serenity despite the most exacting nervous and emotional strains?

“Only by the power of grace can nature be purged from its dross, restored to its purity and made ready to receive the divine life. And this life itself is the fountain from which spring the works of love. If we want to preserve it, we must nourish it constantly from the Sacrament of Love. A woman’s life for which the divine lone is to be its inner form, will have to be a eucharistic life. To forget oneself, to be delivered from all one’s own desires and pretensions, to open one’s heart to all the pressing needs of others—this is possible only through the daily intimacy with our Lord in the tabernacle. If we visit the eucharistic God and take counsel with him in all our affairs, if we let ourselves be purified by the sanctifying power that flows from the altar of sacrifice, if we offer ourselves to the Lord in this
sacrifice and receive him in our inmost souls in Holy Communion, then we cannot but be drawn ever more deeply into the current of this divine life; we shall grow into the mystical Body of Christ, and our heart will be transformed into the likeness of the divine heart.

“Something else is closely connected with this. If we have entrusted all the cares of our earthly life to the divine Heart, our own heart will have been freed from them, and our soul will be ready to share in the divine life. We shall walk by the side of the Redeemer in the same way that he walked when he was on earth, and in which he still continues in his mystical life. With the eyes of faith we shall penetrate even into the secret life within the Godhead. Moreover, this participation in the divine life has a liberating power; it lightens the weight of our earthly concerns and gives us even in this temporal life a glimpse of eternity, a reflection of the life of the blessed, by which we walk in the light. How we can walk thus, as it were hand in hand with God, he has shown us himself through the liturgy of the Church. Therefore the life of a truly Catholic woman will be guided by the liturgy. If we pray with the Church in spirit and in truth, our whole life will be formed by this prayer.

“Summing up we would say: every profession that satisfies the feminine soul and is capable of being formed by it is a genuine feminine profession. The inmost formative principle of the feminine soul is the love that springs from the divine Heart. A woman will live by this principle if she closely joins herself to the divine heart in a eucharistic and liturgical life.”

Notes on Margaret Sanger and Joan Andrews -
Activist counterparts of De Beauvoir and Stein

Margaret Sanger (1879-1966)


More than any other person, Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, is responsible for the application to contraception and abortion of an individualistic, independent philosophy of woman. Not so well known is the way in which, like the Nazis, Sanger wanted to breed a super-race, thoroughbreds, through eugenics by means of abortion, euthanasia, and genocidal sterilization of minority groups.
Sanger was born in relative poverty but became well to do at marriage. Her marriage broke up because of her promiscuity. (See. p. 85) Margaret Sanger also was known to have neglected her three children. Some of her famous lovers advised her to hide her belief in abortion and concentrate on birth control as the first step in her program. She was involved in the occult as well. (See p. 90)

An impetus for Sanger’s attitude toward limitation of families was disgusted at the poverty around her in the slums of the cities. Since the families of many immigrants were so large, her remedy was to try to convince people that the only way to a better life was through limiting population. (See p. 43) She was convinced that large families had more stupid children compared to the smaller families of the wealthy. (See p. 63) Through contraceptives, couples could have unlimited sexual gratification without the burden of children. By 1932 Sanger was recommending gifts of money and presents in exchange for sterilization of the poor. According to her philosophy, sexuality is for the pleasure of the individual, not for the bonding of the couple in love with an overflow to their children. Elasah Drogin, a convert from an atheistic background, did a great deal of research on the writings of Sanger. Here are some of her remarks and citations:

“If a citizen of 1900 were told by a time machine traveler that in only 80 years birth control chemicals and devises and abortion as a back up for contraceptive failure would be highly approved throughout the world, our 1900 citizen would be shocked into unconsciousness....today’s culture is characterized precisely by the values she (Sanger) taught.” (p. 9)

Some quotations from Sanger’s writings in her magazine Birth Control Review and other publications cited by Drogin:

“The marriage bed is the most degenerating influence in the social order.” (p. 15)

(Instead Sanger recommended total sexual freedom and divorce if a woman was not sexually satisfied in her marriage.) (p. 15)

“(The philanthropists who give free maternity care) encourage the healthier and more normal sections of the world to shoulder the burden of unthinking and indiscriminate fecundity of others; which brings with it...a dead weight of human waste.” (p. 17)

Sanger was especially interested in limiting the births of Slavs, Latins and Jews. (See p. 18) She came to believe that 7 out of 10 people were feebleminded. This was to be changed through sterilization of low I.Q. people. She organized black ministers to propagate birth control among their people.

Instead of seeing the poor immigrants as “tired, poor, huddled masses yearning to be free,” who the United States should help compassionately, Sanger wrote:
“Herein lies the unbalance - the great biological menace to the future of civilization. Are we heading to biological destruction, toward the gradual but certain attack upon the stocks of intelligence and racial health by the sinister forces of the hordes of irresponsibles and imbeciles?”

(“This is the typical Sangerian description of a ‘welfare recipient.’” wrote Drogin.) (p. 52)

Back to Sanger:

“47.3% of drafted men have the mentality of twelve year old children - in other words they are morons. Assuming that these drafted men are a fair sample of the entire population of approximately 100,000,000 this means that 45,000,000 or nearly one-half the entire population, will never develop mental capacity beyond the state of moron...Our failure to segregate morons who are increasing and multiplying, ...demonstrates our foolhardy and extravagant sentimentalism.” (p. 65)

Sanger thought that we would have a new garden of Eden if, instead, we had a population of geniuses engineered by sterilization of the unfit. (p. 66) People would have to have permits to have children according to Sanger’s plan.

According to Sanger, most human beings should never have been born at all. (see p. 52) At the same time as she advocated state regulated sterilization, she accused the Catholic Church of “legislating their morality.” (See p. 55)

Drogin points out that statistics from Planned Parenthood, founded by Sanger, demonstrate the success of their original racist agenda with higher rates of abortion among Blacks and Hispanics.

Joan Andrews (1948 -


When I first read of Joan Andrews and then heard her speak, I was thrilled by her, thinking she was the Gandhi of the pro-life movement. Joan was born in Tennessee in 1948. She was a shy little girl living on a farm, afraid of strangers and school. In High School she started protesting the Vietnam War. (see p. 24) She didn’t like the anti-war groups because she could see they were hostile and did not understand the position of the pro-Vietnam side. Joan wanted to go over to Vietnam as a nurse.

Here is how she wrote about her involvement in the pro-life movement:
“In 1973, when Roe vs. Wade was decided, I was shocked. I felt that we had returned to the world of Nazi Germany. I had always figured that we lived in a civilized world, but now that had changed...even as a child I was really horrified by the Nazis....So when I heard about Roe vs. Wade, I decided I had to do something. It took me a few months of prayer and preparation to decide. I kept looking for a public outcry, but there was no outcry. People were not even marching in the streets. At Mass, the priests were not proclaiming that there was mass murder of children going on in this country, and we had to get out and stop it; that we had to go to the places where the killing centers were.” (p. 27-28)

Joan Andrews didn’t know what to do since she was a fearful person. She thought of direct action but couldn’t figure out what to do and instead started working for changes in laws such as informed consent and handing out literature. Here are some highlights of her account of how she decided to become an activist:

Joan asked the Lord what He would have her do. She heard this answer: “Rescue those being led unjustly to death.” Throughout the book we see that Joan’s sole motive was to save babies. Each moment of blocking a clinic would mean some babies saved.

1973- tried to enter an abortuary in Chicago and disable the suction machine.

1974 - started picketing clinics.

1979 - started putting up signs in public restrooms about helping pregnant women in need. They were simple signs saying to call Joan and her sister if you were pregnant and needed help. (See p. 31)

1979 - Joan gets involved with the already started Operation Rescue campaigns.

1980 - In St. Louis Joan participates in first rescue risking arrest accompanied by 100 picketers.

In her own words:

“That first day was hectic. When we arrived at Escobedo’s abortuary in Manchester, police were all over the parking lot. Then the picketers arrived and swarmed all over the property. At first, everybody went everywhere, and the police did not know who might be risking arrest, who was counseling, who was picketing or who was just watching. There were people marching and singing
right through the whole building, going in one door and out the other. The police did not want to arrest us, and they did not know how to arrest so many of us.

“All of us who were going to do the rescue walked onto the parking lot. At first, we could not get in the front door because security guards and police were blocking it. But we started to crawl under their legs, between their legs, all around them like ants, and we got in. That did not go on very long; they just gave up and let everyone in. So the rescue team went right through the door...

“When the first woman tried to get in, a whole group of us blocked the door, but the police dragged her in, right over us. Then they dragged a couple of our people away.” (pp. 45-46)

In the process Joan’s hand got slammed into the door of the clinic by the police. People yelled that the police caused it. Joan explained that it was just an accident. The police were appreciative of that. (p. 46) Later she was arrested. The police captain’s own son was a rescuer and Joan overheard him give instructions not to arrest his son. Soon other non-Catholic Christians joined them.

The police were often sympathetic to the rescuers. Joan Andrews charitably admits, in excuse for pro-life policeman arresting pro-lifers because it was part of their job, that going to jail a few days if very different from losing your job as the officers would have to have done should they have failed to arrest those blocking the doors. Later on in the movement, police got much more brutal - breaking people’s arms, etc. They were not to gripe about torture but forgive and offer it up. (See p. 195) While being tortured by the police rescuers would scream and also yell out “God Bless You!” (See p. 100ff.) Some police respected the courage of the rescuers and their evident love for their tormentors. (see p. 109) The rescuer has to keep in mind that objectively the police officer is the tool of the abortionist to keep the babies from being saved. (See p. 193)

Archbishop May of St. Louis came out and told the rescuers to obey the law. Disappointment was felt by Catholic Rescuers knowing he said nothing about Catholics in complicity with abortion. The rationale for not doing so is to save life. If you have a break down a door to save a baby in a fire you could do it. You would trespass. The lives of the babies are at stake in an abortion. (See p. 51) Joan once said:

“For you imagine all those little babies who have been killed? They die, and no one’s at their death camps. Can you imagine how they must feel if someone does try to stand up for them? We can’t betray them. We can’t say that we won’t rescue them, because that would offend their dignity. I love these babies.” (p. 189)

Because of OR (Operation Rescue) coming to the clinic every Saturday abortions went way down. The abortionist considered stopping. Then came the injunction against rescue operations. After that many stopped blocking doors, but Joan and some others were willing to go to jail no matter how long to stop the killing even for the hours before the police came to drag them off. Usually at that
time they didn’t stay long. (See p. 58) Meanwhile they started a place called Our Lady’s Inn for pregnant women who were turned away by rescue from abortion and needed shelter.

Conflict arose because some wanted only to do maternity work and stop the rescues. Some were arrested hundreds of times.

Joan had cancer of the eye and had an eye removed. She refused to worry about further consequences feeling she would have more stress thinking of the babies dying than staying away to handle the cancer.

To return to the dated chronicle of Joan Andrew’s activities:

1981 - jailed in Baltimore. Some paid fines but some such as Joan didn’t want to pay a fine as if they were guilty. (See p. 76) There is fear of the lesbian majority of women in the prisons who force it on other women. But other women would ask them to pray with them in the night. They would fast totally and partially.

1982 - Starting doing rescues by blocking the doors just by herself. A group would also pray the rosary on the roofs of abortion clinics at night. She had her first extended incarceration for pro-life activism rescuing babies in St. Louis for 225 days in 1983. (See p. 87) The judges kept bribing the group that they would add more convictions unless they agreed not to go back to abortion clinics. They refused to agree. Joan says that being arrested is a great Scripture course showing you what persecution is really like but also the solidarity of those jailed together. Also many rescuers would not come and protest in front of the jail because they had become cautious.

In the summer it was over a hundred degrees with no air-conditioning and 40 in a 20 person room. (See p. 91) Even though there is lots of violence in the prison pro-lifers are liked and respected pretty much because they are Christian. The violent people rarely see compassion and they respond to the compassion of the pro-lifers for them.

1984 - the rescuers start to go limp when the police come to get them. (See p. 131) they also tried entering abortion clinics and locking themselves into the killing rooms. They also would dismantle the abortion machines whenever they could.

1986 - solitary confinement in Florida doing non-cooperative activities such as going out of the cell for meals and exercise but then not going back. She had to be dragged. Cooperating with the system is accepting that you deserve to be punished. In solidarity with the babies who don’t have any voice, the jailed rescuer should not be bargaining. Jesus was silent when prosecuted. (See p. 191)

During a five year sentence she got lots of mail from people who had started rescuing because of her heroism. (See p. 208) The most painful part of being in prison was not being able to go to daily Mass. She prayed the rosary a lot.
1988 moved to Delaware. Some women in the prison converted.

Since the writing of the book, I Will Never Forget You Joan has done rescue work in other countries. She is married and has children. The couple bring the children to talks and take turns lecturing or taking care of the babies.

“She once told a group of former abortionists,

‘You don’t owe us an apology. We owe you one because we didn’t try to convert you sooner.’”(p. 9)

Theme 6:

Interior Analysis vs. Healing through Hope

Freud and Jung vs. Frankl

Introduction

First: a clarification. I have used the term interior analysis instead of psychoanalysis in order to be able to cover a wider range of therapies than the original Freudian technique. The term “psychoanalytic” has a technical meaning: treatment of patients based on theories and practices that emanated from Freud and his loyal followers. The confusion comes because the term psychoanalysis is also used in a general way for any type of therapy involving delving into the childhood of the client with a view to healing. “Psychotherapy,” is sometimes used as a synonym for psychoanalysis, but is also employed often, especially by non-professionals to include any kind of counseling given by a person with a degree in the subject of psychology. Psychiatrists, however, are those with a medical degree who specialized in nervous and mental ailments.

In novels of the 19th century, the mentally ill were often portrayed as patients to be treated in closed institutions. Treatment included electric shock and drugs. By contrast, later into the twentieth century, when Freud’s theories gained greater acceptance, many patients with the same symptoms were being treated by psychoanalysis. This treatment is based on a philosophy of the human person, which includes such facets as the unconscious, the id, ego and super-ego. When psychoanalysis became popular around the middle of the 20th century, what was most shocking was Freud’s theory about the repressed sexual nature of many psychological problems. Could it really be true that most
little boys were sexually infatuated with their mothers leading to adult mother-complexes? Could trivial compulsive behaviors such as nervous mannerisms really be rooted in childhood burying of forbidden sexual expression? Or, to turn to another topic, is the concept of God really nothing more than a projection of a child’s father image into the sky?

By the end of the 20th century, psychoanalytic theories of personality were generally acknowledged to be useful in the diagnosis of irrational behavior patterns. Critique centered more on the way Freud’s theory of personality influenced the concept of the normal person. For many psychologists and philosophers, Freud’s reduction of human behavior to complexes stemming from childhood frustrations seemed much too limited. Within his lifetime, more humanistic systems of therapy were gaining ground. The psychological theories of Carl Jung, including such controversial topics as the collective unconscious, gave more weight to spiritual factors in the maladies and healing of clients.

Many post-Freudian psychological systems were influenced by the work of philosophers now called personalistic. Psychologists such as Viktor Frankl, Abraham Maslow, Conrad Baars, to give only a few examples, were interested in the whole self of the human person, including genuine love, care for the community and the relationship of the individual to God. Most humanists take the data of real love as primordial. They refuse to accept a reductionism of the type often found among those psychoanalysts who think of love as a sublimated sexual drive.

As you read about Freud, Jung, and Frankl, our primary examples of the battle for the twentieth century mind concerning psychology, you will want to assess for yourself what is worthy of influencing the 21st Century, and what might well be discarded.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Freud was born in Moravia, a small town in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, of poor Jewish parents. They moved to Vienna when Freud was 5 years old. He lived there, despite anti-Semitism, until he was 72 years old when he moved to England at the time of the Nazi invasion of Austria. Although the whole family was atheistic they retained Jewish identity.

Freud was the eldest and his mother’s favorite. His personal background had a lot to do with his later theories. He was a child of his father’s third marriage. His father was 40 and his mother 20. The sons of his father’s first marriage were close in age to the new mother. The maid was closer in age to the father. He had fantasies that one of his step-brothers may have been his biological father. Sigmund was fiercely jealous of his siblings and thought he might have been responsible when he was 1 ½ years old for the “accidental” death of a 7 month old brother. As the first child, he hated having his place usurped by this little brother.
Freud had great desire for knowledge and studied biology as a medical student in the University of Vienna. He was interested in the research part of biology, but this paid little and so in order to earn enough to marry, he had to branch out into the practice of medicine. He became interested in the work of a doctor who was treating patients for hysterical neurosis (neurosis = an illness that comes from frustration, privation, when reality withholds the gratification of sexual wishes. The symptoms are substitute gratifications for these desires.) This doctor had discovered that by letting his patient talk about the past he could decipher the hidden emotional logic behind the symptoms. Because these emotions were repressed, they could only be expressed by bodily symptoms. In his own practice Freud discovered that letting patients “free associate” was even better.

His methods evolved into a system called psychoanalysis involving many years of sessions between the therapist and his/her patient. In his General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis, given as a series of lectures to interested students of medicine and psychiatry, he begins with this interesting paragraph:

“Psychoanalysis is a method of medical treatment for those suffering from nervous disorders; and I can give you at once an illustration of the way in which psycho-analytic procedure differs from, and often reverses, what is customary in other branches of medicine. Usually, when we introduce a patient to a new form of treatment we minimize its difficulties and give him confident assurances of its success. This is, in my opinion, perfectly justifiable, for we thereby increase the probability of success. But when we undertake to treat a neurotic psycho-analytically we proceed otherwise. We explain to him the difficulties of the method, its long duration, the trials and sacrifices which will be required of him; and, as to the result, we tell him that we can make no definite promises, that success depends upon his endeavors, upon his understanding, his adaptability and his perseverance.”

It was he, Freud, who invented terms like free association and repression to explain how patients had a resistance to bringing certain shameful material up into consciousness. Neurotic symptoms are a compromise between expressing or repressing some energy.

(From lecture 19 of Introduction to Psycho-Analysis)

“The resistance shown by patients is highly varied and exceedingly subtle...we require the patient to put himself into a condition of calm self-observation...and then to communicate everything which he becomes inwardly aware of, feelings, thoughts, remembrances, in the order in which they arise in his mind. We expressly warn him against giving way to any kind of motive which would cause him to select from or to exclude any of the ideas (associations) whether because they are too “disagreeable,” or too “indiscreet...”

The patient resists by means of pretending that nothing comes to mind, pausing, deciding that what he is thinking about is irrelevant.
“One hardly ever meets with a patient who does not attempt to make a reservation in some department of his thoughts, in order to guard them against intrusion by the analysis...Naturally analytic treatment cannot countenance a right of sanctuary like this; one might as well try to allow an exception to be made in certain parts of a town like Vienna, and forbid that any arrests should be made in the market-place...and then attempt to take up a wanted man. Of course he would never be found anywhere but in those safe places.”

From watching his own children carefully and relating what he saw in his patients to memories of his own childhood, Freud developed the theory that very small children are much more erotic than generally supposed.

The seeking of pleasure goes through various developmental phases: the oral, the anal, the phallic, the latency and the genital stage of adult sexuality. Sometimes frustration of the stages leads to a fixation and then a regression.

The phallic stage involves what Freud called the oedipal complex where the male child wishes for sex with the mother and views his father and brothers as rivals. This leads to a fear of being castrated. The girl takes her mother as her first love object and then relinquishes mother for father when she realizes that girls, including mother, do not possess a penis. Penis envy is the phrase Freud developed to describe this state of mind. Because of this envy the girl turns to her father to obtain what is not available from her mother.

Of great interest was Freud’s philosophy of dreams. Dreams are considered to be fantasized fulfillment of wishes. Sexual and aggressive drives that have to be repressed in conventional life express themselves instead in dream material in disguised forms. Analysis of dreams leads to understanding of unconscious wishes. Some of the observations Freud made about this which were originally ridiculed are now standard, such as hostility toward parents in spite of societal ideas about reverence for them, or sibling rivalry in spite of conventions about children in the family being only loving playmates. In Lecture 13 of Freud’s Introduction to Psycho-Analysis he talks about dreams of the death of these family figures being an outlet for repressed hostility:

“The little child does not necessarily love his brothers and sisters, and often he is quite frank about it. It is unquestionable that in them he sees and hates his rivals, and it is well known how commonly this attitude persists without interruption for many years, till the child reaches maturity...We can most easily observe it in children of two and a half to four years old when a new baby arrives, which generally meets with a very unfriendly reception; remarks such as “I don’t like it. The stork is to take it away again” are very common...attempts are even made to injure it (the baby) and attacks upon it are by no means unheard-of...when we find a wish for the death of a brother or a sister latent in a dream we need seldom be puzzled...”
Freud also contrasts pleasure instincts, called libido, with death instincts expressed as hate, anger and aggression. In displacement an individual who has to repress his or her frustrations expresses this by blaming others and seeing them as responsible, hateful, etc.

Underlying the descriptions of these states of mind is a theory about the human person divided into id, ego, and superego. The id, the unconscious comes at birth and is the seat of the instincts, a cauldron of fury, striving for immediate satisfaction of urges. The ego is that portion of the mind, which organizes strategies for self-preservation. It mediates between the internal needs of the id and the demands of reality. By the age of five or six, another agency of the mind develops called the superego. This is the internalization of the moral norms of the parents. An example might be disgust at seeing anyone talk with food in his or her mouth, because one was brought up strictly only to talk after swallowing ones food.

In later life, Freud, in the study Moses and Monotheism, developed the theory that religion was a father-complex. Because the child needs the protection of the father who is discovered with time to be fallible and weak, he projects a perfect all-powerful father God into the sky.

In case you feel “thrown” by this theory, consider as one Christian psychotherapist, Paul Vitz, puts it, you can reverse it and claim that those who reject God, the Father, are really rejecting their own fathers. Since Freud had a negative relationship to his father, one could explain his atheism as a way of “killing off” his biological father. (See Paul C. Vitz, Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism.)

Of course, the main thing is that God exists as the only explanation of the existence of the universe as we know it, as can be proved by reason. We can no more prove that he does not exist on a merely psychological basis than imagine he does exist on such a basis. Certainly there are plenty of people who believe in God in spite of having had negligent fathers and there are those who had wonderful fathers who have difficulty believing in God.

Biographers say that by the end of his life Freud was a cocaine addict. Faced with great pain from terminal cancer, he committed suicide as a form of euthanasia.

At first Freud’s theories were greeted with disbelief and derision by the general medical community, but gradually his success with patients and the meticulous elaboration of his views in lectures and writings won Freud important disciples.

Even though nowadays there are few pure Freudians, since his disciples branched out into variations on his original themes, most psychologists consider his thought as a lasting contribution in terms of knowledge about the unconscious, the mechanisms of repression, and the operations of id, ego and super-ego.
Here are some helpful definitions of Freudian terms:

- complex – circle of thoughts and interests of strong affective value
- normal - healthy – able to work and to love.
- mental illness – symptoms or activities detrimental or useless to life as a whole.
- narcissism – libido energy diverted to the ego itself as in delusions of grandeur.
- regression – reversion from a higher to a lower stage of development.
- sublimation – unconscious redirection of libido into socially acceptable channels.
- traumatic neurosis – (as from war experiences) the ego seeks protection for the threatened self. One takes flight into psychological illness out of fear of still worse miseries in real life.

By way of critique, the idea of explaining irrational behavior as partly due to the repression of painful experiences of the past is probably true. For example, you have a strong revulsion toward someone just because they remind you of some trait of a rejecting parent.

Freud’s theories help explain irrational nationalism - such as Nazism. (Fury of the id, frustrated by loss of WWI, projected onto Jews?)

Since Freud has an erroneous concept of the human person it is hard for him to explain how normal behavior comes about. No distinction is made by some Freudians between authentic conscience and super-ego. Freud didn’t understand, as Thomas Aquinas did, that reason needs to control the emotions, not super-ego. Super-ego is harsh internalization of prohibitions; conscience is based on reason leading to amendment.

Freud’s theory is much too materialistic. There is no explanation of what is truly lovable and noble in oneself or an exploration of the response to the good we find in others. This leads to a relativism with no explanation of how there could be moral progress since there are no absolute norms. Freud once gave as the standard for healthy normalcy that the patient become able to love and work. However, Freud fails to provide a philosophy of life that includes the source of such values as love, work, honesty, or integrity.

Psychoanalysts who come from an atheistic, materialistic base, can distort and even destroy the true religious beliefs of their patients.

Freud seemed to hold to some form of “terrestrial messianism.” Terrestrial messianism is a phenomena that involves thinking that since there is no divine Messiah, as atheists certainly think, then earthly humans have to take that non-Messiah’s place by eliminating suffering. The way Freud
thought the world could be saved without divine intervention was by means of normalizing neurotic and psychotic people who cause suffering to others.

In terms of contemporary relevance, it is important to realize that Freud and other psychoanalysts can help us understand puzzling realities. How is it, for example, that even those who pray a lot may exhibit many irrational symptoms. Examples: addiction, or passive-aggressive behavior.

On the negative side, there are narrow individuals in the field of psychology who have no interest in revelation, intuition or inspiration. This is limiting and destructive when such interior analysts demean, consciously or indirectly, the faith of their patients.

Psychoanalysis led to tremendous breakdown of morals when norms were reduced to mere expressions of super-ego with the resulting advice to get rid of these norms, especially sexual ones, and be free, which meant, if not for the analysts, at first, at least for their patients, being irresponsible.

Psycho-analysis as a general theory has led to people feeling like determined victims of their past. Everything is a symptom vs. a response. (In the heyday of the popularity of interior analysis, what was called “parlor psychoanalysis” consisted in people with no training analyzing others. “Ah, I know why you just did that - it was because in your childhood....” People under the influence of psycho-analysis can become self-engrossed vs. responsive and grateful.

Before going on to study something of the ideas of Carl Jung, one of the most original of the disciples of Freud who broke away to elaborate his or her own systems; I would like to append here something about a Freudian psychoanalyst who was a Jewish convert to the Catholic faith: Karl Stern.

Karl Stern (1906-1975) was a Jewish psychiatrist who came from Germany to the United States and then to Canada during the Nazi period in Germany. Stern became a Catholic, as described in his book The Pillar of Fire. Subsequently, he became interested in explaining to Catholics why he continued to be a psychoanalyst when Freud appeared to be the enemy of religion. His book: The Third Revolution: A Study of Psychiatry and Religion, written in 1954, explores what he considered to be valid in Freudian psycho-analysis and how those ideas could find a place in the broader perspective of the religious view of the human person.

The title “third revolution,” psychoanalysis, followed such revolutions as the replacing of faith by science during the French enlightenment, and the Marxist revolution.

Here are some thoughts and direct excerpts from the book The Third Revolution:
When Stern was a student of medicine in the early part of the century, psychiatry was taught as a branch of medicine with diagnosis, prognosis and treatment described in the same manner as one would talk about surgery or ear, nose and throat problems. There was little mention of neurosis. But in the second half of the century, Stern observes:

“...There are living in our midst thousands and thousands of people (there is a strong possibility that they form the majority of mankind in our present civilization) who suffer, or produce suffering among those around them, in a most puzzling manner. They live in mortal anxiety, or they are unable to hope, or they are entangled in mysterious hatred, or they are out to destroy that which would give them happiness, they are incapable of trusting, or they are being oppressed by something which is best called insatiable remorse. They form a huge army of suffering, dissatisfaction, frustration, and assault...” (pp. 5-6)

These people are not in institutions but they lead a hellish life and make life a hell for those around them. (See p. 6) Stern’s view is that it takes a synthesis of psychoanalytic and religious concepts to deal with such problems. (See p. 12 ff.)

“In the face of these developments, a defensive attitude on the part of Christians becomes destructive. The temptation to ward off or shut out the seemingly alien is a sign of sterility...If our lives are guided by fear of error, rather than the love of truth, we are no better than those people whose lives are dominated by fear of sin rather than the love of good...

“This is a time when, in the world of ideas, we need the spirit of courage and discernment which characterized people like Saint Thomas Aquinas.” (p. 12)

“The existentialist philosophers tell us - and they tell us nothing new - that despair and anxiety, hatred and distrust lurk in a potential pit which surrounds us all, no matter how healthy we think we are.” (p. 15)

Here are some excerpts from other chapters of Stern’s intriguing book:

“To dispute the basic tenets of psychoanalysis on philosophical grounds would be just as wrong as to dispute certain tenets of physics on philosophical grounds. All we can say is that nothing discussed in the preceding chapter is incompatible with a Christian idea of the nature of man...

“It is therefore the more surprising that psychoanalysis is considered a vicious onslaught against Christianity, in fact against any religious belief...Freud did not stop at factual statements to which the tests of veracity can be applied...

“Freud’s method in dealing with anything spiritual is reductive. This means that Freud reduces everything which, to the religious believer, is in the supernatural order, to something in the natural
order. For example, the idea of God, says Freud, is a father image projected on the sky. The child originally has a concept of an omnipotent father who is able to fulfill all his needs. In the degree to which the child develops a grasp of reality, that image of the father is gradually erased. Instead of it, a fantasy figure, a father in heaven, becomes imbued with the same qualities of omnipotence and protectiveness.” (pp. 115-117)

Stern explains that this kind of “nothing but” philosophy follows from denial of the supernatural.

“The ‘nothing but’ of Freud is the complete inversion, the upside-down, the perfect mirror image of the Christian position. Whereas Freud tells us that God is nothing but a father figure...a Christian philosopher would say: ‘Even in the child’s relationship to the father, there is contained a crude foreshadowing of our relationship to God.’” (pp. 118-119)

Stern refutes Freud’s theory about religion on the basis that it is quite irrational to say that because phenomena “B” resembles phenomena “A” in some ways, that “B” is nothing but “A.” For example, the fact that a picture in an anatomy book resembles Michelangelo’s statue of David doesn’t mean that the statue is nothing but the sketch in the anatomy book. “In order to understand the form and beauty of the face of “David,” we do not need to know anything about (anatomy).” (p. 124)

It is as if you said a rose is nothing but humus and manure because it grows out of it, remarks Stern.

Stern continues his critique by explaining that to make it seem as if psychology explains everything is to remove all boundaries and imagine psychology solves everything. This would be psychologism. (It makes it seem as if there were no genuine metaphysical realities that are explained by the reality of God as First Cause) (See p. 126).

Concerning the idea that everything good is merely sublimated sexual energy, Stern writes: “Does anyone really believe that families are founded, orphans are cared for, the sick are tended to, cathedrals are erected, symphonies are composed - only because instinctual drives are blocked by society?” (P. 127)

According to Stern, however, all this error does not mean that the basic ideas of psychoanalysis itself are false. Healing takes place through this method because of the encounter with the analyst which is in actually spiritual in nature and a form of empathetic exchange in the direction of personalism. (See p. 146-147 and p. 306)

Carl Jung (1875-1961)
Carl Jung, born in Kesswil, Switzerland in 1897, was the son of an Evangelical minister. His father was a disappointed man who was chronically depressed. Young Carl observed much conflict between his mother and father. Carl thought that his mother had two personalities: one, a pleasant housewife and loving mother by day; the other, a witch, prophetess and seer who communicated with spirits at night. He became convinced later that he had two personalities also. He thought he was growing insane because of horrifying dreams, some apparently demonic. By the time Carl was twelve he began to think that besides his child personality he was simultaneously a wise old man of the eighteenth century. He thought that he was given rare and secret revelations. He became increasingly solitary.

Given this background it is not hard to understand that Jung wrote his university dissertation on the occult. He married at twenty-eight and had five children. Jung began studying psycho-analysis with Freud but broke with him in 1910. He was unable to accept the exclusively sexual concept of the libido in Freud based on a biological model. Instead Jung believed that man’s spiritual needs are at least equally, if not more, potent than his basic biological needs.

Of interest to readers not necessarily in agreement with all his other theories is Jung’s book on Psychological Types written in 1921.

Jung was a world traveler, visiting New Mexico, East Africa, and other countries. In 1936 he received an honorary doctorate from Harvard. He lectured at Yale. From 1948 until his death in 1961 he was the head of the Jung Institute in Zurich.

The most famous of the students of Freud who broke away eventually from the master were Adler and Jung. Before describing the differences, let us look at what they had in common with Freud: “the mind, psyche, or personality of man comprises unconscious as well as conscious components, and that man’s behavior and his conscious states can be explained only by reference to the unconscious sources of motivation.” The practice of psychoanalysis” is the use of special techniques for bringing these unconscious factors into daylight.” (From Introduction to Jung’s Psychology - Editorial note by C.A. Mace, p. 7)

By the end of the twentieth century the term “unconscious” had become wide-spread and easily understood, but when Freud and Jung began explaining their theories, they were greeted with doubt and sometimes ridicule. According to psycho-analysts, evidence of the unconscious came in work with patients by means of techniques of free association, hypnosis, and dream analysis. Psychosomatic illnesses were said to indicate the work of the unconscious.

What Jung called the personal unconscious is what has been repressed from memory but can re-emerge. What Jung called the collective unconscious would be archetypal images from the past which are engraved on our psyches such as squares, circles, wheels, dwarfs, animals, plants.
A glossary of terms used by Jungian psychologists is appended here (see Frieda Fordham, *An Introduction to Jung’s Psychology*, p. 146):

Affect – emotion

Anima – the unconscious feminine side of a man

Animus – the unconscious masculine side of a woman

Archetype – a content of the collective unconscious which is the psychological counterpart of instinct. Also loosely used to designate a collective image or symbol

Collective – psychic contents which are not common to one individual, but to many. When these are unconscious they are termed the collective unconscious

Complex – an affectively toned group of associated ideas

Ego – the centre of the conscious mind

Extroversion – the turning of the libido towards outer objects

Fantasy – imaginative activity

Individual – the integrated whole personality

Individuation – the process of becoming an individual

Instinct – an unconsciously determined impulse, or action which is collective

Introversion – the turning of the libido towards inner objects

Libido – psychic energy

Neurosis – a disorder of the psyche caused by unconscious conflict, in which the ego remains relatively intact

Persona – the facet of personality which is turned to the world and by which a relationship with the environment is made

personal unconscious – repressed memories, wishes, emotions, etc., and subliminal perceptions of a personal nature

projection – the transmitting of a subjective process onto an object
psyche – a necessary postulate defining the subject matter of psychology, and as such including the conscious and the unconscious

psychic – pertaining to the psyche

psychosis – the invasion of the conscious by unconscious contents, so that the ego is partially or completely overwhelmed. What is commonly known as insanity

reductive analysis – the reduction of or tracing back of psychic manifestations to their original source

repression – the more or less deliberate withdrawal of attention from some disagreeable experience, causing it to be expelled from consciousness so that it cannot be recalled at will

schizoid – a split personality, an introverted personality which is not, however, insane

self – the centre of the totality of ego and unconscious, and/or the synthesis of ego and unconscious

shadow – the unconscious ‘natural’ side of a human being

symbol – an expression of something relatively unknown which cannot be conveyed in any other way

trauma – psychic injury

One of the most important contributions of Jung was the weight he gave to the imagination. The imagination includes not only records of individual experience but also what are called archetypes. These are inherited predispositions to respond with great emotion to specific events. For example, within the collective unconscious is the archetype of the hero. In an emergency, you might find yourself fighting an enemy. You find yourself enacting the role of the hero slaying a “dragon.” Once when I was in the 9th month of pregnancy, I noticed a pregnant cat lying in the sun. As I exalted in the kinship I felt with that mother cat, of a sudden I felt myself fulfilling the universal archetype of maternity. It would not be unusual for a Christian facing martyrdom to call up the images of the great martyrs of many centuries past.

Even archetypal images that we have no previous conscious knowledge of, can appear in our dreams. “These images find their way into myths where, for instance, the sunrise is seen as the birth of the God-hero from the sea who drives his chariot across the sky and to the west where a great mother dragon waits to devour him in evenings.” (See Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung’s Psychology, p. 26)

A concept of Jung that has become popular as a way of describing features of the personality is the shadow. This is a part of our personal unconscious which contains our unacceptable motives,
tendencies and desires. In a wider sense, just as your body throws a shadow, a person who is zealous in a good way, sometimes may exhibit the shadow of zeal such as fanaticism.

Another topic of interest is regression. In our life choices we are often progressing, satisfying the ego through active adaptation to one’s environment. An example I would think of would be work. I finish a project of value to the company I work for and in this way make progress for myself and for the goals of our business. Regression, on the other hand, satisfies the unconscious. It is an adaptation to one’s inner needs. (See Fordham’s summary, p. 18) For example, I might indulge in the evening in some puerile game reacting with childish petulance to failure to win over my child.

Throughout history there has been an interest in personality typology. Most enduring would be the notion of the four temperaments: choleric, sanguine, melancholic, and phlegmatic. Jung developed a typology employed by psychologists throughout the world even if they do not accept many other concepts of the Swiss psychoanalyst. Here is a summary statement of Jung’s ideas about personality types:

Jung postulated two personality types based on attitudes: the “introvert” and the “extrovert.” Introverts are characterized by their withdrawal from social stimulation, their intensely subjective interest in things intellectual and their reliance on the power of their own feelings. The extrovert, much the opposite, is dominated by objective, external reality and is socially orientated.

In addition to these attitude types, he proposed four functions: thinking and feeling (rational), and intuition and sensation (irrational). Classifying the functions as rational or irrational is dependent on the degree of judgment or reasoning involved. Thinking and feeling are classified as rational functions because both involve conscious reasoning and are judgmental processes; sensation and intuition are classified as irrational because conscious reasoning is virtually absent. Introverts and extroverts can each be dominated by one or more of these functions, leading to an eight-fold combined typology.

I. Extrovert types:

(1) Extrovert Thinking Type (Rational): Use only objective facts at hand when drawing their conclusions and their thinking tends to be dogmatic and dominated by “oughts” and “shoulds.” Their key trait descriptions are: objective, rigid and cold.

(2) Extrovert Feeling Type (Rational): Also respond to objective, external facts but respond with their emotions rather than thinking functions and found more in women than men. Their key trait descriptions are: intense, effervescent and sociable.

(3) Extrovert Sensation Type (Irrational): Look for the sensory experiences of external objects and suppress tendency to introspection which makes them good social company. May be discriminating
judges or connoisseurs of such things as fine art or wine. Their key trait descriptions are: realistic, sensual and jolly.

(4) Extrovert Intuitive Type (Irrational): Has difficulty maintaining interest in any one thing for very long and tends to make decisions without conscious reflective thought. Yet, decisions are likely to be good ones because they are closely in touch with the wisdom of their unconscious. Their key trait descriptions are: visionary, changeable and creative.

II. Introvert Types:

(1) Introvert Thinking Type (Rational): Looks like the stereotypical intellectual, the “egghead,” concerned with abstractions and creation of theories for their own sake and ignoring the practicalities of everyday living. Is a very private person. Key trait descriptions: theoretical, intellectual and impractical.

(2) Introvert Feeling Type (Rational): Outward emotional expression is kept to a minimum despite intense and troublesome emotions which they might express through the writing of poetry rather than share their feelings with others. More common among women. Key traits descriptions: silent, childish, and indifferent.

(3) Introvert Sensation Type (Irrational): Dominated by the changing flow of external events and what matters is his personal reactions to the objective sensory events which he evaluates in terms of clear-cut categories of what is good and evil to him. He is undisturbed if people point out that he is separated from reality. Key trait descriptions: passive, calm and artistic.

(4) Introvert Intuitive Type (Irrational): Tends to be aloof and unconcerned about concrete reality or external events and looks like the stereotypic “peculiar artist” or the slightly “mad genius” or “oddball” whose productions often result in strange but beautiful creations. He needs to shape his perceptions in a way that will satisfy his inner self. Key trait descriptions are: mystic, dreamer and unique.

It must be emphasized that the combined attitude-function types rarely occur in the pure form just described. In addition, individuals may change from one to another type as conditions of their personal and collective unconscious change. Such change may be facilitated by a growth effort such as psychotherapy.

In his practice, Jung met many middle-aged people for whom life had lost its purpose. He thought that what they needed was not necessarily great sexual fulfillment but rather greater development of their individuality by harmonizing the ego and the unconscious. You might think of a man who worked
as an engineer to satisfy parental pressure to be a successful member of the community, but whose 
real yearning was to be an artist. In mid-life such a man might need to break with his former career to 
satisfy his artistic nature. Remaining an engineer would be too one-sided, eluding a wholeness that 
could come from integrating the knowledge of spatial relationships of the engineer with the 
sensitivity to color and form of the artist.

Psychological health, according to Jung, came with accepting the basic contradictions of life 
and becoming whole in integrating the light and the dark, the good and evil in oneself. Religion is of 
utmost importance in this quest, but is separated by Jung from objective questions such as whether 
God actually exists. He thought such matters were uncertain. What was important was not the fact 
of God’s existence but what belief in it does to help us become whole.

In evaluation, it is important to realize that when some Christians became aware of the way 
Carl Jung was bringing spirituality into the realm of psycho-analysis, previously thought of as 
materialistic, deterministic, and hedonistic, there was a rush to learn more about his thought and 
practice. For example, Viktor Frankl, whose writings in quite a different vein we will study next, once 
praised Jung as having the great merit of seeing that neurosis came from suffering of the soul that has 
not found its meaning.

“The great merit of Jung was to see that neurosis came from suffering of the soul that has not 
found its meaning.” (See Illustrated Biography of Jung, by Gerhard Wehr (Boston: Shambhala Press, 
1989 p. 150) Quite a number of ministers, clerical and lay, made trips to Zurich to study his ideas in 
greater depth. Some of these concepts appear to have abiding value such as his insights into 
personality types, the importance of archetypal images, and the greater wholeness that comes with 
balance of features in a personality that may be one-sided.

Most fundamental of the objections made to Jungian psychology concerns his refusal to 
distinguish between religion as a response to a transcendent God who exists apart from human 
experience, and God as a symbol for man’s religious aspirations. Erich Fromm, a prominent 
humanistic psychologist wrote that “Jung is totally relativistic. He has no interest in whether a belief is 
true or false. This is logical nonsense.” (Illustrated Biography of Jung, p. 146) It appears that Jung’s 
fascination with archetypal symbols led him away from interest in the real God, and from revelation 
as a truth that requires obedience.

Another serious objection concerns Jung’s way of describing evil as a polarity vs. something to 
be shunned at all costs. It is impossible logically to deny that evil is to be avoided since everyone will 
protest some form of evil at one time or another, if only the evil of intolerance. It may be true on a 
therapeutic level that a client may need to sublimate sinful energies rather than repress them, but 
never can they be viewed as equally valuable or a force for good within that person. It appears that 
quite a number of so-called Christian Jungians will encourage clients to make choices previously 
considered immoral on the basis of considerations of psychological growth or wholeness. For 
example, a woman who has become drained by years of experience of the maternal feminine in
marriage and family life, might decide as a result of Jungian therapy, to develop more of the masculine side of her personality even at the cost of abandoning husband and family.

There is much emphasis on introspective exploration in Jungian psychology. One can find those who become one-sidedly involved with some of these methods seeing other people merely as triggers for self-growth rather than persons of worth in themselves toward which one has a responsibility, especially when commitments are involved. Some one might announce to a spouse “I chose you because you embodied for me the eternal feminine, but now that I have interiorized those values while coming into touch with my own feminine, I have to move along.”

The features I have criticized here can assume a peculiar form in the life of those influenced by Jungian ideas or therapy. One can come to see other people and even God more as symbols or exterior examples of elements within one’s own psyche rather than as important totally separate individuals. We need to rejoice in the radical individuality of another person, not reduce him or her to a set of qualities to be found within ourselves or desirable for ourselves.

For example, my friend is not just a collection of qualities to inspire me, but a person in his or her own right I am gifted to be able to love. Mary, the Mother of God, is not just an archetype of the pure feminine I want to find or develop in myself. She is a separate person who dwells in heaven and wants to help me on my path toward holiness. God is not a symbol of the divine within. He is the real Divine reflected most dimly in my own innermost core.

Viktor E. Frankl (1905-1997)

Viktor Frankl, a Jew, was born in Vienna and studied medicine and psychiatry. During World War II he was a prisoner in a concentration camp. After the war he became a professor and psychotherapist in the United States teaching at many universities. I personally met Viktor Frankl in 1972 when I was doing a research project on new methods of teaching. At that time he was a professor in San Diego at the International School of Psychology. His books were translated into many languages some with nine millions copies. I was amazed that he, an old man, said he took phone calls through the night wanting to help others at any cost of himself. He became a Catholic in his later years, but did not publicize this conversion in order to spare the feelings of his Jewish relatives.

Frankl’s most famous book was first called From Death Camp to Existentialism, in 1961, and then expanded into Man’s Search for Meaning, translated Isle Laschand printed by NY: Washington Square Press, 1963. The subtitle of the expanded book is “An Introduction to Logotherapy” The L.A.Times said Frankl’s approach was “the most important contribution to psychiatry since the writings of Freud.” By some, Logotherapy was considered the 3rd Viennese School of Psychotherapy after Freud and Adler.

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In the concentration camps, Frankl lost his father, mother, brother, and wife, all except his sister. He asked himself how in the camp, with everything lost and suffering from hunger, cold, brutality expecting to be exterminated, he could still find life worth living. His answer was that when a person had a meaning to his or her life that transcended conditions, then life was worth living.

After the war Frankl started logotherapy at the University of Vienna and all over the world. Whereas Freud thought that neuroses come from anxiety caused by conflicting and unconscious motives, Frankl thought there were many layers where illness could arise, and that one of them was due to failure to find meaning in life. Logotherapy is a form of existential psychoanalysis. Frankl did not get rid of Freudian ideas but built around them a new much more humanistic system, compatible with religious belief.

In the concentration camps where there was nothing left but life itself, there were many phases, cold detachment, curiosity about one’s fate, strategies to preserve remnants of one’s life, though the chances of surviving were slight, humiliation, fear and deep anger at injustice; but also images of beloved persons, religion, or even a grim sense of humor, or the healing beauty of nature. But all of this doesn’t work until one can find a meaning to suffering. Frankl quotes Nietzsche p. xiii “He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how.”

This becomes a microcosm for the question for all patients: how can you find purpose in your circumstances, no matter how grim?

Frankl was interested in the average concentration camp victim. There were always choices to be made. For example, in order to try to maneuver to get one’s own name off a list of the most feeble prisoners in a smaller camp to be transported to the huge death camp or to keep one’s friend’s name off the list, one knew that someone else’s name would go on. Was it right to live on at the sacrifice of another, known or unknown? (see p. 5) No one had a name in the camp, just a number. Most of the survivors had to lose all scruples to save themselves. “The best did not return.” (p. 7)

Even though Frankl was a psychiatrist and medical doctor, he did not do this work at the camp until the last few weeks. Mostly he was digging and laying tracks for railways. The existentiality of this account is that it deals not with theories so much as the actual experience.

There are “three phases of the inmate’s mental reactions to camp life...: the period following his admission; the period when he is well entrenched in camp routine; and the period following his release and liberation.” (p. 11)

The first period is characterized by shock. Most of the prisoners were sent immediately to the gas chambers of Auschwitz, only those who were thought to be healthy enough to continue to live were allowed to work in the camp. The first evening this minority found out about the others.

“I inquired from prisoners who had been there for some time where my colleague and friend P had been sent.”
“Was he sent to the left side?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“Then you can see him there,” I was told.

“Where?”

“A hand pointed to the chimney a few hundred yards off, which was sending a column of flame up into the gray sky of Poland. It dissolved into a sinister cloud of smoke.

“That’s where your friend is, floating up to Heaven,” was the answer. But I still did not understand until the truth was explained to me in plain words.” (p. 18-19)

Then the SS greeted them with charm in order to get their watches and other valuables off them with the hint if they gave them over freely to this guard, he might help them after. Then they were stripped naked. The fear devolved into cold curiosity about the future. Also surprise.

Regarding living conditions at the camp, Frankl made this surprising observation:

“I had been convinced that there were certain things I just could not do: I could not sleep without this or I could live with that or the other.” (p. 25) We found that we could sleep nine in a cot huddled together. “We were unable to clean our teeth, and yet, in spite of that and a severe vitamin deficiency, we had healthier gums than ever before...a light sleeper, who used to be disturbed by the slightest noise in the next room, now found himself lying pressed against a comrade who snored loudly a few inches from his ear and yet slept quite soundly through the noise.” (p. 26)

Everyone thought about committing suicide, mostly by running up against the electric barbed wire. In the first phase of shock the prisoner stopped fearing death. The apathy of the first phase is a kind of emotional death because of the pain of the “boundless longing for his home and his family.” Also people experienced great disgust at the external aspects of the place.

In the second phase feelings were blunted and someone could watch others being beaten unmoved. This, and eventual insensitivity to beating was “a very necessary protective shell.” (See p. 35)

The painful part was not so much the pain of blows but being treated like a dumb animal. Without thinking he tried to help a comrade who was partially disabled carry a girder. “I was immediately hit on the back, rudely reprimanded and ordered to return to my place. A few minutes previously the same guard who struck me had told us deprecatingly that we “pigs” lacked the spirit of comradeship.” (p. 38)
Fortunately Frankl’s usual guard had marital problems and consulted Frankl, and therefore he was favored and his life was saved.

In the second phase the only interest is in survival of self and of one’s friends. Other psychoanalysts at the camp spoke of a regression reflected in dreams, mostly being of bread, cake, cigarettes, warm baths. Mostly conversation was about food or the hope of liberation, describing the future life they wished for. One could predict who would die of starvation next. There was little interest in sex, probably because of malnutrition. Most interest was in rumors involving politics.

“The religious interest of the prisoners, as soon as it developed, was the most sincere imaginable. The depth and vigor of religious belief often surprised and moved a new arrival. Most impressive in this connection were improvised prayers or services in the corner of a hut, or in the darkness of the locked cattle truck in which we were brought back from a distant work site, tired, hungry and frozen in our ragged clothing.” (p. 54)

Some weaker prisoners did better than hardier ones because they would retreat within themselves to inner riches and spiritual freedom. Marching along, for instance, Frankl started thinking of his wife’s image:

“A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth - that love is the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire....The salvation of man is through love and in love. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved. In a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way - an honorable way - in such a position man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment. For the first time in my life I was able to understand the meaning of the words, ‘The angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory.’” (p. 58)

Frankl grasped that love goes beyond the physical person of the beloved to his spiritual being, his inner self.

There is also a refuge in memories of the past, often trivial ones. The prisoners would go into ecstasy to see a mountain or a sunset. (See p. 60)

In the midst of despair he heard a “Yes” to the question of ultimate purpose. He had a deep sense of the presence of his wife of light shining in darkness. (See p. 64)
They even had a makeshift cabaret in the camp with prisoners singing songs or telling jokes. He got a comrade to agree each day to think of some amusing thing that could happen after liberation. This is a form of momentary self—preservation. (See p. 68)

“Under the influence of a world which no longer recognized the value of human life and human dignity, which had robbed man of his will and had made an object to be exterminated (having planned, however, to make full use of him first - the last ounce of his physical resources) - under this influence the personal ego finally suffered a loss of values. If the man in the concentration camp did not struggle against this in a last effort to save his self—respect, he lost the feeling of being an individual, a being with a mind, with inner freedom and personal value. He thought of himself then as only a part of an enormous mass of people; his existence descended to the level of animal life.” (pp. 78-79)

Even though it was likely to mean death, Frankl agreed to leave with a transport of sick persons. The transport contained his friends. On his way out he told a friend to tell his wife, if she survived, that their short time together outweighed everything, even the camp. Toward the end, the camp he had left became cannibalistic. (see p. 88)

There was a feeling of fate and a horror of having to make decisions such as about escape attempts. (p. 90) Once he was about to escape, but felt very bad about it, then stayed because of a friend he was trying to save from death. (See p. 93) After deciding to stay he became happier.

Another factor of the camp was a kind of inferiority complex:

“The majority of prisoners suffered from a kind of inferiority complex. We all had once been or had fancied ourselves to be ‘somebody’.”

“Now we were treated like complete nonentities. (The consciousness of one’s inner value is anchored in higher, more spiritual things, and cannot be shaken by camp life. But how many free men, let alone prisoners, possess it?) Without consciously thinking about it, the average prisoner felt himself utterly degraded.” (p. 99)

By contrast the prisoners who were capos or cooks felt superior with even delusions of grandeur.

There were lots of fights.

Does Frankl’s analysis of the concentration camp mean that man is completely at the mercy of his environment? Is there no free will? There is free will. Some men went around comforting others, giving away their last pieces of bread. There is a last freedom which is to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.
“It is this spiritual freedom - which cannot be taken away - that makes life meaningful and purposeful. ...If there is meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. ...the way in which (a man) takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity - even under the most difficult circumstances - to add a deeper meaning to his life.” (p. 106)

This freedom involves not only creative and enjoyment values but with these missing, the moral values come to the fore. Not just in the camps but everywhere man is offered the chance to achieve something through his own suffering. What of the fate of the sick and incurable? To die in a courageous and noble way?

The fact that the prisoners had no way to know how long it was or if they would survive changed their inner life. Life becomes meaningless if you don’t look at the opportunities of the present for spiritual growth.

“The prisoner who had lost faith in the future - his future - was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay...usually it began with the prisoner refusing one morning to get dressed and warm or to go out on the parade grounds...He just lay there, hardly moving...He simply gave up. There he remained, lying in his own excreta, and nothing bothered him any more”(p. 117-118).

A great number of the prisoners died right after Christmas because they had become sure they would be home by Christmas.

What they needed was meaning in the sense of tasks set for us by life. (p. 122)

Tears bear witness to the courage to suffer. (p. 125)

To get through despair one has to realize that one is an irreplaceable individual. (p. 127)

In the camp Frankl would quote from Nietzsche - “that which does not kill me, makes me stronger.” (p. 130)

And what of the guards - some were sadists, some were dulled by the camps, but some actually helped the prisoners - buying medicines. Some SS commanders were actually good, and some prisoners were evil to each other.

“I remember how one day a foreman secretly gave me a piece of bread which I knew he must have saved from his breakfast ration. It was far more than the small piece of bread which moved me to tears at that time. It was the human “something” which this man also gave to me - the word and look which accompanied the gift. (p. 137)

Frankl offers some interesting reflections about liberated prisoners.
The liberated prisoner: numb, could not really rejoice. Mostly people ate and ate and talked and talked. Frankl, out in a field, knelt down and prayed a line from the Psalms about calling to the Lord from a prison and being freed. (See p. 133 ff.)

Some liberated prisoners had taken in the violence and became oppressors themselves wanting some form of revenge. (p. 144)

“Only slowly could these men be guided back to the commonplace truth that no one has the right to do wrong, not even if wrong has been done to him.” (p. 144)

Some became bitter coming home to hear “We did not know about it,” and “We, too, have suffered.” Some were disillusioned to come home and find no one waiting. Others felt that: “the crowning experience of all, for the homecoming man, is the wonderful feeling that, after all he has suffered, there is nothing he need fear any more - except his God.” (p. 148)

A later edition of from Death Camp to Existentialism called Man’s Search for Meaning, concludes with chapters on the

BASIC CONCEPTS OF LOGOTHERAPY (see p. 151 ff)

This healing therapy is more focused on hope for the future than the past. It is centered on how to break through the self-centeredness which keeps people from their life tasks.

Logos = meaning.

What is important in Frankl’s Logotherapy is not the will to pleasure of Freud or will to power of Adler, but more will to meaning. This meaning must be unique and specific.

Most people think you need meaning to live and many would die for it. This cannot be mere self-expression or wishful thinking because that is self-defeating. One cannot give oneself to it then or be challenged by it.

“This holds true not only for the so-called sublimation of instinctual drives but for what C.G. Jung called the “archetypes” of the “collective unconscious as well, inasmuch as the latter would also be self-expressions, namely, of mankind as a whole.” (p. 156)

According to Frankl, we don’t invent ourselves as Jean Paul Sartre thought, but we rather detect this meaning. Values do not drive a man, but pull him. Man is free to choose about what is offered.

Man doesn’t relate to drives he is motivated by the object, the cause, the person, God.
One can be frustrated - frustration having to do with meaning is called noogenic neurosis vs. psychogenic. Noos = mind in Greek. Noogenic neurosis come from conflicts of values, moral conflicts or spiritual conflicts. Instead of tracing these back to unconscious roots and sources, they are dealt with in spiritual terms by logotherapists.

For example: “a patient was discontented with his career (as an American diplomat hating the reigning US foreign policy). His (former) analyst, had told him again and again that he should try to reconcile himself with his father because the government of the U.S. were...nothing but father images and, consequently, his dissatisfaction wit his job was due to the hatred he unconsciously harbored toward his father.” (p. 161)

But with Frankl as a therapist, this man came to see that he really wanted to do a different kind of work. He is very happy in his new work.

Spiritual distress from despair is not a mental disease. “It may well be that interpreting it (despair) in terms of (mental disease) motivates a doctor to bury his patient’s existential despair under a heap of tranquilizing drugs. It is his task, rather, to pilot the patient through his existential crisis of growth and development.” (p. 163)

Narrator:

The logotherapist guides a patient in becoming aware of the hidden logos of his existence. This requires some analysis. The idea is to help the person find what he actually longs for in the depth of his being.

“Logotherapy deviates from psychoanalysis insofar as it considers man as a being whose main concern consists in fulfilling a meaning and in actualizing values, rather than in the mere gratification and satisfaction of drives and instincts, the mere reconciliation of the conflicting claims of id, ego and superego, or mere adaptation and adjustment to the society and environment.” (p. 164)

Frankl himself partly wanted to survive the camp because he wanted to get his first book published. This means that health is not just equilibrium but a tension about future accomplishment “or the gap between what one is and what one should become “What man needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him...the spiritual dynamics in a polar field of tension where one pole is represented by a meaning to be fulfilled and the other pole by the man who must fulfill it.” (p. 166)

“If architects want to strengthen a decrepit arch, they increase the load that is laid upon it, for thereby the parts are joined more firmly together. So, if therapists wish to foster their patients’ mental health, they should not be afraid to increase that load through a reorientation toward the meaning of one’s life.” (p. 167)
By contrast many people are caught in the “existential vacuum.” “The existential vacuum is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century...the traditions that had buttressed his behavior are now rapidly diminishing. No instinct tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; soon he will not know what he wants to do. More and more he will be governed by what others want him to do, thus increasingly falling prey to conformism.” (pp. 167-168)

This manifests as boredom. Lack of meaning is replaced by will to money, power, pleasure, sexual compensation, suicide, alcoholism.

Even if someone starts out with a psychological problem, the existential vacuum increases it. One cannot answer the question what is the meaning of life in general terms. It differs from person to person, from day to day. What matters is the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment. (p. 171) What we need is a vocation in life, a mission, an assignment. Life gives us a meaning, we are questioned by life to be responsible.

“Logotherapy sees in responsibleness the very essence of human existence.” (p. 171-173)

The categorical imperative of Logotherapy is “So live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now!”...such a precept confronts man with life’s finiteness as well as the finality of what he makes out of both his life and himself.” (p. 173)

He is accountable to himself, not the therapis. He is also accountable to God.

“The logotherapist's role consists in widening and broadening the visual field of the patient so that the whole spectrum of meaning and values becomes conscious and visible to him.” (p. 174)

“Human existence is essentially self-transcendence rather than self-actualization. Self-actualization is not a possible aim at all, for the simple reason that the more a man would strive for it, the more he would miss it...self-actualization cannot be attained if it is made an end in itself, but only as a side effect of self-transcendence...

“The world must not be regarded as a mere expression of one’s self. Nor must the world be considered as a mere instrument, or as a means to the end of one's self-actualization.” (p. 175)

We discover meaning in life in three different ways - deeds, experience of value, and suffering. In love we grasp the innermost core of the personality of another. Affirming the possibilities of the other. Love is not sexual drives sublimated, it is a primary phenomena. Love is not a side effect of sex but rather sex is a way of expressing “that ultimate togetherness that is called love.”

For example grieving is an expression of the love that was there. Suffering is not a symptom of maladjustment for which we should be ashamed, but rather suffering that is unavoidable is
something to ennable. For example when Frankl lost his manuscript having to give it up on entering Auschwitz, the coat given him instead had a page of the S’hema Y’Israel. He thought it meant that he was challenged to live his thoughts instead of merely putting them on paper.

Most of his comrades in the camp thought the main question was “Will we survive the camp? For, if not, all this suffering has no meaning.” The question which beset me was, “Has all this suffering, this dying around us, a meaning? For, if not, then ultimately there is no meaning to survival; for a life whose meaning depends upon such a happenstance - whether one escapes or not - ultimately would not be worth living at all.” (p. 183)

Frankl cites a woman who had a son who died at 11. Her only older son was paralyzed. She wanted to commit suicide with the older son, but the older son didn’t want to die. He liked living, and thought it had meaning. Frankl had the woman in a group. He asked another woman to role-play a woman with no children in her 80’s but plenty of riches, bemoaning how meaningless her life was. Finally the first woman was able to articulate that her life would have meaning if she improved the life of her paralyzed son. (See p. 184-185) Then at the end of the session he got the whole group to consider that just as an ape who was being used as a guinea pig to develop a polio serum would not know why he was suffering, but we would know; so there might be a meaning to our suffering that we don’t know.

“What is demanded of man is not, as some existential philosophers teach, to endure the meaninglessness of life; but rather to bear his incapacity to grasp its unconditional meaningfulness in rational terms. Logos is deeper than logic.” (p. 187-188)

The therapist cannot bring in religious belief in a pressuring way, but if the patient is a believer he can bring this to bear. For instance an old rabbi had lost his wife and children in the camps. Frankl asked if he didn’t want to be reunited with them in heaven. He cried and said that he could never be with them since they were innocent and he was a bitter old man. Frankl asked if possibly the reason he had been left was to be purified by all this suffering of grief so that he could be reunited with them. The Rabbi found relief in this view.

The fact that our life is transitory doesn’t make it meaningless. The past is the storehouse of all our deeds and choices. We decided which opportunities would be actualized and what would sink into non-being. Instead of possibilities, the older person has realities lived, work done, love loved, suffering suffered. (p. 192)

With neurotic things like agoraphobia, the logotherapist works on elements that do have to do with philosophy - such as how anticipatory anxiety produces the bad results - just as fear of blushing leads to blushing. On the other hand over attention to a goal makes it impossible. Frigidity is
helped not by concentrating on the goal of orgasm but instead comes with attention to the partner with the pleasure as the side-effect.

The collective neurosis involves a societal nihilism that seeps into psychological theory itself to permeate it negatively such as the image of man as a nothing but robot, not a human being. He calls this pan-determinism - as if from all sides man is conditioned whereas he sees the individual as self-transcending. Even horrible Nazi leaders can reform - he mentions one. He thinks it bad when religious people adopt these theories as if all who had bad fathers have to hate God whereas sometimes the good relationship to God is healing of the father problem. (See p. 204)

“Through such a misconception, the psychology of religion often becomes psychology as religion, in that psychology is sometimes worshiped and made an explanation for everything.” (p. 210)

“Man is that being who has invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who has entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord’s Prayer or the S’hema Y’Israel on his lips.” (p. 213)

In this way we end our chapter comparing psycho-analytic with personalist notions of the healing of mankind. I leave it to you to say which writer’s concepts seem to you the richer, the truer, and the more worthy of being carried into the 21st Century.
THEME 7

Social Engineering vs. Free Ethical Response

Skinner vs. Von Hildebrand

Introduction

One of the major issues of the 20th century concerned a deterministic view of human choice coupled often with related plans for social engineering vs. the traditional view held by most of mankind throughout the centuries that the human person has free-will and with it the ability to choose, in ethical response, between evil and good. Are human beings free in their choices or are they so “determined” by cultural conditioning that they are no better than sophisticated robots requiring the greatest possible control by experts to ameliorate their condition?

The debate about free will and ethics was partly a legacy of nineteenth century Marxism. Karl Marx taught that whereas people think they are free, in reality the behavior of individuals and groups is the direct and inevitable result of their economic conditions. For example, before the advent of unions, workers were conditioned to think it natural for the capitalists to get the profit and for them to live on starvation wages. According to Communists, People thus conditioned cannot simply decide to choose better conditions. It is necessary, instead, for powerful communist agitators to come on the scene to de-program them from their resignation. If such revolutionaries lead the workers into revolt and this protest includes the killing of capitalist bosses, that is good. According to deterministic Marxists, no traditional moral absolutes about the rights of any individual to life or property, can stand in the way of revolution. This is because they think there are no moral absolutes. Notions such as the sacredness of human life, underlying absolute rights, came from an old-fashioned philosophy that presupposed a free response to the good by human beings of a fixed nature. Instead the Marxists thought that human nature was something that could be changed by pressures of an economic and sociological kind.

Another source of determinism came from the experimental branch of psychology. Intriguing experiments were done which indicated that under certain conditions people might act quite contrary to their own predictions because of the force of pressures of which they were unaware. One of the most ominous involved a large group of subjects who were brought into a room and told to follow the instructions of the facilitator in pulling switches which would affect other persons seen through a
glass window. The subject could hear the progressively louder screams of the people on the other side of the glass, in reaction to his or her pulling of the switches. However, almost all of them unquestioningly raised up the level of that pain. When questioned afterwards they said that they assumed that a professional facilitator giving instructions had to be obeyed!

One of the most controversial determinists was B.F. Skinner who popularized his ideas about determinism in a best-selling novel entitled Walden II from which excerpts will be taken in the following theme of The Battle for the Twentieth Century Mind.

In response to claims that humans were no freer than guinea pigs in a lab, some thinkers promoted their own theories about the intrinsic freedom of choice of human beings. In this chapter we will focus on the defense of free will and ethical choice from the pen of Dietrich Von Hildebrand, the foremost Catholic philosopher of ethics of the century. You will see from the excerpts how determinism can be refuted and also the nobility that belongs to the human person as one able to make a response to such values as life, beauty, purity, and sacrifice.

B.F. Skinner (1904-1990)

B. F. Skinner, one of the most published psychologists of the century, was born in upstate New York to a fairly conservative family. His mother’s side of the family was conformist and correct. As a boy Burrhus Frederic was much frightened by the idea of hell taught him by his grandmother. By the end of high school he had decided that he didn’t believe in God. In college he rebelled against daily chapel and compelled sports. He specialized instead in planning hoaxes and in writing bitter caricatures of the faculty for which he was reprimanded. He wanted most to become a writer but after a few years of relative failure he went to Harvard to study psychology out of an interest in animal and human behavior. In 1936 he married and had two daughters.

In 1945 Skinner became chairman of the psychology department at Indiana University. In 1948 he became a professor at Harvard where he became a permanent member of the faculty. A researcher and mentor of many doctoral candidates, Skinner became most famous because of his novel Walden II, a fictional account of a community run according to his behaviorist principles. This book became a best-seller.

The title Walden Two harks back to Thoreau’s famous book Walden describing his experiment in solitary living at the site of a New England pond. Skinner thought of starting his own community along utopian deterministic lines but decided he was too old to undertake such a venture. His most famous non-fiction book is Beyond Freedom and Dignity.

Before presenting excerpts from B.F. Skinner’s Walden Two, it would be well to acquaint you with some key terminology from what was called behaviorism in psychology.
Behaviorism holds that human behavior is caused by genetics and environment. In the book *Skinner for the Classroom: Selected Papers*, edited and introduced by Robert Epstein (Champaign, Ill.: Research Press, 1982) it is pointed out that, “Skinner does not deny that there are “thoughts” and “feelings,” and so on. He simply regards them as physical states of the body, as opposed to metaphysical or psychological entities.” (p. 2). In other words, you may think you are considering matters of truth and value as if to determine your behavior freely according to your conclusions about say, democracy or communism. In reality, according to a behaviorist such as Skinner, your thoughts and feelings are merely reflections of your programming either by a democratically organized society or a communistic one.

Skinner’s determinism, however, is not simply a theory about observable behavior. He is most interested in motivating people through conditioning to change in ways he deems important for their own good and the betterment of others around them. This is to be accomplished by what is called reinforcement. “If we can show that a response increases in frequency because (and only because) it follows a particular stimulus, we call that stimulus a reinforcer.” (pp. 3-4). By experiment psychologists can find out what is most effective for reinforcement. For example, one can find out by studies on students whether they do better on tests before or after meals. Eventually all these findings will produce a science of man with perfect prediction of all the effects of different kinds of reinforcement, according to Skinner.

So successful has Skinner’s behaviorism been in our times that the idea of positive reinforcement is simply a part of the vocabulary of educators and all those promoting any cause, product, or even presidential candidate. It is as simple in application as promising a child a treat after a painful inoculation as an incentive to getting him or her to walk into the car without resistance.

Even though Skinner thought there was no such thing as free-will and moral worth, he acknowledged that it is important that people feel free and worthy.

Now let us turn to how these deterministic ideas are illustrated in Skinner’s best selling novel *Walden II*, incidently written in a feverish seven weeks!

*Walden II* characters include: Frazier (the behavioral psychologist running the utopian community), and visitors to the community: Burris (a professor) Castle (a philosopher), Barbara and Roger, Mary and Steve.

Conditioning, or programming, was called behavioral engineering at the time Skinner wrote the book. *Walden II* is about a perfect planned utopian modern community. Members are made to imagine they are free, but in reality everything is planned for them. A trivial example is the way the trays in the cafeteria are transparent for easy cleaning because you can see both sides. The place is
run by specialist managers, not democratically. Everything is planned, for instance children have to wait when they come in from play to eat for some minutes and if the other group eats first they have to watch the first group eat.  (p. 84)

Frazier explains to the inquiring guests that in Walden II, children are cared for by many, with less constant care of parents only. “We go in...for everybody’s love - community love, if you wish. Our children are treated with affection by everyone - and thoughtful affection too, which isn’t marred by fits of temper due to overwork or careless handling due to ignorance.” (p. 99)

Frazier, the founder of this project in the countryside, says about the utopian community:

“...The emotions which breed unhappiness - are almost unknown here, like unhappiness itself. We don’t need them any longer in our struggle for existence, and it’s easier on our circulatory system, and certainly pleasant, to dispense with them.” (p. 101)

The bad emotions such as envy and rage served a purpose, Frazier explains, in the evolution of man. But in his cooperative society they don’t fit.

“In a competitive world there’s some point to anger. It energizes one to attack a frustrating condition. The impulse and the added energy are an advantage...The world isn’t ready for simple pacifism or Christian humility...Before you can safely train out the destructive and wasteful emotions, you must make sure they’re no longer needed.” (p. 102)

Without the sort of behavioral engineering that prevails in Skinner’s Walden II there is little progress, according to Skinner, because people are conditioned in ways that are counter-happiness such as competitiveness. In the past progress was supposed to come through inspiring people to good behavior but in Frazier’s community it will come from experimental study.

“What’s the best behavior of the individual so far as the group is concerned? And how can the individual be induced to behave in this way?” (p. 105)

This is not new, Frazier claims. “‘Love your enemies’ is an example - a psychological invention...” (p. 105)

Skinner espouses total materialism:“ All differences (between humans) are physical...We think with our bodies, too.” (p. 127)

In Walden II the children live with group care and regard all the parents as their own. In this way they get better programming than they would through tired busy parents. They have selective breeding. Insecurity in children, according to Frazier, comes not from professional care but from overworked emotionally upset parents. (See p. 145) Previous experimental utopias failed because they were based on moral principles instead of scientific ones.
At Walden II there is a division of labor with most people working only half a day because of good management. The rest of the time is spent with congenial groups of people pursuing the arts or hobbies etc. Everything is planned with the talents and character of the people taken into account. Frazier considers that this good life is justification in itself because it is enjoyable, and it doesn’t require any further justification. (See p. 161)

If anyone fails to do their part they are sent to a community psychologist. Self-control because of conditioning is what makes the community work. By contrast, communities based on freedom and morality “...put too much faith in human nature. (They are) an offshoot of the philosophy of perfectionism...We have no truck with philosophies of innate goodness - or evil, either, for that matter. But we do have faith in our power to change human behavior. We can make men adequate for group living - to the satisfaction of everybody. That was our faith, but it’s now a fact.” (p. 196)

In Walden II they take the members for field trips to the outside world to show them all the miseries of jails, saloons, slums, etc.

The goal is happiness and the best possible future that intelligence can work out. (See p. 209)

The sceptical guests of the community make all sorts of attempts to look for flaws but don’t find them except that Frazier’s room is a mess and that he obviously has psychological problems which he explains as due to his not having grown up in Walden II but in the world. (See p. 249 for juicy description of the confrontation of the main sceptic with Frazier on his unsolved problems. )

Finally Frazier tries to convince one of the sceptics that there could be nothing as challenging as trying to control behaviors: “What would you do if you found yourself in possession of an effective science of behavior? Suppose you suddenly found it possible to control the behavior of men as you wished. What would you do?” (p. 255)

The sceptic replies in a dialogue between Castle and Frazier:

Castle: “What would I do?:...I think I would dump your science of behavior in the ocean.”

Frazier: “And deny men all the help you could otherwise give them?”

C: “And give them the freedom they would otherwise lose forever!”

F:“How could you give them freedom?”

C: “By refusing to control them!”

F:“But you would only be leaving the control in other hands.”

C:“Whose?”
F: “The charlatan, the demagogue, the salesman, the...bully, the cheat, the educator, the priest — all who are now in possession of the techniques of behavioral engineering.”...

“If man is free, then a technology of behavior is impossible. But I’m asking you to consider the other case.” (p. 256)

The sceptic insists that free will is undeniable because he experiences it. (p. 257) Frazier replies that all aspects of life involve behavioral control. “The determining forces may be subtle but they are inexorable.” (p. 258)

Even dropping a matchbook - you might do it to annoy the predictor or not do it to annoy the predictor but it is all in principle predictable even if difficult to predict at the moment. Behavioral engineering is done through reinforcement of what is wanted. A person is likely to behave in a way that leads to results he likes. We can predict what someone will like. This is more effective than punishment. (See p. 260) “‘Love your enemies’ is an example of positive reinforcement for you reduce your rage and therefore deal more effectively with the stronger person who you can’t subdue by force or rage.” (p. 261)

Positive reinforcement leads to people feeling free even if they are not. They are free from force but not from the inclinations they have been programmed with. (See p. 263) The leaders are benevolent tyrants because they use their psychological power to bring about happiness for the community.

Let us now turn to an evaluation of Skinner’s determinism. On the positive side, by the extremity of his determinism and his candid application to social engineering, he provided for defenders of free will a worthy opponent and a prophet of what was to come in manipulation of people in the future.

Formal critique of the negative can be found in Von Hildebrand’s refutation of determinism in the next section. Here I want to mention that a danger of determinism clearly shown in Walden II is the way the authorities become pseudo-gods, omnipotent and omniscient in their efforts to control others. Even atheists such as Jean Paul Sartre thought that psychological determinism leads to the “bad faith” of blaming others for ones actions seen as the result of pressure rather than free choices.
Dietrich Von Hildebrand (1889-1977)

Dietrich Von Hildebrand was a student in Germany of the philosophy of Max Scheler and Edmund Husserl. A convert to the Catholic faith and a fierce opponent of Nazism, he fled across Europe during World War II and eventually became a professor at Fordham University in New York City.

Von Hildebrand’s fame as a thinker rested primarily on his development of an ethical philosophy based on insight into value response. The phenomenological method used in unfolding his ideas about intrinsic values is similar to the personalistic approach of John Paul II in his philosophical and theological writings. The excerpts you will find in this chapter from Von Hildebrand’s work *Ethics* include his refutation of determinism and of relativism, both presuppositions for the type of social engineering envisioned by Skinner.

From Von Hildebrand’s *Ethics* Chapter on Freedom of the Will (p. 286-294)

(Von Hildebrand distinguishes between two basic capacities, perfections, of the human will: 1) the ability to respond freely interiorly to any given phenomena or feeling [such as deciding that abortion is an atrocity] 2) the ability to initiate a new chain of exterior happenings *such as clapping one’s hands].

“Someone may object: The capacity of the will to command certain activities, such as certain movements of our body, is nothing but a specific type of causality. As a fit of anger has the power to make our heart beat or our face redden, so too our will has the power to move our hands.

“In answer, it must be said: Certainly the link between our will and the activities commanded by it is a causal relation. But in comparing this with psychophysical causality it becomes precisely evident why we speak here of a completely new kind of causality, of one which by its nature includes a dimension of our freedom. Causality in other cases takes place without the intervention of our freedom; for when we are angry we in no way command our heart to beat faster or our face to redden. These are pedestrian cases of causality, whereas in the case of the will there is a capacity to *command* certain movements, to use them for the realization of the state of facts which we have decided to realize. They are within the range of our power. The causality linking the will with these activities is such that they are dominated by our will; and it depends completely upon our free power to command them in one or another direction, or else to abstain from initiating them....

“It is not enough, however, merely to distinguish the two dimensions of freedom or the two perfections of will. We must also show the intrinsic relation between them. The two perfections as such, despite their differences, are nevertheless deeply interrelated from the point of view of the
specific “inner word” of willing. The second perfection, the capacity of intervention in the world around us, is deeply related to the specific inner word of the volitional response. We saw before that only states of facts which are as of yet unrealized (though realizable) can become the object of our will. We have to add now that the object, in order that we may will it, must be realizable not only in principle but must even present itself as something accessible to our own power. What precisely distinguishes the inner word of willing from any wishing or ardent interest in the becoming of something is that we say to the object, “Thou shalt be through myself.” This inner word of willing, the specific content of the volitional response, would be impossible if the will did not possess the marvelous capacity to command, spontaneously and freely, activities through which the goal of the will can be attained.

“Whereas the free value-response to the existence of something as such (i.e., the inner word “Thou shouldst be”) does not presuppose man’s capacity to start a new causal chain, willing in the strict sense does presuppose it, and even presupposes an awareness of this capacity. [Take the example of a child trying to overcome the fear of diving into the swimming pool.] The inner word ‘Thou shouldst be’ as it may also be found in wishing does not constitute willing in its proper sense. [The child can wish to dive but still not force his or her will to give the command.] Even if to the ‘shouldst be’ a ‘thou wilt be’ is added, we do not yet reach the specific inner word of willing. This would rather be the inner word of hope. But the response which implies the inner word ‘Thou shouldst be and thou shalt become real through me’—the distinguishing mark of willing—necessarily presupposes awareness that the coming into existence of this good is at least to a certain extent in our power, i.e., the awareness of the second perfection of willing. [This is when the child, overcoming fear, pushes him or herself to plunge into the water.]

After having examined the two perfections of freedom, we still have to add a few remarks concerning freedom as such. The freedom of the person refers to that unique, marvelous capacity to posit an act which by no means can be considered merely an effect of a former chain of causes. To be sure, if we are confronted with any change, any becoming, or any perishing in the sphere of matter, of life, or even of the psychical, we must ask for a cause and we must consider the changes as effects determined by certain causes. But a similar inquiry into the cause of an act of willing would be pointless; moreover, the assumption that this act of willing is an effect determined by certain causes would be a completely wrong and thoroughly unfounded assumption.

“The will to act in a certain way is not strictly determined by the character of a man, his education, his milieu, his former experiences, nor even by the importance the object may have. The will to act is not a resultant of a parallelogram of these forces, but something which issues from the marvelous creative capacity of man, and which, notwithstanding all the influence of these factors, is never strictly determined by them. An act of willing can by no means be considered a link in a chain of causality whereby the person would merely be the causa proxima, and education, milieu, dispositions, and so forth the causa remota: so that the person would be, as it were, the “transformer” of all these causes. Although these factors make it understandable that a man wills
and acts in a certain way and not otherwise, we are nonetheless aware that they never necessitate him to act so, that they never determine his will in the sense of a strict causality. Notwithstanding the influence of all these factors, a man could will and act otherwise, and in many cases he does so.

“Every man, independently of any philosophical conception, presupposes this fundamental fact. As soon as he makes a moral judgment about another person or about himself, as soon as he has a bad conscience or becomes indignant at any action of another man, as soon as he is filled with admiration at someone’s action or with esteem for another person, he thereby presupposes man’s responsibility; and this again implies the capacity for free decision.

“In addressing a question to someone we likewise assume his freedom; we clearly realize that we are confronted by a situation different from that in which we try to obtain a result from a calculating machine. We presume not only that this person is able to understand us but also that he has the freedom of answering if he so chooses. We realize that his answer is not the effect of our questioning him as his leaping up could be the effect of our screaming. We are aware that this person is free either to answer or to decline to answer.

“In every social act we presuppose and refer to the freedom of man. In exhorting another person, we presuppose that he is able freely to decide whether he will not follow our exhortation. In no way do we believe that his response is necessitated by our exhortation; that we press a button which will effect the desired result in the other person. We clearly distinguish the exhortation which appeals to his freedom as opposed to any psychical effect which we may create in his soul in giving him a drug, and even from the sorrow which bad news will create in his soul.

“In every exhortation, in every rule, in every law imposed, freedom of will is essentially presupposed. ("Man has free choice, otherwise counsels, exhortations, precepts, prohibitions, rewards, and punishments would all be pointless.” St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, 1a,lxxxiii,1.) We are constantly aware of this reality and we always count on it; it is as self-evident as the stability of being or the principle of causality. We must realize that if we seriously denied the freedom of will all morality would immediately collapse, and the notions of moral good and bad would lose all sense. In stressing the inevitability of presupposing freedom of will, we intend only to lead the reader to a deeper stratum in which it is univocally given as an essential feature of a personal being. In leading the reader to a deeper stratum, we want him to discover the fact that he clearly and firmly knows about his freedom.

“Yet the creative power of freely engendering an act of will does not imply that we could engender it without any motive. We have already seen that willing presupposes not only an object (that is to say, a state of facts which is as yet unrealized, although as such realizable) but also that this object is endowed with an importance—the importance may be a value, an objective good for the person, or something subjectively satisfying. The object, in order to have the potentiality of moving our will, must be important either as an end or as means toward an end. Something completely neutral cannot become the object of our will. Thus in every act of willing there is presupposed an
object which has a motivating power. But the motivating importance by itself does not engender the will. Our freedom displays itself in the capacity to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ with our will to the invitation of a situation; or, in other words, displays itself in the capacity to conform in our will to the invitation or call of this importance, or else to refuse for a specific reason to initiate an activity.

“Willing cannot be brought into existence simply by our free center without any motive supporting it from the object side. In this sense St. Anselm says: ‘Every will, inasmuch as it wills something, wills as it does because of something...Wherefore every will has a what and a why, for we will absolutely nothing unless there be a reason why we will.’ (De Veritate. [R.P. McKeon, op. cit., p 176.])

“A conception ascribing to the person the capacity of willing without any motive would be a complete misunderstanding: it would make of the willing something purely arbitrary, thereby depriving it of its meaningful, spiritual character. In trying to stress the free character of willing, such a conception actually destroys the dignity and rationality of willing and even places it below merely blind urges. To confuse freedom with the arbitrary would imply a total misunderstanding of the very nature of willing, its intentional, meaningful character as a response rooted in an act of knowledge. Freedom and the arbitrary are essentially incompatible. For the arbitrary deletes the will from the great dialogue between person and universe. It separates the will from the logos of being, and above all from the world of values. Willing would thus no longer be a position taken by man toward something, becoming a merely blind movement.

“No, the true sense of freedom of will does not imply the capacity to engender an act of willing without the presence of any motivating object. Willing necessarily presupposes not only an object to which it is directed, but also the importance this object possesses, and in addition our awareness of this importance capable of motivating the movement of our will and of forming a meaningful basis for our willing. The freedom which so deeply distinguishes willing from all other motivated responses consists in this: that it is entirely within our power either to conform to the invitation of the object or to decline to conform to it; or in many cases to choose freely between different possibilities and even to decide in a direction contrary to our pleasure or the promptings of our heart. The really pertinent and decisive difference between willing and all affective responses is that willing never comes by itself as a gift. It always implies a free decision which we can accomplish with our free spiritual center, though never independently of some motive and always supported by the importance of the object, and furthermore it always consists in a turning to an object because of its importance. On a case mentioned before we observed that we may sometimes be confronted by a situation in which we understand that we should be full of joy, that the object deserves joy, yet we realize that it is beyond our power to engender this joy. Now such a frustration is not possible with respect to willing; it is always in our power to engender an act of willing when we understand that the object deserves a positive decision.
“Someone might object: Is it not a self-evident metaphysical principle that every change presupposes a cause? How can the willing of man and the subsequent action issuing therefrom and directed by it (since both willing and acting involve a becoming of something) take place without being caused or at least without having a sufficient reason for their becoming? Must it not be that the experience of this freedom in one’s own person and the presupposition of it in other persons is a mere illusion, since the principle of sufficient reason forbids us to accept such a thing as freedom of will?

“In answer it must be said: Certainly every becoming (or even every contingent being) requires a cause for its coming into existence. But this fact in no way means that every becoming (or every contingent being) is necessarily the result of a long chain of causes, or that it must have the character of a link in this chain.

“Freedom of will is in contradiction neither with the principle of causality nor with the principle of sufficient reason. The act of willing which arises freely, inasmuch as it cannot be considered a link in a chain of causality, has its sufficient reason in the nature of the person; this nature is endowed with the mysterious capacity of engendering an act of will and of starting a new chain of causality.

“In its nature as well as in its existence, the freedom of any created person certainly demands a causa prima, inasmuch as the created person himself demands it. (‘It is not of the essence of liberty that what is free should be its own first cause, any more than that a thing’s cause has to be its first cause.” St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, 1a,lxxiii,1,ad 3.) Freedom is a privilege granted to a man by his character as a person. Now just as the soul of man cannot be caused by any causa secunda but rather issues directly from God, so too the freedom of man does not depend upon any secondary cause; this capacity in man presupposes only the Causa Prima, God....

“In the case of freedom, however, we have to grasp that it is by its very nature a capacity for starting a new chain of causality which, as a capacity rooted essentially in man’s personal nature, presupposes God for its existence and actuation, but does not thereby make of our free decision something necessitated by God. The capacity freely to engender an act of willing and to start a new chain of causality is created by God and is actuated independently of Him. The spiritual center of the person, however, is really the free cause of a concrete act of willing.

“The freedom of the person undoubtedly belongs among those data which have the character of natural mysteries of being and which call for a special wondering about them. It certainly differs in its intelligibility from causality. The fact that every contingent being needs a cause for its existence is, in another way, ‘transparent’ to our reason; it is something which we can more fully penetrate than we can the fact that man is able with his will to start a new chain of causality....

(The following section to the end of this selection is optional for the student)
“But this does not mean that freedom of will is therefore less certain. It is evidently given as an essential feature of the person, with the difference only that the person is that kind of being which, because of its higher rank, possesses a richness and mysterious depth that, in spite of its objective, luminous intelligibility, does not have for our minds the kind of transparent intelligibility, which a mathematical truth possesses.

“In distinguishing the two perfections of will which we can also term the two dimensions of freedom, we mentioned those activities which are under the immediate command of the will. We still have to examine briefly the nature of these activities as well as their relation to our freedom.

“We saw before that all cognitive acts and responses, theoretical as well as affective, include a meaningful conscious relation of the person to an object, whereas, mere states, for example, lack this intentional character. Furthermore, all responses are motivated, whereas many states are merely caused. Activities such as eating, walking, running, or any voluntary movement of our limbs form, from this point of view, a separate class. They differ on the one hand from the responses, inasmuch as they include no meaningful, conscious relation to an object. They are thus not intentional in the strict sense. But they differ also from mere states, inasmuch as they are guided by a will, which itself has a clear intentional character, and are pervaded by a certain finality. They are certainly caused and not motivated; but they are caused by our will, they are voluntarily actualized. When we say that those activities are free or that they are in our power, we mean that they are accessible to our free will. They themselves are caused by our will, but since our will can command them and since they depend upon our will, which itself is free, they partake of its freedom. Inasmuch as they happen not in us or on us, but rather through us they belong to the zone of our free power; we consider them free and hence hold everyone responsible for them. In fine, they are free insofar as they are accessible to the command of our free will. The freedom of these activities, however, clearly differs from the freedom of willing itself. Whereas the person can be impeded in the freedom displayed in the command of activities by the will (e.g., by sickness such as paralysis, or by exterior compulsion), the first dimension of freedom can never be frustrated as long as the person is in possession of his reason. No force whatsoever can ever compel man to speak a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ with his will. (“As regards the commanded acts of the will, then, the will can suffer violence, insofar as violence can prevent the exterior members from executing the will’s command. But as to the will’s own proper act, violence cannot be done to the will.”) St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, 1a-2ae, vi, 4. (A.C. Pegis, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 231.) Calderon admirably expresses this peerless privilege of man: ‘Though my fancy it will gain, it will never my consent...Then the will no more were free if a force could it compel.’

“Thus the freedom of willing has its own unique character, which is not shared by the freedom of these activities insofar as willing is not so much something that we command as something which we engender. Being so much nearer to the free spiritual center of the person, it is an actualization of this center itself; it is a position of the very core of ourselves and not something that is somehow
distant from ourselves and which we dominate and command in the strict sense of this term. We experience the different activities in the zone of our power, as submitted to us, as below ourselves, whereas willing presents itself as an immediate actualization of ourselves."

Von Hildebrand’s Ethics (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press 1953) p.106ff

RELATIVISM

Ethical relativism is widespread. It is, unfortunately, the ruling moral philosophy of our age, the term “value” is generally employed now as something merely subjective. In speaking of values, one usually takes it for granted that there is general admission of their relative and subjective nature.

The preceding analysis concerning the nature of the important-in-itself should suffice to unmask the impossibility of any value relativism. He who has understood our statements and arguments will also understand that every attempt to interpret as an illusion the notion of an importance-in-itself or of an objective value collapses as soon as we examine more minutely the nature of value. Nevertheless, because ethical relativism is so ubiquitous, it seems necessary to discuss it in a separate chapter and to refute it in detail.

The first type of ethical relativism is no more than a subdivision of general relativism or skepticism. As soon as someone denies that we are able to have any objectively valid knowledge, as soon as he argues that there exists no objective truth, he necessarily also denies the existence of any objective value. The nature of a general relativism is such that it affects everything. We must observe, however, that even though this type of ethical relativism is a logical consequence of general relativism, nevertheless the unconscious motive for general relativism is very often the desire to do away with an absolute ethical norm. At least deep unconscious resistance against the objectivity of truth frequently has its source in a type of pride which revolts primarily against objective values.

General relativism or skepticism, however, has been overwhelmingly refuted many times, beginning with Plato’s Gorgias through St. Augustine’s Contra Academicos (and most especially in his famous Si fallor, sum— “If I am mistaken I am” ‘De Trinitate, XV, 12-21; also De Civitate Dei, XI, 26.]), through all the many classical reductiones ad absurdum, and last but not least in Edmund Husserl’s Logische Untersuchungen ([Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1900], “Critique of specific relativism,” Pt. I, chap. 7, § 36, pp. 116ff.).

Whatever the formulation of the thesis denying the possibility of any objective knowledge or of attaining any objective truth, it is inevitably self-contradictory, because in one and the same breath
it denies that which it necessarily implies. In claiming to make an objectively true statement by declaring that we are unable to attain any objective truth, this position clearly contradicts itself, or in other words, it claims to attain an objective truth in the statement that we can never attain an objective truth.

If every general relativism is untenable because of its intrinsically self-contradictory character, so too is any ethical relativism, which is merely a subdivision of the former and is supported by no other arguments than those offered by general skepticism. But we are here interested in refuting these arguments of an ethical relativism which are not derived from the arguments of general relativism. And there exist many such arguments which are not necessarily derivations of a general value relativism.

To be sure, the ethical relativists are, for the most part at least, value relativists, since theoretically they will deny any importance-in-itself. But their arguments often refer exclusively to the morally good and evil, to moral norms, to any value which imposes on us a moral obligation. Certain other values, e.g., aesthetic values, they believe to be so obviously relative, or subjective and deprived even of any pretension to objectivity, that they no longer argue against their objectivity; again, other values, such as life, health, and democracy, they tacitly accept as objective, even though they will not theoretically admit them to be so. Thus, the real stress is laid on the denial of an objective good and evil in the moral sense, or at least in the sense which implies a moral obligation.

The first well-known argument for ethical relativism appeals to the diversity of moral judgments, which can be found in different peoples, cultural realms, and historical epochs. What is considered as morally good or morally evil, this view contends, differs according to peoples and historical ages. A Mohammedan considers polygamy morally justifiable. It does not occur to him to have any pangs of conscience on this respect. With an entirely good conscience he has different wives simultaneously. To a Christian this would seem immoral and impure. Of such diversity in judgments on what is morally good and what is evil, innumerable examples can be offered. Moreover this diversity of opinion concerning the moral color of something is to be found not only in comparing different peoples and epochs, but also in looking at the same epoch and even at the same individual at different times of his life.

Now this first argument for the relativity of moral values is based on an invalid syllogism. From the diversity of many moral judgments; from the fact that certain people hold a thing to be morally evil while other people believe the same thing to be morally correct, it is inferred that moral values are relative, that there exists no moral good and evil, and that the entire moral question is tantamount to a superstition or a mere illusion.

In truth, a difference of opinion in no way proves that the object to which the opinion refers does not exist; or that it is in reality a mere semblance, changing for each individual or at least for different peoples. The fact that the Ptolemaic system was for centuries considered correct but is now
superseded by our present scientific opinion is no justification for denying that the stars exist or even that our present opinion has only a relative validity.

There exist a great many fields in which can be found a diversity of opinion, among different peoples and in different epochs, and also among philosophers. Does this then refute the existence of objective truth? Not at all. The truth of a proposition does not depend upon how many people agree to it, but solely upon whether or not it is in conformity with reality.

Even if all men shared a certain opinion, it could still be wrong, and the fact that very few grasp a truth does not therefore alter or lessen its objective validity. Even the evidence of a truth is not equivalent to the fact that every man grasps and accepts it immediately. In like manner, it is erroneous to conclude that there exists no objective moral norm, that moral good and evil are in reality illusions or fictions or that at least their pretension to objective validity is an illusion, only because we find many different opinions concerning what is considered to be morally good and evil.

What matters is to see that in all these diversities the notion of an objective value, of a moral good and evil, is always presupposed, even if there exist contradictory positions concerning the moral goodness of a certain attitude or action. And just as the meaning of objective truth is not touched by the fact that two persons hold opposite positions and each one claims his proposition to be true, so too the notion of moral good and evil. Of something objectively valid which calls for obedience and appeals to our conscience, is always untouched, even if one man says that polygamy is morally permissible.

The distinction between something merely subjectively satisfying and advantageous for an egotistic interest on the one hand, and the morally good on the other hand, is always in some way implied.

Thus conflicting opinions concerning the moral illicitness of something, instead of dethroning the general notions of moral good and moral evil, clearly attest their objectivity. As the diversity of opinions reveals that objective truth as such is always presupposed and is consequently beyond all possibility of the collapse to which the truth of a single fact may be exposed, so the indispensable presupposition of an objective moral norm reveals itself majestically in all diversities of opinions concerning the moral goodness or badness of a single attitude.

On the other hand, the fact that there have existed many more conflicting opinions concerning moral values, for instance, the moral character of polygamy or of blind revenge, than concerning colors or the size of corporeal things, can easily be understood as soon as we realize the moral requirements for a sound and integral value perception (The problem of value blindness has been discussed systematically in my former work, Sittlichkeit und ethische Werterkenntniss [Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1921], p.24ff.).
Without any doubt the perception of moral values differs in many respects from knowledge in any other field. In order to grasp the real value or disvalue of an attitude, in order to see, for example, the disvalue of revenge or polygamy, more moral presuppositions are required than for any other type of knowledge. Reverence, a sincere thirst for truth, intellectual patience, and a spiritual souplessé are required in varying degrees for every adequate knowledge of any kind. But in the case of the moral value-perception much more is required: not only another degree of reverence and of opening our mind to the voice of being, a higher degree of “conspiring” with the object, but also a readiness of our will to conform to the call of values, whatever it may be (In his work on St. Augustine, C.N. Cochrane stresses this fact in saying, “Intellectually, this bad will finds expression in an effort ‘to make one’s own truth,’ i.e., to justify one’s conduct by rationalizations which are blindly and stubbornly adhered to for the very reason that they cannot stand the light of day.” Christianity and Classical Culture [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940], p. 449.). The influence of the environment, of the milieu, of the traditions of a community, in short the entire interpersonal atmosphere in which man grows up and lives, has a much greater influence on this type of knowledge than on any other. In the ethos of a community, moral convictions are present in another way than are convictions concerning other spheres. They are embodied not only on the laws and customs, but above all in the common ideal which forms an ever-present pattern for judging our fellow men and ourselves. The entire atmosphere is so saturated with this moral pattern that the conscious and unconscious influence on the individual is a tremendous one.

And this influence may cripple the capacity for value-perception. Thus it is not difficult to see how errors in this field are more widespread, expressing themselves in conflicting value judgments in different tribes, peoples, cultural realms, and epochs.

But this only shows why errors and inadequacies in this field are more widespread. It shows us how the tradition of a community may in many cases hamper the moral value-perception, and in other cases facilitate an adequate value-perception. But in no way does it show that without any such influence of a community there would exist no moral good and evil, or that the morally good is nothing but a convention or a custom of a certain community.

How, moreover, will the moral relativists explain the fact that we often find great moral personalities piercing through the screen laid over morality by the customs and convictions of the environment and discovering parts at least of the true world of values? How do they account for the moral views of Socrates, of Zoroaster, and many others?

Once we have grasped the roots of moral value blindness, it will no longer be astonishing that there exist such diversities of value-judgments; rather we shall be astonished at how many agreements nevertheless exist among all tribes, epochs, and individuals. We must now cautiously examine the origin of this diversity in moral judgments.

In many cases the fact that one tribe in a certain historical age considered as morally evil the same thing which another tribe considered as morally good is due to a difference of opinion or belief.
concerning the nature of a thing, and not its value. If for a tribe certain animals are considered sacred (as, for example, the Egyptians considered the ox Apis to be holy), then to kill this animal assumes the character of something sacrilegious; whereas for one who is aware of the true nature of this animal, to kill it is not at all sacrilegious. Innumerable examples could be given of such diversities which manifest in no way a contradiction concerning moral values, but only a difference of opinion concerning the nature of certain objects. A sacrilegious action is in both cases considered to be morally evil. Thus there is no diversity concerning the disvalue of a sacrilegious action, but only concerning the fact as to whether something is believed to be sacred or not.

There exist no doubt tremendous differences among peoples and epochs concerning the interpretation of nature and the world surrounding us. The interpretation of the universe by a superstitious primitive tribe naturally differs enormously from the universe as it is understood by science in our age. Thus one and the same action necessarily had a completely different moral significance according to the conception, which the agent has of the things that he is dealing with. This difference implies no diversity in the moral judgment as such. Precisely because the moral judgment as such is the same, because there is agreement concerning the value, the judgment of this concrete action must differ as soon as one set of factual presuppositions has been replaced by another.

One of the most widespread forms of ethical relativism is the thesis of what is called the French sociological school. According to this theory the notion of moral good and evil is in reality only the objectivation of the beliefs and will of a community. As Anatole France puts it, murder is not punished because it is evil, but we call it evil because it is punished by the state. The “objectivity” of the moral norm, its undeniable difference from our arbitrary mood or our subjective desires, is explained according to this theory by the fact that it is the beliefs of a community that the individual finds as something pre-given, imposed on him by tradition.

Moral good and evil are identified with mere convention, with something which has no other basis than the pseudo objectivity of Bacon’s idola tribus, the idols of the tribe or collective erroneous beliefs, as opposed to the idola specus, the idols of the cave or individual prejudices. We do indeed find such a pseudo objectivity of ideas as when in a particular epoch certain ideas are, as it were, in the air. The individual experiences ideas as if they were possessed of objective power and reality because instead of arising in his mind they have an interpersonal reality, and are considered as common knowledge. The individual experiences them as things which come from “outside” his mind, and thus confuses their mere interpersonal reality with objective truth. In order to see the confusion and fallacy at its basis, we need only concentrate on the thesis of the ethical relativists whereby moral values are identified with their being commanded by a community.

Even though we contended that all our convictions are fallacious, mere idola tribus, due to our confusing the pseudo objectivity of the interpersonal reality of an idea with its truth, the notion of truth as such would still remain untouched. There is a clear and unassailable opposition between
objective truth and the relativity of all those concrete convictions which have no other basis than a collective belief. When these beliefs and opinions are denounced and belittled as merely relative, then the notion of objective truth, far from being invalidated and reduced to a mere illusion, reveals itself in its full majesty and undethronable reality. Objective truth forms the tacit presupposition of this thesis, for plainly it is only because there exists an objective truth that the propositions, which have no other worth than to be idola tribus are declared relative. Now if we interpret this position as tacitly presupposing objective truth, it becomes tantamount to the thesis that we are unable to attain truth, a skeptical position as which is contradictory in itself, as we saw before. If, on the contrary, we interpret the thesis as considering that truth is in reality constituted by nothing more than the pre-agreement of a community, we are confronted with one of those nonsensical statements which are so often presented in the formula: “It is in reality nothing but...” We have already spoken of the impossibility of these “discoveries” in philosophy, because as far as true essences or necessary, intelligible unities are concerned the reduction of one to the other is inherently nonsensical. If someone tells us that in reality 3 is 4, or green is red, further discussion would be a waste of time. The same applies to every attempt, which declares ultimate, necessary, and intelligible entities to be mere illusions.

Besides the simple impossibility of identifying truth as such with the fact that something is held to be true by a community, the very nature of conviction also forbids such identification. For whether a conviction is true or false in its content, it nevertheless attempts to aim at something transcendent. The statement itself claims to be not merely the belief of a community but a truth. Therefore as such it presupposes the possibility of knowing an objective truth.

In much the same way the thesis of the ethical relativist which declares that what we call good is in reality nothing but the result of social convention means that every particular statement in which we say something is morally good or evil is therefore on the same level as mere rules of convention, such as those which fix the manner in which one person is to greet another. Now this thesis leaves untouched the notion of moral good and evil as such in its objectivity. For it amounts to the thesis: the things, which we believe to be morally good and evil are not so in reality, since we are unable to distinguish whether something is objectively so or whether it only appears to be good or evil because of the tradition of a community.

As far reaching and disastrous as is the denial of the objective validity of every value-judgment concerning any type of human attitude, the objective validity of the notion of moral good or evil would still not be touched by this ethical agnosticism. It would mean: though there exists a moral good and evil, every concrete statement (e.g., “Murder is morally bad,” or “Faithfulness is morally good”) is the mere result of a community convention.

Later on we shall discuss the arbitrary and unfounded character of this ethical agnosticism.

Of course the French sociological school would not accept this interpretation. They want to say that the notion of moral good and evil is nothing but a superstition; and that just as totemism
ascribes to certain animals a magical power and significance which they do not have in reality, so mankind in general imagines such a thing as importance-in-itself, and even such things as moral goodness and moral wickedness. As superstition consists not only in ascribing magical power to a being but also in the very notion of magical power, so too not only the predication of moral good or evil to a human act but the very notion of moral good itself is pure illusion.

This statement may assume two different forms: First, moral goodness and evil are mere illusions, and we are therefore on the same level with the notion of magic power. In reality, things are neutral. The second formula would run: What people call morally good and evil is in reality only mere convention, the social perspective of a certain community.

This latter formula does not lead to the same consequences as does the former. The idea of moral good and evil is not declared to be a superstition, which should be eliminated as in the former case, but rather it is seen as a normal part of man’s communal life. All we have to do is simply to understand its true nature, and this consists precisely in its being the expression of a community belief. Both formulas are equally nonsensical.

The first position, which declares the notion of good and evil to be mere superstition, a fiction to be explained by psychoanalysis, tries thereby to deny a necessary, ultimate, intelligible quiddity. This is a nonsensical procedure as we have shown before (Cf. Prolegomena, p. 5 ff.). Just as it is indeed possible to discover that some contingent idea is a mere illusion or fiction (e.g., that a centaur does not exist, or that the phoenix is a mere illusion) so it is absurd to say of any intelligible, necessary entity (e.g., the number two, or truth, or justice) that it is a mere fiction or illusion.

The very nature of these necessary, intelligible entities is such that they are beyond all invention and fiction, and possess a radical autonomy and independence of the act in which we grasp them. To ignore the essential difference between merely contingent facts and these entities, which have essences so potent as to exclude any possibility of denying them objectivity, and to place them on the same level with any contingent quiddity, thus betrays a degree of philosophical incapacity and superficiality which from the start dooms every theory touches by this blindness.

If we think of all the innumerable attempts in philosophy to reduce one thing to another despite the fact that the two things obviously differ in their very nature— whether it be to explain the meaning of a word by saying that it is nothing but association of an image with the sound of the word, or to explain the respect of an image with the sound of the word, or to explain the respect for a moral value as nothing but a specific form of inhibition, or to describe joy as nothing but the experience of a certain Organenempfindung associated with a certain representation of an object, or whatever the particular form may be— we are at a loss to understand whence this idle and even nonsensical procedure derives its attractiveness. Not only value in general but, more important, moral value is, as we saw before, such an ultimate datum that in order to grasp the evident datum of value which, in spite of all theoretical denials, a person constantly presupposes, it suffices that he become fully aware of his lived contact with reality.
Adherents of the French sociological school were full of indignation about Hitler’s atrocities and racism, notwithstanding the fact that according to their theory there could be no basis for any indignation. Even if, in order to be consistent with their theories, they should deny that they were indignant, nevertheless at the first occasion in which for a moment they forgot their theory, they would be sincerely indignant. Every day offers many situations in which their responses give the lie to their theory.

But we need only think of the attitude, which ordinarily accompanies this theory. The “dogmatism” of the moral objectivists is looked upon with contempt. Whether it is looked upon as superstition or reactionary obscurantism or “mystical” phantasy, it is always fought against as something evil, and never as something merely erroneous, as is the case when one or another scientific theory is attacked. Obviously in attacking objectivism as evil the relativists admit what they theoretically deny.

Sometimes we find that those who are in rage against the notion of any objective norm and any objective value nevertheless strive against them in the name of “freedom,” or “democracy”; and thereby they fully admit the character of the value of freedom or democracy. They do not speak of freedom as if it were something merely agreeable or as if they wanted it for personal reasons, but they speak of it as an “ideal” which itself implies the notion of value and even of morally relevant value. The entire ethos of those who fight against any objective norm belies the content of their theory. The pathos with which they condemn the attitude of the “dogmatists” is weighted with the pretension of fighting for the nobler cause. Whatever may be the point on which they tacitly admit an objective value and even a moral significance, whatever may be the “ideal” which they presuppose unawares, somewhere the notion of value and even of moral value must inevitably enter. Would they not look with contempt on a colleague who, eager to prove a theory, paid people for giving false testimony, or lied about the results of his experiments? Would they not blame a medical charlatan who foists fake medicines and cures on his unfortunate patients. Lewis brilliantly points to this inconsistency in saying:

In actual fact Gaius and Titus will be found to hold, with complete uncritical dogmatism, the whole system of values which happened to be in vogue among moderately educated young men of the professional classes during the period between the two wars, their scepticism about values is on the surface; it is for us on other people’s values: about the values current in their own set they are not nearly skeptical enough. And this phenomenon is very usual. A great many of those who “debunk” traditional or (as they would say) “sentimental” values have in the background values of their own which they believe to be immune from the debunking process. They claim to be cutting away the parasitic growth of emotion, religious sanction, and inherited taboos, in order that “real” or “basic” values may emerge. (C.S. Lewis, The Abolition of Man {New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947}, pp. 18-19.

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Why indeed should they write books at all proposing their relativistic theory, if they did not think that it is better to know truth than to err? (“For the whole purpose of their book is so to condition the young reader that he will share their approval, and this would be either a fool’s or a villain’s undertaking unless they held that their approval was in some way valid or correct.” (Ibid., p. 18.)

There may be people who in their lives ignore their moral obligations and become disinterested in the world of moral values and who, like a certain type of criminal or a complete egotist, aspire only to satisfy their pride or concupiscence. But one who is a sincere theoretical relativist can completely avoid presupposing the datum of moral value.

We repeat: As soon as one of these relativists should, in abstracting from his theories, become aware of his immediate contact with being, he could not fail to discover the datum of moral value in its undeniable reality. Only the relativist who could sincerely answer, “yes,” when asked whether he would prefer objective moral values, would be capable of reaching this deeper stratum and of gaining awareness of the value.

But some may object: As soon as a person in his search would rejoice in finding one possibility confirmed by reality rather than another, he is no longer unprejudiced and hence in analyzing reality he may become a prey to wishful thinking.

But this does not apply here. What we mean is simply this: The man who wants to commit suicide because he despairs of objective truth or objective values is sincere in his conviction, even though he errs in his attitude. But the one who denies objective truth and objective values and, far from finding such a world tragic, prefers it, completely reveals the psychological and moral reasons which are at the basis of his denial.

The distinction between the notion of moral good and evil on the one hand and a mere convention or a mere “being forbidden by the state” on the other is obvious. To consider moral good and evil as in reality nothing but the result of a positive commandment springing from the self-defense of society against the individual is a typical example of an attempt to dissolve necessary, intelligible entities into contingent fictions and constructs. We might just as well say that in reality a triangle is a square. Such a consideration has sense only if it means that things are often presented under the title of moral laws, or as having a moral value, even though in actual fact those things are prescribed only because they are in the interest of society. This would amount to a judgment analogous to the one wherein we accuse somebody of being a hypocrite and of speaking of God when he really means money. But what must we think of the intellectual capacity of a man who would conclude from the fact of hypocrisy that in reality moral good and evil are only other names for selfish interest? Such a man would deny the hypocritical character of the person whose hypocrisy was the starting point of his disappointment! In the very premise, namely the hypocrisy of this man, he clearly distinguished between the Tartuffe and the morally good man, between what the man pretends to be and what he really is.

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Another form of ethical relativism is one that bases itself on a value-subjectivism, and which is in common vogue as a theory concerning values. This theory contends that whenever we attribute a value to something (e.g., in saying that a quartet of Beethoven is beautiful, a dialogue of Plato deep and luminous, or in praising Joseph’s noble forgiveness of his brothers), in reality we mean a certain feeling which we experience in connection with those objects. Though we attribute beauty, goodness, or depth to an object, these are in reality nothing but mere states of soul which we objectify, erroneously attributing them to an object.

The adherents of this theory seek support for their contention in the fact that such erroneous projections are often found in everyday experience. We call some food healthy because it contributes to our health. Not in the sense in which we say that we are healthy or in which we say that meat comes from a healthy animal, we cannot attribute health as such to a certain food. According to this theory, the same would apply to value-judgments: for instance, we call music beautiful, or an action morally good because they cause certain feelings in us; or because we associate certain feelings with the thought of certain objects.

Of course, so the theory continues, when we say “beautiful,” “sublime,” “good,” or “noble,” we are not speaking of mere illusions or fictions. We indicate by these terms something which is very real; but in fact this something is not a property of objects, acts, or persons, but a “feeling” which for one or another reason we connect with an object. Thus too the moral qualifications which we predicate of human actions or attitudes are in reality only feelings, connected for one reason or another with the object. So too, what we call moral obligation is really a specific type of coercive feeling. The experience of a “must” can be found in various forms in man’s inner life, ranging from an idee fixe to all kinds of inhibitions. Moral obligation appealing to our conscience is thus nothing but a form of coercive feeling. It can thus easily be explained by psychology. To ascribe to this obligation an objective reality, an existence independent of our consciousness, is again the mere result of a psychological tendency, in this case the tendency for objectivizing.

Since values in general and moral values in particular are mere subjective feelings and not properties of things, and since moral obligation is also just a specific kind of feeling, it is accordingly impossible to ascribe to moral values or to moral obligation an objective validity. They are subjective and thus relative. If certain individuals, tribes, or cultural realms differ in their moral value-judgments, this is quite natural, for we can hardly expect everyone to have the same feelings on the face of certain objects, as one person likes very hot food and another dislikes it; as one prefers salty food and another unsalty; as one and the same thing may cause pleasure in one man and displeasure in another; how much more understandable then is it that we have different “value-feelings” with regard to the same thing, since the connection with the object seems to be even looser here than in these cases of certain bodily effects.

First of all, there is no reason whatsoever for declaring that the beauty of a melody, or even the moral sublimity of an act of charity, is in reality a feeling and not a property of the object.
Experience tells us just the opposite. The beauty is given as a quality of the melody, and the sublimity
as the quality of a moral act. This clearly differs from the way in which a typical feeling (e.g., a state of
depression or irritation) is given to us.

The situation is just the opposite in the case of healthy foods. As soon as we try to verify what
we mean by “healthy” (in saying, for example, that a certain mineral water is very healthy), we realize
that we are using the term “healthy: in an analogous sense, and that the primary sense of health is
question only when we speak of a healthy man or a healthy animal or any other living being.” We
immediately realize that by healthy, we mean with respect to mineral water that it serves our health,
whether in overcoming or avoiding an illness. Moreover, we clearly see that the relation expressed by
the term “serves,” as when we say that medicine serves health, is a causal relation.

If on the contrary we ask ourselves what we mean in saying of a melody “How beautiful!” and
in saying of an action “How noble!” “How good!” we find that in no way do we use these terms in an
analogous sense and that they refer primarily to something else. There is neither a property of
ourselves nor any feeling in our soul to which we could attribute the good or beautiful in its primary
sense. Rather, we mean something, which precisely by its very nature, can only be a predicate of the
object.

In order to grasp how entirely superficial and senseless it is to reduce the values to feelings,
we must consider for a moment the term “feeling.” It is, as we shall see later in detail, an equivocal
term (By this we do not deny that there are some common features which are at the basis of the
different uses of this term.). It is sometimes used to denote mere states, such as fatigue, depression,
irritation, anxiety: sometimes for experiences, such as bodily pain or bodily pleasure; and sometimes
for meaningful affective responses, such as joy, sorrow, fear, enthusiasm. We shall see later the
essential difference which exists between a mere state of alteration and a meaningful, intentional
response such as joy. Here it may suffice broadly to distinguish them, and to see how the subjective-
value thesis looks against the background of this distinction.

If we interpret the thesis as asserting that moral goodness or beauty is in reality a feeling like a
bodily pleasure, then the absurdity is immediately evident. There is nothing in experience which
would allow such a reduction; rather, experience totally excludes it. A bodily pleasure extends in
space and time. We can localize it more or less, and we can strictly measure its duration. To
predicate of beauty or of moral goodness that it extends in space and in time is sheer nonsense.

Bodily pleasure presents itself univocally as something which can be experienced only by
ourselves and which has no existence outside of its being experienced. Moral goodness and beauty
clearly show themselves as things independent of our experience; we clearly realize that the moral
goodness of another’s act of charity in no way depends on its being witnessed by ourselves. On the
contrary, we discover it to be good and we know that it would yet be good whether or not we were aware of it.

Now no one will actually try to reduce moral values or the dignity of a human person to certain bodily feelings, or to a projection of such feelings. This attempt is only to be found with respect to aesthetic values, such as beauty. We shall, however, disregard the specificity of this attempt here, because once one has grasped the impossibility of reducing values in general to feelings, the attempt to do so with aesthetic values reveals its futile character.

Insofar as values are concerned, moral values especially, this subjectivism contends that they are projections not of bodily but of psychical feelings. This theory holds that in praising as morally noble the action of a man, we only give expression to the fact that we rejoice before the object; that it moves us, or pleases us. And the content of these experiences is projected into the object: we express ourselves in our judgments as if the object were endowed with a certain quality.

According to this theory, value-judgments are merely a confused way of expressing ourselves. The real meaning of a value-judgment would then be: “I feel pleasure or displeasure in connection with this object,” or “The object causes a positive or negative feeling in my soul.” Yet, if we compare a value-judgment with a proposition dealing with our feelings, we immediately see the obvious difference. In stating that forgiveness is morally good, revenge morally evil, we mean by morally good the character of an attitude, and not of any feeling which I experience in witnessing these attitudes in another person. When, on the contrary, someone says, “I cannot stand angry people; they frighten me to death,” he means a feeling which angry people cause in him. When someone says of a landscape that it is sublime, or that a human person has a higher value than an animal, he certainly does not mean by sublime or by value a feeling which he discovers in his soul. Sublimity, moral goodness, the value of a human person are either properties of a being or they are fictions. As we have already seen they can never be feelings, because predications, which are meaningful and correct when applied to feelings or psychical entities, become senseless when applied to values. The thesis that value-judgments are statements concerning one’s feelings (and thus that they are feelings) is obviously wrong.

A special version of this value subjectivism is Ayer’s emotive theory. He contends that value-judgments are not statements referring to our feeling, but rather a mere expression of feeling or a command (A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic [London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1950], pp. 20-22, 102ff.). Thus, according to him, value-judgments can be neither true nor false. The statement: “Justice is good,” or “Injustice is evil” should, according to Ayer, be synonymous either with a mere expression of a feeling or with or with the command: “Be just,” or “Do not be unjust.”

The term “expression of feelings” is in many respects vague. In the first place, the term “feeling” is, as we mentioned above, equivocal; in order to give sense to this thesis, the datum which is here meant by feeling would have to be carefully elaborated. Secondly, the term “expression” is equally ambiguous. In its most authentic meaning the term refers to the intuitively given
transparency of psychical entities in a person’s face or on his voice or movements. In this sense we say that a face expresses joy, a voice expresses fear, a way of walking expresses an affected or sophisticated attitude. In this sense, too, we say that a certain face expresses kindness, purity, intelligence. It is obviously impossible in this primary sense of the term to identify a value-judgment with any expression.

By expression we may also mean any exteriorization of our emotions; e.g., tears may be an expression of sorrow, singing an expression of joy, or jumping in the air an expression of exuberant cheerfulness. In this sense certain words or even sentences may be called expressions of our joy, our sorrow, our fear, our enthusiasm. Such words and sentences obviously have a character completely different from any statement. They differ completely from a proposition in which we share that we rejoice or that we are angry. They have the function rather of an exteriorization, the character of a dynamic manifestation of our inner experience. This type of expression, Ayer contends, constitutes the major part of our value-judgments.

We can disregard in our context the thesis of Ayer that value-judgments are neither true nor false because they are not propositions. We may disregard this part of Ayer’s thesis for, even if he admitted that value-judgments can be true or false, the main basis for his relativism would not be overthrown: if value-judgments really do only refer to feelings independently of the more logical question whether they can be true or false, then values would truly be something entirely subjective.

The point of interest here is to see whether Ayer is right in saying that value-judgments are an expression of feelings or a command. Now this theory is equally in blatant contradiction to experience. Great music is given as beautiful to me, the quality of beauty revealing itself univocally as a property of the object; it stands before my mind as distinct from psychical experiences of my soul, such as joy, serenity, being moved, or sorrow and anxiety. The moral nobility of an act of charity is clearly given as a property of the act, as something on the object’s side, definitely distinguished from any psychical happening in the soul.

Our primary contact with values is in no way a judgment; it is not the act of imparting a property to an object but the perception of something autonomous. The original experience is the perception of the importance of an object; only after this initial disclosure of the value may we by a judgment attribute it to an object.

In the case of an expression, the primary experience is an emotion, e.g., joy, sorrow, fear; and the words we utter as expression of this experience can in no way be interpreted as the formulation of something we perceived before as the property of an object. These dynamic expressions have an analogous character to the “Ouch” someone utters when he is hurt, or to the famous “Uh” of Mozart’s Papageno when he sees Monostatos. They are an exteriorization of something, having only the character of a projection of a psychical experience. They speak exclusively of the psychical entity whose expression they are; they manifest univocally the nature and presence of joy, sorrow, or fear.
This expression itself shows up only in an active, dynamic process of exteriorization. How could one pretend that the beauty of a great work of art, the value of truth, the moral value of justice, the dignity of the person (all of which are primarily known in a perception) are in reality mere expressions of feelings?

We are moved to tears because of the beauty of a work of art. Our being so affected is clearly distinguished therefore from the beauty of the object. How should the expression of our emotion be identical with beauty? Or how could one pretend that in saying that this work of art is beautiful, we are in reality not stating a fact but merely expressing our reaction?

Moreover, the untenable character of a theory such as Ayer’s becomes fully manifest when we analyze the kind of feelings of which value-judgments are supposed to be expressions. It is obvious that mere states, such as fatigue, irritation, depression, which are only caused by an object, but not motivated by it, are not at all in question in the theory under inspection. Clearly they have not the dynamic trend of exteriorization although they are typically “expressed” in the first and literal sense of expression. Obviously what Ayer means by the term “feeling” comes under the heading of intentional experiences, experiences having a meaningful conscious relation to an object. Experiences such as joy, sorrow, enthusiasm, indignation, admiration, contempt, love, hatred, hope, and fear are the feelings which, according to this theory, are the very source of value-judgments.

But the futility of this theory discloses itself as soon as we realize the nature of these acts. The intentional nature of affective responses, their meaningful response character, essentially presupposes the knowledge of a datum on the object’s side which is the very reason for our joy or enthusiasm. So long as an object presents itself to our knowledge as neutral or indifferent such a response is impossible. This elementary fact, as we have already noted in the first chapter, became the starting point for Freud’s discovery of the phenomenon of repression. So far are the affective responses from being the sources of the importance of the object that, on the contrary, they presuppose the knowledge of this importance (This importance can naturally also be the merely subjectively satisfying in the case of joy. But in these cases we are aware of the difference, for no man would speak of the financial profit about which he rejoices as morally noble, sublime, and so on. He might perhaps say that it is lucky.).

To believe that in stating the moral goodness of justice we only exteriorize our enthusiasm about justice is as absurd as to believe that the statement 2+2=4 is nothing but an exteriorization of our conviction. The acts which in both these cases are said to exteriorize themselves in a statement cannot be separated from the object which they essentially presuppose. There is no enthusiasm, no veneration, no esteem as such, just as there is no conviction as such. Every veneration is essentially a veneration of someone; every enthusiasm, an enthusiasm about something; every esteem, the esteem for a person; every conviction is necessarily conviction of a fact. The feelings to which, according to this theory, the values must be reduced, themselves presuppose an importance on the object side.
Thus Ayer confuses the *principium* with the *principiatum*. But apart from that it is plainly clear that the content of the quality on the side of the object (which we term “beautiful,” “sublime,” “heroic,” “noble,” and so forth) clearly differs from the content of our responses, such as joy, enthusiasm, love, admiration, esteem, and so on. Above all, the radical difference which separates the consciousness of something, the awareness of an object and its quality, from our response to it should once and for all make manifest the impossibility of identifying the sublimity of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, which we grasp, with our experience of being moved by it or enthused about it. C.S. Lewis unmask in a brilliant way the ridiculous confusion of this interpretation of values:

Even on their own view—on any conceivable view—the man who says *This is sublime* cannot mean *I have sublime feelings*. Even if it were granted that such qualities as sublimity were simply and solely projected into things from our own emotions, yet the emotions which prompt the projection are the correlates, and therefore almost the opposites, of the qualities projected. The feelings which make a man call an object sublime are not sublime feelings but feelings of veneration.

In summarizing we can say that the attempt to interpret the values as mere projections of feelings into an object, either because the object causes these feelings or because we associate them with the object, collapses and reveals itself as sheer nonsense as soon as we take the trouble first to expose the equivocal character of the term “feeling,” and then to examine the real nature of the experiences on which we grasp a value and respond to it.

The attempt to interpret value-judgments as sentences, expressions, or commands also collapses when minutely analyzed. It is obviously impossible to interpret as commands statements such as “The Ninth Symphony of Beethoven is beautiful,” or “The human person has a higher value than an animal,” or “Truth is something precious.” What kind of command should these value-judgments embody? If one would say it is a command to appreciate this music, or to respect the human person, or to worship truth, the question-begging character of such a view is obvious. Not only does one definitely mean something else, but the very reason for commanding such responses is precisely the value of the object. This involves the same confusion as if one would say, “It is true that Caesar was murdered in 43 B.C.,” and make this statement synonymous with the command to be convinced of it.

Without doubt, this reduction of values to a mere object of commanding is meant only to be applied to moral values. The transposition of the extra-moral value-judgments into commands is so plainly artificial that we can hardly believe anyone would seriously cling to it.

In the moral sphere, of course, commands and prohibitions play a great role. It is here that the view under consideration attains a certain meaning, in the assertion, for instance, that the sentence “Killing is morally evil” is synonymous with the sentence “Thou shalt not kill,” or again, that “Charity is morally good” is synonymous with “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”
Now it is not difficult to see that the two sentences are not identical in meaning; they express two facts, although these facts are interrelated. In stating that killing is evil, we clearly refer to a property of the act of killing; but we are not expressing any prohibition. We do not even refer to any prohibition. But we are certainly indicating a fact which necessarily leads to the prohibition. We refer to something which is, on the one hand, the reason and basis for the prohibition, and from which, on the other hand, the prohibition logically follows. The same applies when we state that charity is good. We must realize that the connection between both facts—the goodness and the command to goodness— is evidently such that the goodness is the principium, and the command, the principiatum. Thus, it is impossible to substitute the command for the value, because the command, as soon as it is a moral command and not a mere positive commandment (such as the commandment in the Decalogue to observe the Sabbath), necessarily presupposes the value of the object to which it refers.

It would be just as nonsensical if one said that truth is nothing but the commandment to be convinced of something. In reality the truth of a sentence is presupposed in its independence in order to require conviction and oblige belief in it.

And what kind of command then should the moral value-judgment involve? Arbitrary commands which an incompetent individual places on someone else? Obviously not. Perhaps the commands of a community? This would amount to the relativism of the French sociological school which we discussed above, or at least to a pure value positivism.

If on the contrary the command in question is conceived as issuing from a true authority (e.g., the father in the family, the state, and above all the Church), the value is presupposed on the very notion of the authority. But even a true authority, implying the notion of value, could only be claimed to be the source of a valid positive law. The difference between a merely positive law and a moral commandment is so obvious and has so often been stressed that we need no longer insist on it.

In our age of psychoanalysis it is high time that we had a psychoanalysis of relativism. If anything calls for a psychoanalytic investigation it is the artificial and desperate effort to deny the most obvious data and to make of them innumerable different things—anything in fact except what they distinctly reveal themselves to be.

Addendum: Self-Help Groups and Free Will

Many 20th century academicians had trouble trying to refute determinism in spite of a strong sense that it had to be false since freedom is so much a part of the human person. But on the grass-roots level the 20th century saw a phenomenal growth of self-help groups pitting freedom to change
with the help of God’s grace against the most seemingly impossible odds coming from enslavement to addictions. Simultaneously AA for alcoholics and Recovery, Inc. for anger, fear and depression developed programs in the first half of the century to develop the freedom of individuals who seemed otherwise doomed to repetitive destructive behavior patterns. By the end of the 20th century the concepts of 12 Steps and of what was called cognitive therapy were liberating people from areas of addiction ranging from drug addiction to compulsive shopping!

Here are some summaries of the basics of these programs for self-help with a commentary by me on how the principles contrast with deterministic ideas:

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.”

(This fundamental maxim admits that some things are not in my power, and not alterable by my free choices such as circumstances or actions of others - I can’t fix others, because they have to freely decide they want to change. To think I can just fix them is deterministic - but it also proclaims that with courage I can change some things, including my own attitudes. A spiritual director familiar with 12 Steps used to advise: don’t try to control others and don’t let them control you.

Let’s look at some of the 12 steps and slogans:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable. (Whether it is alcohol or other addictions - overeating, drugs, sexaholism, workaholism, compulsiveness, we can’t control it by ourselves. This shows that habit is a determining factor of behavior.)

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. (In spite of the way we have lost freedom from our choice or compliance with addictive determinants, with God’s grace we can be freed.)

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Through other steps, by admitting our wrongs and taking responsibility we get away from the idea that we are totally determined by what others did to us in the past. And, then, by step 7 we are ready to ask Him to remove our shortcomings. By step 11 we get closer to God to ask him to help us carry out his will for us.

In some 12 Step groups they give out a bookmark called “just for today” I am including these self-help maxims here. Notice that these slogans represent an acceptance that some things are too difficult or impossible to change but others are within my power:

“Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once.

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“Just for today I will be happy. This assumes to be true what Abraham Lincoln said, that ‘Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.’

“Just for today I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my “luck” as it comes, and fit myself to it.

“I will be agreeable, not criticize one bit, not find fault with anything, and not try to improve or regulate anybody but myself. I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.”

Abraham Low, a psychiatrist from Europe who came to the United States in the first part of the 20th century, began to question Freudian concepts and to develop his own philosophy of the human problems. Eventually he founded a system for self-help groups working on training the will through training the mind. His techniques are similar to those used by many late 20th century cognitive therapists. Called Recovery, Inc., groups throughout the world work on liberating the members from defeatist ways of thinking that lead to anger, fear and depression. Here are a few points from this self-help system:

We feel trapped until we accept the average behavior of others. When people bother us in extreme ways, we need to put them in outer boundaries, if only by going into another room or taking a walk. The acceptance of what is fixed in human nature, its imperfection, is necessary to have energy to do what we can do, to look for alternatives, to take secure thoughts, to be courteous, to enjoy the love that is in daily life.
THEME 8

New Age vs. Catholic Spirituality

Chopra vs. Merton

Introduction

From the 1960’s onward there was an increasing interest in the West in Eastern spiritualities. By the end of the 20th century many people left main-line Christian churches to base their interior growth on a variety of methods coming out of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Most of those interested in Eastern spirituality were not attracted by the rigors of asceticism of the masters, but more in popularized versions of meditation and fellowship.

By the 1980’s the term New Age became the name for any mixture of astrology, clairvoyance, prophecy, and meditation, with the common theme of breaking away from traditional Christianity into a belief in a cosmic convergence of light. Many New Agers thought that the year 2,000 would bring in radical changes in the universe, perhaps even a unification of intelligences from other planets with our earth’s sages. Often New Agers included in their spiritual synthesis elements of classical Christianity, especially communication with angels, but also with Jesus. The Jesus of most New Agers, however, is different from the Jesus worshiped by Christians in the past. In New Age movements, generally Jesus is seen as only one of the many great sources of light. He is on a par with Buddha, Krishna or with contemporary gurus such as Sai Baba, an alleged worker of miracles in India. As an illustration of the trend to bring together the truths of many religions and practices into a synthesis in the Eastern mode but adapted to the West, I will be excerpting passages from Deepak Chopra, an Indian doctor practicing medicine and spirituality primarily in the United States.

The pressure of the exodus of so many young people in the second half of the century from the churches into various alternative New Age groups led some main-line Christian and Jewish spiritual leaders to recover and articulate in modern terms the great wisdom of the West concerning the path to holiness. In the United States and eventually world-wide, the most influential figure in the movement to express classical Catholic spirituality in a new way was Thomas Merton, a man who became a Trappist monk after a confused and hedonistic youth. I will be quoting passages from one of his most famous books, No Man is an Island. Later in life Merton became a leader among Catholics
seeking a synthesis with Eastern thought and practice. But it is his earlier work that was most powerful in bringing orthodox Catholics to explore their own spiritual heritage.

Before delving into concrete manifestations of the battle for the 20th century mind in the area of spirituality, I will lay out for you the main contrasts.

I. Seeking Treasures in Non-Traditional Religions vs. Delving into One’s Own Tradition

It is characteristic of the New Age movement to take elements from many sources sometimes even demonic, to create a personal synthesis. Even those belonging to specific groups with strong leaders do not feel bound to accept every idea offered, but usually take some things from one system and other ideas from other systems. By contrast, Catholics and other Christians study Scripture, tradition and the writings of the great Christian masters as formative. Even though loyal Catholics are open to truths of other traditions, they will be careful to avoid anything coming from the occult or from mysticisms they believe to be tainted by heretical concepts.

II. Experiential Wisdom vs. Dogmatic Truth

Whereas New Agers hold to individual religious experience even when such is contrary to classical Christian belief, Catholics see their spirituality as a response to the persons of the Trinity and as an exemplification of dogmatic truth.

III. The Divine Within vs. The Transcendent God Within His Creation

Most New Agers think of the Divine as within the soul instead of above and beyond the self. By contrast, Catholics and other believers in revealed religion such as Jews, Moslems and non-Catholic Christians know God as beyond the universe yet being present within it.

IV. All is One vs. The Personal Self Reaching Out in Love to God and Other Beings

Many New Agers overcome emotions of loneliness and alienation by immersing themselves in meditative experiences of the oneness of everything in the universe. They seek an ultimate unity where their own selfhood would be fused into the divine. On the contrary, Catholics and others belonging to Western religions believe that the unique self will never disappear since it is created by God in love for the purpose of uniting in love to God, other persons and all other beings of the universe.
V. Evil Comes from Ignorance vs. Evil Comes from Sin

It is characteristic of many New Age systems of thought to emphasize ignorance as the main source of suffering in the world. An enlightened person chooses good, according to many such New Age philosophies, not so much out of love, but out of desire to avoid the consequences of wrong choices for oneself such as turbulence, anxiety, enslavement. Catholics and others of Judeo-Christian or Moslem background know moral evil and the sufferings which follow to come from the deliberate choice of evil called sin.

VI. The Individual is the Final Authority in Spiritual Matters vs. God is the Lord of Our Lives

Many New Agers come from Jewish or Christian families where God was seen as a harsh authority figure, perhaps in the image of their own often unreasonable human fathers. As a result these seekers and others who simply cannot accept traditional religious authority, find comfort in the belief that no one can enforce anything upon them against their own judgment and will. By contrast, Catholics and others coming from a revealed religion will see God’s authority as absolutely binding. In a difference of opinion how could the absolute omniscient God be wrong and limited puny-minded I be right?

VII. The Universe is Eternal and the Soul Reincarnated vs. Time has a Beginning and an End and the Soul is Judged by God after one Life

Because many New Agers reject the concept of creation by God at a given moment in time, they tend to think of time in the most common Eastern way as an everlasting cycle. Since they see God as the divine within, there is no God to judge the soul. Instead it evolves from ignorance to enlightenment through a series of incarnations in different bodies. Classical Judeo-Christian thought accepts God’s revelation of a beginning and end of time with the soul being judged after one lifetime.

VIII: The Best Way to Serve Others is Through Spiritual Teaching vs. Corporal as well as Spiritual Works of Mercy

Generally speaking, most New Agers reject laboring for justice on this earth in terms of righting wrongs or alleviating physical suffering. This is because such seekers think that spiritual solutions are more important. Such a dualistic philosophy is contrary to the Christian insistence that spiritual growth is normally expressed in works of justice and compassion.
As we study the thought of representatives of New Age vs. Catholic spirituality these contrasts will take on flesh.

Deepak Chopra

(he doesn’t give out his date of birth, it seems)

One of the most influential of New Age gurus is Deepak Chopra, Director of the Institute of Mind-Body Medicine and Human Potential at Sharp Health Care in San Diego, Ca. with books translated into 25 languages. He lectured all over the world toward the end of the 20th century and will no doubt be even more famous in the 21st century.

To help you understand this leader, I will provide here some interesting facts from his autobiography: Return of the Rishi: A Doctor’s Story of Spiritual Transformation and Ayurvedic Healing, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1988).

Chopra, a doctor from India studied endocrinology in the United States where he became interested in holistic health. The holistic approach involves treatment integrating the body, mind and heart of the patient. During a trip to India he decided to pursue the old folk medicine called Ayurveda (ayus = life, veda = knowledge). One of the reasons for his interest in the old manner of treating illness was disgust with the way classical Western medicine makes people suffer enormously even if there is no cure vs. caring about how the patient feels, and offering him or her love and care. He decided to study what the old Indian Rishis (seers) knew concerning the way the body mirrors the natural cosmos.

As a child Deepak’s grandmother taught him about Rama and Krishna. She also believed that magic and perfection were in all people, but most were not yet perfected to be able to do miracles. Grandmother told beautiful stories from the tradition with words like these “The fire that leads to Heaven is hidden in the secret place of the heart.” By knowing the soul within yourself you can know immortality.

This home religious education was interrupted when Deepak learned from an Anglo-Indian communist to be a sceptic. The old traditional ideas didn’t seem to match the terrible suffering he found around him, which he wanted to ameliorate through social means. After high school Chopra decided to be a doctor. His motive was to heal people and make them happy. As an intern he found that most academic doctors would not get to know the patients. He started sitting with them and communing with them, especially poor villagers.

In 1970 he graduated from medical school in India. For six months he worked in a village seeing with his own eyes how a dangerous looking grand mal seizure’s patient was cured not by their
Western medicines but by being exorcized and then given herbs. This worked perfectly. He was surprised.

In the United States, Chopra worked in the summer in a hospital in New Jersey. Doing ER work he wondered about how it was that he was treating specific emergencies vs. really relating to the people. He saw a contrast to Hippocrates who swore that his own life should be pure and holy so that his very presence might help the patients who were in crisis. (see p. 8) He also became interested in how the ancient Greeks used food and herbs in cures, based on nature. It seems to him that American doctors were interested in fighting disease only (p. 9) and didn’t seem interested in the persons they were helping.

Chopra married an Indian woman he had loved from his teen years and brought her back to the United States. In his practice he began to notice the problem of patients who don’t want to be well. Only a small percentage believed they could be healed. He saw that by thinking of the patients not as full persons but rather as the cardiac case, the diabetic, etc., he was part of the problem.

Chopra’s goal became to see how to get people to want to be well. (p. 82) He quotes Emerson on invincible health. “Man is a god in ruins. When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and shall pass into the immortal as gently as we wake from dreams.” (p. 83)

Patients with a strong belief that they will be healed do much better. But most people want hard medicine and don’t want to lean on belief, which seems weaker. “Negative thoughts trigger substances in the body that are subtle and yet potent.” (p. 97)

On a visit to India Chopra met an Ayurvedic physician. This man was master of the art of feeling the pulse and knowing your whole diagnosis. He was sensitive where Western medicine tends to be clumsy. The diagnosis included much about diet but also about loving feelings and unhealthy emotions; such as too much work and worry vs. a more leisurely life. According to Ayurveda the goal of life is “to be happy and to receive wise and happy thoughts from every part of the cosmos.”

Traditional Indian medicine is related to certain metaphysical concepts such as:

“Nature is composed of one intelligence. Man is part of Nature. Therefore, man’s intelligence connects him to the universe.” (p. 115)

A turning point for Chopra came when he and his wife made a trip to India to see Maharishi Mahesh Yogi the founder of Transcendental Meditation (TM). Chopra read a book about TM and was impressed. This type of meditation was not designed for recluses and ascetics. Instead it emphasized overcoming stress in the body. Since Chopra, himself, was involved in the heavy stress of the life of a doctor, carrying a beeper, drinking lots of coffee, smoking a lot, drinking whiskey in the evening, this analysis was appealing. Sitting for two 20 minute sessions, as advised in TM was something anyone could do. There was also no need to commit to a set a beliefs. (p. 125) Within a week of practicing
TM, Chopra had stopped drinking. Two weeks later he quit smoking. He felt joyful and filled with new energy.

At the Maharishi’s training center, he met one of the monks who was full of inner silence and joy. Chopra and his friend sang a song about there being no death, no mother and father...no master, no disciple. I am only blissful consciousness. “I am God. I am God.” (p. 134) He linked this experience to a strain of unorthodoxy in Indian poetry and song, which contrasts with the supposed dullness of traditional religious orthodoxy.

According to Chopra, since nature has thought of all remedies, sickness comes from lack of knowledge. The doctor is to turn to nature’s intelligence to find the cure. Sickness is a distortion of consciousness. Everything in being, comes from the transformation of the one intelligence (p.143). Silence breaks the power of the problems we are attached to. As silence increases, ignorance and disease disappear (p. 146).

Maharishi teaches that man is eternal bliss-consciousness. Instead of seeking happiness without, we find it within. (p. 149) How happy a person is has to do with the bliss he has brought out from Being into the conscious waking life. (P. 150)

Finding a way to happiness brings health. Happiness is an antidote to illness. The positive emotions set up biochemistry in the nervous system that directly enhances the body’s ability to avoid sickness (p. 156). A well person dwells inside hidden. It is your real self. In his meditation about his patients he comes to feel that he is them, not separate.

Studies show a decrease in violence in cities wherever there are more people meditating. This is because all people are really connected. When people feel at one then hostilities disappear (p. 172).

(Chervin wants you to note the utopian undercurrent here.)

Sessions in 1986 with TV cameras showed yogic levitations, called yogic flying. Chopra mentions that Catholic saints were known to fly. Chopra experienced this yogic flying himself. The interior experience is the integration of mind and body. (p. 185)

Now that you know more about Chopra’s life and ideas, we will go back to the themes mentioned in my introduction comparing New Age to Catholic spirituality. Quotations from Chopra will be used as samples of the general New Age mentality.

I. Seeking Treasures in Non-Traditional Religions
I am taking this information from Deepak Chopra, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: A Practical Guide to the Fulfillment of your Dreams* (Based on Creating Affluence) (San Rafael, California: Amber-Allen Publishing, 1994) About the original book *Creating Affluence*, Chopra says that coming into contact with the divinity within (a basic theme of Eastern spirituality) will give you “The ability to create unlimited wealth with effortless ease, and to experience success in every endeavor.” (p. 1)

“Success in life could be defined as the continued expansion of happiness and the progressive realization of worthy goals...the abundant flow of good things to you.” (p.2)

Success, according to Chopra, is not to be at the expense of others...this success involves good health and energy. The successful person has enthusiasm for life, fulfilling relationships, creative freedom, emotional and psychological stability. He or she also has a sense of well being and peace of mind. “Even with the experience of all these things, we will remain unfulfilled unless we nurture the seeds of divinity inside us. In reality, we are divinity in disguise, and the gods and goddesses in embryo that are contained within us seek to be fully materialized. True success is therefore the experience of the miraculous...the unfolding of the divinity within us...the perception of divinity wherever we go...in the eyes of a child, in the beauty of a flower, in the flight of a bird...when we begin to experience our life as the miraculous expression of divinity -- not occasionally, but all the time - then we will know the true meaning of success.” (p. 3)

This book of Chopra takes the reader through what he calls the Seven Spiritual Laws. Law is the process by which the unmanifest becomes manifest, the invisible into the known and visible. (p. 3) Creation is divinity, the process of creation is divinity in motion (or the mind); and the object of creation is the physical universe including the human body. (p. 4-5) We have to understand these laws. Then we apply them in our lives and we can create, “because the same laws that nature uses to create a forest, or a galaxy, or a star, or a human body can also bring about the fulfillment of our deepest desires.”

Note the way Chopra takes insights from many religions but gives them a modern interpretation in terms of extending the notion of human creativity to include humans creating the whole universe!

As you read Chopra’s laws, bear in mind that they contain many truths as well as erroneous formulations. For example, it is true that a saint seeks God instead of human approval. But his or her motive is not to become infinitely creative but rather to follow God's will in humility and courage.

Law 1 The Law of Pure Potentiality

We are pure consciousness and therefore pure potentiality and therefore we are the field of all possibility and infinite creativity (p. 9). We should not be too influenced by objects outside ourselves, constantly seeking approval of others - this leads to fear and desire to control.
The true self is not afraid because it doesn’t feel beneath anyone. Ego-based power only lasts as long as the title, money, jobs. But interior self-power is permanent. This self-power magnetizes others to you. People feel bonded to you and enjoy being with you. From this comes true love. To get self-power you have to spend time in silence, meditation, non-judgment, nature. (p. 13). Meditation means that you simply Be (p. 14). He relates this to the Biblical “Be still, and know that I am God.” (p. 16-17) Constant judgment and evaluations also leads to turbulence.

Law 2 The Law of Giving

If we give what we seek then we keep abundance circulating in our lives. Bring everywhere you go and everyone you encounter a gift, a compliment, a flower, a prayer. Also receive the gifts life offers such as beauty of nature. (p. 36)

“Each time I meet someone, I will silently wish them happiness, joy, and laughter.”

Law 3 The Law of “karma” or Cause and Effect.

We sow what we reap, when we choose actions that bring happiness and success to others, the fruit of our karma is happiness and success (p. 38). “Our thoughts, our words, and deeds are the threads of the net which we throw around ourselves,” said Swami Vivekananda.

Witness your choices - see what the consequences are - ask whether the choice will bring fulfillment and happiness to me and also to those affected.

Ask your heart for guidance watching for feelings of discomfort. (p. 50)

Law 4 The Law of Least Effort

When we harness the forces of harmony, joy, and love everything becomes easy and carefree. When actions are motivated by love there is more energy. Energy is trapped when our motive is to uphold our importance. Acceptance vs. struggle (Chervin: This can be related to principles of 12 step) See problems as opportunities. Decide not to defend yourself all the time, to convince or persuade. Be open and not rigidly attached to opinions.

Law 5 The Law of Intention and Desire

These have energy. Think about goals, and expect them to come true. Don’t be influenced by opinions and criticisms of others. Don’t share with those who don’t have the same desires and goals. (p. 78) “Relinquish your attachment to the outcome...live in the wisdom of uncertainty. Enjoy every moment in the journey of your life, even if you don’t know the outcome.” Trust that when things don’t go my way there is a reason - (p. 79) “The cosmic plan has designs for me much grander than even those that I have conceived.”
Law 6 The Law of Detachment

We have to detach from the known which is the prison of past conditioning. You don’t detach from the desire or intention but from the result. (Chervin: This could be related to the saying of Mother Teresa that God doesn’t tell you to succeed. He tells you to love.)

Attachment comes from fear and insecurity. Many saints such as John of the Cross, a doctor of the Church, teach the same. It is a sign of poverty to be always in fear and worry. Security is an illusion (p. 86). “The search for security and certainty is actually an attachment to the known. And what’s the known? The known is our past....” But this is stagnation. You have adventure when you are willing to step into the unknown.

“You don’t need to have a complete and rigid idea of what you’ll be doing next week or next year, ...then you shut out a whole range of possibilities”(pp. 87-88). Avoid forcing solutions on problems.

Law 7 The Law of “Dharma” or Purpose in Life

Joy comes when we blend our unique talents with service to others. We live in physical form to fulfill a purpose. Little children should be taught to see what their talents are not how to get good graces, etc. We exist on earth to know that we are spiritual, to find the higher self, to express our unique talents, to ask how can I help, vs. what’s in it for me. (p. 99) Quote from the Upanishads “You are what your deep, driving desire is. As your desire is, so is your will. As your will is, so is your deed. As your deed is, so is your destiny.”

To turn to another source of Chopra’s philosophy of life, there is lots of wisdom to be found in the presentations on the Chopra video: The Way of the Wizard. Here we are only interested in the way it ties in with the main themes of New Age.

We find the seeking of treasure in non-traditional religions illustrated in this video. The image of the “wizard” is not to be confined to fairy-tale characters or magicians or even to male figures. A wizard turns out to be very like a traditional holy person in some respects. We would think that the very use of a term “wizard” rather than saint or mentor already illustrates the theme of seeking treasures from sources other than traditional religion. One of the stated benefits of entering into the wizard identity, is that life becomes magic instead of either humdrum or desperate. Here, again, a term normally associated with the occult, “magic,” is used in a positive manner, thereby indirectly skirting negative connotations about magic in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

The wizard is a seer in the sense of one in touch with the divine. No distinction is made between true prophets inspired by a transcendent God and false prophets who might have their own agendas. In this way Chopra is able to promote an ideal of the wizard superior to the ordinary
trapped conformist mortal. The issue of good or evil doesn’t come to the fore as it would in the case of traditional religious belief.

According to Chopra, no one culture or religion has the first place. “Everywhere the truth emerged.”

More of the ideas on Deepak Chopra’s video, “The Way of the Wizard,” will be cited in relation to other themes of New Age spirituality.

II: There is no Absolute Religious Truth

In The Way of the Wizard, Chopra likes to quote sayings of Jesus such as “you are in the world but not of the world.” But, at least in this talk, he doesn’t quote Jesus as saying “Baptize all nations, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” or “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

In another part of the presentation about the wizard, Chopra advises his audience to “run away from those who think they have found truth. It is good to seek the truth but not to find it.”

Those of us brought up in traditional religions were taught certain absolutes such as: “The Lord, thy God, is One,” or “There is One True God, and Allah is his Prophet,” or “Jesus is the One True Son of God.” Such statements of religious creeds are conveyed not as hypotheses, speculations, or conjectures but as absolutely true and worthy of belief. Each of these purported truths implies the falsehood of a contrary statement. Jesus is the one true Son of God also implies that there are no others equal to him in sonship. That the Lord is one means that the Divine is not a plurality of gods as was thought in pagan Greece.

Most New Agers do not think this way at all. We don’t mean that they positively disagree with any of the above creedal statements. In the New Age a statement is taken not as an absolute truth. It is seen as one truth among many, sometimes no more true than its opposite! So, for example, someone could harvest spiritual treasure from the thought of the One God but also enjoy relating to the spiritual forces symbolized in the many pagan gods. An “open-minded” Jewish New-Ager might happily recite the morning prayer of his or her ancestors “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One,” and the evening of the same day go to some neo-pagan ritual involving Aphrodite.

Some seekers do not think there is any contradiction here. This is because he or she does not think in terms of absolute truths about God. More likely, the image would be of some divine energy floating around the world and in our human souls, symbolized variously in all religions. To worry about whether in reality there is one God or many would be considered naive and unsophisticated by some New Agers. This approach may explain why for many such seekers there is never a single path to walk toward God, but instead sporadic exciting experiences.
A concern about absolute truth presupposes entities existing outside our minds with real characteristics such as absolute being (the traditional God of Jewish, Islamic and Christian faith) or limited being (primitive multiple gods.)

III: The Divine is Within

In “The Way of the Wizard,” Chopra says that when the *seeker* realizes what was being sought was himself, then he becomes the *seer*! The goal is not to find God as an Absolute Person but rather to come into touch with the inner self, which is divine. As one grows spiritually one also comes into divine consciousness. At that point one can see the divine in every thing.

A corollary is to think, as did certain “idealist” western philosophers of the modern period, that there is no real world. As Chopra explains, the brain creates reality! We create the world because our thoughts create energy. The example he uses is how we decide to eat and our hand moves toward the fork. The concept of mind creating material change relates to the Hindu idea that physical reality is maya - illusion. A common notion to be found in many New Age movements is that you create reality even to the point of unconsciously creating illness and disaster. (See *Cults, Sects, and the New Age*, edited by Rev. James J. LeBar (Huntington, Indiana, 1989) p. 155.)

“The kingdom of God is within you,” proclaimed Jesus. Those familiar with this Scripture passage naturally think, at first, that when a New Ager says that the divine is within this is a traditional belief. Not so. What most New Agers mean by “the divine is within,” is that there is not necessarily any God outside the soul at all. What used to be thought of as a transcendent “independent” God is really the innermost part of each of our souls or spirits. Such a doctrine is a basic part of Hinduism, as expressed in the famous formula: “Atma is Brahma.”

IV: All is One, so we are Never Alone

Chopra in “The Way of the Wizard” claims that as you grow in divine consciousness you realize that we are all the same being in different disguises and this makes you love the universe vs. plundering it. Birth and death are just ideas in your mind. Finally in the highest stage my spirit merges with everything in reality. Then there is no distinction between seer and scenery. No need for miracles because everything is a miracle.

Feeling lonely, alienated, separate - these are states of mind and heart few of us escape. Out of such emotions often comes hostility, anger, vengeance, despair.
Many New Agers overcome such feelings with the thought that even though our bodies exist somewhat separately from other material objects, innerly we are all one. Perceived difference is an illusion. That we are all one follows from the divine being within everything.

An important corollary of this dictum is that happiness comes not from changing outer aspects of our life and circumstances but rather from within. We don’t have to simply react to what is going on around us. Through higher thinking we can see the illusory nature of all supposed evils and retain our peace.

For example, whereas most people experience physical separation from loved ones as unbearable, especially if the cause is death, a New Ager might try, instead, to focus on the spiritual unity of all souls such that the loved one is still present, even if invisibly so.

While being as positive as possible in life can be good, LeBar (sorry, lost reference - he is a Christian critic of New Age) points out that the twist New Agers give this concept can put them in conflict with reality itself as well as a sense of duty, penance and humility. (see p. 156)

V: What is Called Evil is only Ignorance. There is no such Thing as Sin.

Deepak Chopra in “The Way of the Wizard” says that we shouldn’t condemn desires, because all wishes lead to God. He does talk of diabolic as well as good forces but there is nothing in the video presentation about personal sin as such.

In most traditional religions, especially Judaism, Islam and Christianity, there are strong teachings about sin and evil. God will ultimately punish sin. Virtue will be rewarded.

New Agers tend to dispute these concepts. Instead they want to believe that it is ignorance that is at the root of negative behavior. Spiritual enlightenment coming from knowledge and meditation leads to peace of soul. Tranquility leads to choices that are not toxic for self or others.

Many New Age books, tapes, and workshops are designed to suggest new and successful ways of dealing with the frustrations and conflicts of daily life. Such miseries are shown to result from one’s own attitudes more than from external happenings.

VI: Every Person is his or her own Authority

In “The Way of the Wizard” Chopra says that philosophy gave rise to religions. Note that philosophy, so diverse and varied and at loggerheads surely has not the authority claimed as coming from God by revealed religious authorities.
Given the rejection of absolute truth and usually of “institutional religion” most New Agers lack any authority that claims to come to leaders directly from God.

As a result, it would seem that the only authority is the judgment of the self. It is possible that someone might truly make judgments about the divine on an individual basis. But this is unlikely. Since self is never all-knowing, there is a great interest among most New Agers in the sort of authority claimed for channelers, Tarot cards, crystals, astrology. As well, most New Agers seek charismatic spiritual mentors such as those we will be studying in later chapters.

VII: The Universe is Eternal and Reincarnation is part of the Soul’s Cycle

In the presentation of “The Way of Wizard,” Chopra states that it is false to think of time as a line. Rather we should think of time as a web. In some mystical sense a wizard exists in all times. Reincarnation, which Chopra holds to, is implied in such a view of time.

A basic concept of Biblical religion is that time was created by God with a beginning and it will have an end. Eternity in the form of timelessness is the realm of God. At the time of an individual’s death he or she is subject to judgment and, according to Catholic belief, goes to hell, purgatory or heaven. At the end of time, all humans are ushered into the eternal realm once and for all either to everlasting hell or a heaven of happiness in union with a God of love.

By contrast, in most of New Age spirituality the concept is that the world always was. It is eternal. Death comes only to the body. The soul is reincarnated in another body to continue the process of purification. When the soul has become totally free of attachment to the earth, it is liberated from the wheel of births and deaths into a state of perfect peaceful bliss.

VIII: Service – Even though New Agers are interested in helping others to come to spiritual enlightenment, there is a lack of the type of overflowing charity in the form of helping the poor such as evidenced in the history of Christianity. This is partly because of the dualism of soul and body characteristic of Eastern thought in general, but also because of a reincarnation doctrine often held by New Agers such that improving this world is not considered as high a priority as in religions that stress you have only one life to give in charity to others.

A good part of the evaluation of New Age spirituality has already been offered in the previous pages. Here are some other considerations.

By definition, New Age spirituality is much too diffuse a phenomena to make a critique based on any limited sample of readings from various writers and leaders. All that can be done here is to
point out to our readers some of the positives and negatives found in many such writings including those of Chopra.

On the positive side, unlike materialists, New Agers think that the spiritual is real. This can be a bridge from scepticism and worldliness to more serious pursuit of the religious. Some members of traditional Churches, even some Catholics, can become so wrapped up in what they already know about religion they have difficulty letting anything new into their souls even if it is compatible. In his book Crossing the Threshold of Hope, John Paul II says that without compromising in any way the truths God has given us, we should be open to whatever is good in other religions in the way of wisdom. Having to combat erroneous ideas of New Agers in academic circles or in the family, work place, society and even in the parish, can sharpen the Catholic’s understanding of the truths of God.

Here are some negatives other than those already given in the text. It is often claimed by New Agers who come from Christian traditions that there is no great incompatibility between their systems and Christianity. In this regard it is necessary to point out that the Old and New Testaments clearly prohibit many of the practices some New Agers like to explore: Check out


Many strong Catholics know why the Church forbids occult practices including astrology and going to mediums to contact the dead and why reincarnation is not the teaching of Christ, but some are unsure. Here are some passages from the Catechism of the Catholic Church about these matters:

2116: *All forms of divination are to be rejected:* recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to “unveil” the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm
reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

2117: All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one’s service and have a supernatural power over others—even if this were for the sake of restoring their health—are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. Wearing charms is also reprehensible. Spiritism often implies divination or magical practices; the Church for her part warns the faithful against it. Recourse to so-called traditional cures does not justify either the invocation of evil powers or the exploitation of another’s credulity.

1013: Death is the end of man’s earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny. When “the single course of our earthly life” is completed, we shall not return to other earthly lives: “It is appointed for men to die once.” There is no “reincarnation” after death.

The reader may be wondering whether the only way to come against those New Age beliefs that run counter to Catholic spirituality is by blind faith in the Church’s magisterium. Is there no way that reason can help us understand why Catholic belief on the themes we have discussed so far is superior?

More insight will come with the excerpts from Thomas Merton and from other related sources. In the meantime some considerations of framework may be useful. Supposing there was no way of knowing anything about God or the soul except by means of religious experience. In that case the guesses of New Agers would be as good as the beliefs of anyone else. What makes the difference is that we believe that God is a conscious Person who created the world and has revealed much about His nature and ours through Scripture and tradition. Proof that a personal God exists was given in The Battle for the Twentieth Century Mind, Theme II. Regarding the nature of the soul, I believe it is rather easy to show that we are not divine as New Agers want to think. If the definition of divine means absolute, omniscient, unchanging, all-powerful, how could we think we qualify? On the question of ignorance or sin, what is clearer to experience than that sometimes we do things out of stupidity but others times because of deliberate desire to get what we want even if it involves stepping on others, dishonesty, and betrayal. Belief in cyclical time and reincarnation seems based on lack of faith in a God of love and mercy who can purify us through repentance and reparative deeds of love rather than forcing us through a long process of return to the earth over and over again.
Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

Thomas Merton was born in France. The son of an artist from New Zealand and an artist mother from the United States. His mother died when he was six. He lived with his father mostly in France, but went to a prep school in England and then to Cambridge. He eventually came to live in the United States where he studied journalism at Columbia University in New York. In 1938 he became a Catholic. He taught English at St. Bonaventure’s College. In 1941 he entered the Trappist monastery of Our Lady of Gethsemane in Kentucky. Merton’s description of his conversion and the beginning of his life as a monk became a best-seller under the title of The Seven Story Mountain.

At the monastery he eventually became Master of the Scholastics preparing for priesthood and later Master of Novices. It appeared clear that the vision of Merton of Catholic spirituality was destined not only for his students, but also for many other Catholics, priestly, religious and lay pursuing the path of holiness. Such books as, Seeds of Contemplation, The Sign of Jonah and No Man is an Island provided much insight for Catholics seeking a new way to live out the great truths of the Catholic spiritual tradition.

Merton was never one to separate the contemplative from the active in his vision of the Catholic life. During the 1960’s and 70’s Merton became one of the foremost leaders in Catholic pacifism and social justice.

The last part of his life involved a vocational crisis. As he also delved into the thought of the East, some fans and some critics thought that Merton might leave the monastic life and even the Catholic faith. Others believed that by the time of his sudden accidental death at a monastic conference in Thailand, held in 1968, Merton was well back into the fold.

Without trying to judge the final state of Merton’s mind and soul, it seems safe to excerpt from one of his most popular early books. I see No Man is an Island as a manifestation of Merton’s gift of integrating classical with contemporary spiritual themes.

I am choosing selections which show how a Catholic can do justice to the sort of truths Chopra has understood, while at the same time deepening our grasp of the wisdom of Revelation and the joy of being close to the personal God of the Bible. Here are some excerpts from the book No Man is an Island, published in 1955.

A review in America magazine manifests the impact Merton’s books had on 20th century Catholics: “...unity of meaning, intense, burning, heroically reaching for the purest sincerity, characterizes this book of flame in which, with deeper tones and from profounder levels of the contemplative life, Thomas Merton returns to thoughts which are of absolute importance for the spiritual life of man... a major work of spirituality...”
“I consider that the spiritual life is the life of man’s real self, the life of that interior self whose flame is so often allowed to be smothered under the ashes of anxiety and futile concern...without a life of the spirit, our whole existence becomes unsubstantial and illusory. The life of the spirit, by integrating us in the real order established by God, puts us in the fullest possible contact with reality - not as we imagine it, but as it really is. It does so by making us aware of our own real selves, and placing them in the presence of God. (p. 7)

Note how the first part of this excerpt could have been written by Chopra, but the second part ushers us straight into the mystery of the personal God in whose love our selves are to grow. In the next excerpt you can see the same progression from universal spiritual wisdom to the specific truths of Christianity: “By salvation I mean first of all the full discovery of who he himself really is. Then I mean something of the fulfillment of his own God-given powers, in the love of others and of God...The salvation I speak of is not merely a subjective, psychological thing - a self-realization in the order of nature. It is an objective and mystical reality - the finding of ourselves in Christ, in the Spirit, or, if you prefer, in the supernatural order... (it) always transcends. Therefore this discovery of ourselves is always a losing of ourselves — a death and a resurrection. ‘Your life is hidden with Christ in God...the discovery of ourselves in God...is, therefore, not the discovery of ourselves but of Christ” (p. 11-12).

Would a New Ager have the subtlety to write a paragraph like this?

“It is therefore of supreme importance that we consent to live not for ourselves but for others...As long as we secretly adore ourselves, our own deficiencies will remain to torture us with an apparent defilement. But if we live for others, we will gradually discover that no one expects us to be ‘as gods.’ We will see that we are human, like everyone else, that we all have weaknesses and deficiencies, and that these limitations of ours play a most important part in all our lives. It is because of them that we need others, and others need us. We are not all weak in the same spots, and so we supplement and complete one another, each one making up in himself for the lack in the other.” (p. 16)

Here are some other challenging passages:

“A happiness that is sought for ourselves alone can never be found: for a happiness that is diminished by being shared is not big enough to make us happy.” (p. 19)

“Infinite sharing is the law of God’s inner life. He has made the sharing of ourselves the law of our own being, so that it is in loving others that we best love ourselves.” (p. 19)

“We are not perfectly free until we live in pure hope. For when our hope is pure, it no longer trusts exclusively in human and visible means, nor rests in any visible end. He who hopes in God trusts God, Whom he never sees, to bring him to the possession of things that are beyond imagination.” (p. 27)
“If we hope in God, by hope we already possess Him, since hope is a confidence which he creates in our souls as secret evidence that he has taken possession of us. So the soul that hopes in God already belongs to Him, and to belong to Him is the same as to possess him, since He gives himself completely to those who give themselves to him. The only thing faith and hope do not give us is the clear vision of Him whom we possess.” (p. 28)

“Without hope, our faith gives us only an acquaintance with God. Without love and hope, faith only knows Him as a stranger. For hope casts us into the arms of His mercy and of His providence. If we hope in Him, we will not only come to know that he is merciful but we will experience his mercy in our own lives.” (p. 28)

“All desires but one can fail. The only desire that is infallibly fulfilled is the desire to be loved by God.” (p. 29)

“Meanwhile, if we embrace them for themselves, we discover both them and ourselves as evil. This is the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - disgust with the things we have misused and hatred of ourselves for misusing them.” (p. 31)

“To consider persons and events and situations only in the light of their effect upon myself is to live on the doorstep of hell. Selfishness is doomed to frustration, centered as it is upon a lie. To live exclusively for myself, I must make all things bend themselves to my will as if I were a god. But this is impossible. Is there any more cogent indication of my creaturehood than the insufficiency of my own will? For I cannot make the universe obey me. I cannot make other people conform to my own whims and fancies. I cannot make even my own body obey me. When I give it pleasure, it deceives my expectation and makes me suffer pain. When I give myself what I conceive to be freedom, I deceive myself and find that I am the prisoner of my own blindness and selfishness and insufficiency.” (p. 34)

“If my will is meant to perfect its freedom in serving another will, that does not mean it will find its perfection in serving every other will. In fact, there is only one will in whose service I can find perfection and freedom. To give my freedom blindly to a being equal to or inferior to myself is to degrade myself and throw away my freedom. I can only become perfectly free by serving the will of God.” (p. 35)

“We ought to have the humility to admit we do not know all about ourselves, that we are not experts at running our own lives.” (p. 43)

“They would no longer keep the law with the formalistic perfection that defeated the whole purpose of the law, but they would realize that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” (p. 44)
“The whole function of the life of prayer is, then, to enlighten and strengthen our conscience so that it not only knows and perceives the outward, written precepts of the moral and divine laws, but above all lives God’s law in concrete reality by perfect and continual union with His will.” (p. 45)

“No matter how much we may deny our freedom and our moral responsibility, our intellectual soul cries out for a morality and a spiritual freedom without which it knows in cannot be happy.” (p. 46)

“The man who never prays is one who has tried to run away from himself because he has run away from God. But unreal though he be, he is more real than the man who prays to God with a false and lying heart.” (p. 46)

“All true prayer somehow confesses our absolute dependence on the Lord of life and death. It is, therefore, a deep and vital contact with Him whom we know not only as Lord but as Father. It is when we pray truly that we really are. Our being is brought to a high perfection by this, which is one of its most perfect activities. When we cease to pray, we tend to fall back into nothingness. True, we continue to exist. But since the main reason for our existence is the knowledge and love of God, when our conscious contact with him is severed we sleep or we die.” (p. 47)

“At other times, we think of God in prayer but our thoughts of Him are not concerned with prayer. They are thoughts about Him that do not establish any contact with Him. So, while we pray, we are speculating about God and about the spiritual life, or composing sermons, or drawing up theological arguments. These thoughts are all right in their place, but if we take prayer seriously we will not call them prayer. For such thoughts cannot satisfy the soul that desires to find God in prayer. On the contrary, they leave it with a feeling of emptiness and dissatisfaction. At the same time, when one is really a man of prayer, speculative thoughts about God in the time of study or of intellectual work can often lead into prayer and give place to it; but only on condition that prayer is more to him than speculation.” (p. 48)

“...we can reflect upon ourselves, and realize that we are the subjects of this great experience of love, as well as the objects of God’s love.” (p. 49)

“...what we find in our souls becomes terrible to us. Instead of complacently calling ourselves sinners (and secretly believing ourselves just) we begin to find that the sins of our past life were really sins, and really our sins – and we have not regretted them! And since the time when we were grave sinners, we have still sinned without realizing it, because we were too sure we were the friends of God...so that in many ways we have turned the love of God into selfishness and have reveled in His gifts without thanking Him or using them for His glory.” (p. 50)

“The man who can face such dryness and abandonment for a long time, with great patience, and ask nothing more of God but to do His holy will and never offend Him, finally enters into pure prayer. Here the soul goes to God in prayer without any longer adverting either to itself or to its
prayer. It speaks to Him without knowing what it is saying because God Himself has distracted the mind from its words and thoughts. It reaches Him without thoughts because, before it can think of Him, He is already present in the depths of the spirit, moving it to love Him in a way it cannot explain or understand.” (p. 51)

“...it (deep interior prayer) has effected such an interior isolation and solitariness in our own souls that we naturally tend to seek silence and solitude for our bodies as well as our souls. And it is good for the soul to be in solitude for a great part of the time.” (p. 51)

“The will of the Lord is not a static center drawing our souls blindly towards itself. It is a creative power, working everywhere, giving life and being and direction to all things, and above all forming and creating, in the midst of an old creation, a whole new world which is called the Kingdom of God.” (p. 54)

“Before the Lord wills me to do anything, He first of all wills me to be. What I do must depend on what I am. Therefore, my being itself contains in its own specific nature a whole code of laws, ways of behaving, that are willed for me by the God Who has willed me to be.” (p. 57)

“We must, therefore, live by the commandments and the counsels and by the Spirit of Jesus. And in order to do this we must search the Scriptures and understand the Gospels, in order to find out what Jesus is like and what His commandments are.

Besides that, we have to seek Him where He is to be found living among us on earth: in the kingdom He came to establish, which is His Church. We must listen to His voice not only in the Scriptures but in the authority which, as we read in the Scriptures, He constituted over us to rule and sanctify and teach us by His own light, and His own holiness and His own power.” (p. 58)

“Above all, the Holy Spirit teaches us to live, not according to the flesh, but according to divine charity...’Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are fornication, uncleanness, immorality, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, contentions, emulations and wraths, quarrels, divisions, sects, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like. Of which I foretell you as I have foretold you that they who do such things shall not obtain the Kingdom of God’ (Galatians 5:19-21).”

If we have the Spirit of God in our hearts, we will live by His law of charity, inclined always to peace rather than dissension, to humility rather than arrogance, to obedience rather than rebellion, to purity and temperance, to simplicity and quietness and calm, to strength, generosity, and wisdom, to prudence and all-embracing justice, and we will love others more than ourselves, for it is the commandment of Jesus that we should love one another as he has loved us (John 15:12).” (p. 59)

“God’s will for us is not only that we should be the persons He means us to be, but that we should share in His work of creation and help Him to make us into the persons He means us to be. Always, and in all things, God’s will for me is that I should shape my own destiny, work out my own salvation, forge my own eternal happiness, in the way He has planned it for me. And since no man is
an island, since we all depend on one another, I cannot work out God’s will in my own life unless I also consciously help other men to work out His will in theirs.” (p. 61)

“Wherever we have some sign of God’s will, we are obliged to conform to what the sign tells us. We should do so with a pure intention, obeying God’s will because it is good in itself as well as good for us. It takes more than an occasional act of faith to have such pure intentions. It takes a whole life of faith, a total consecration to hidden values. It takes sustained moral courage and heroic confidence in the help of divine grace. But above all it takes the humility and spiritual poverty to travel in darkness, and uncertainty, where so often we have no light and see no sign at all.” (p. 62)

“Pure intention, in this highest sense, is a secret and spiritual word of God which not only commands my will to act, or solicits my co-operation, but fulfills what He says in me. The action is at once perfectly mine and perfectly His. But its substance comes entirely from Him.” (p. 64)

“Simple intention is a divine medicine, a balm that soothes the powers of our soul wounded by inordinate self-expression.” (p. 68)

“Merely accepted, suffering does nothing for our souls except, perhaps, to harden them. Endurance alone is no consecration. True asceticism is not a mere cult of fortitude. We can deny ourselves rigorously for the wrong reason and end up by pleasing ourselves mightily with our self-denial.” (p. 70)

“To believe in suffering is pride: but to suffer, believing in God, is humility.” (p. 70)

“Only the sufferings of Christ are valuable in the sight of God, Who hates evil, and to Him they are chiefly valuable as a sign. The death of Jesus on the Cross has an infinite meaning and value not because it is a death, but because it is the death of the Son of God. The Cross of Christ says nothing about the power of suffering or of death. It speaks only of the power of Him Who overcame both suffering and death by rising from the grave.” (p. 70)

“The saint is not one who accepts suffering because he likes it, and confesses this preference before God and men in order to win a great reward. He is one who may well hate suffering as much as anybody else, but who so loves Christ, Whom he does not see, that he will allow his love to be proved by any suffering. And he does this not because he thinks it is an achievement, but because the charity of Christ in his heart demands that it be done.” (p. 72)

“Some men have been picked out to bear witness to Christ’s love in lives overwhelmed by suffering. These have proclaimed that suffering was their vocation. But that should not lead us to believe that in order to be a saint one must go out for suffering in the same way that a college athlete goes out for football. No two men have to suffer exactly the same trials in exactly the same way. No one man is called to suffer merely for the sake of suffering.” (p. 72)
“Before we come to that which is unspeakable and unthinkable, the spirit hovers on the
frontiers of language, wondering whether or not to stay on his own side of the border, in order to
have something to bring back to other men. This is the test of those who wish to cross the frontier. If
they are not ready to leave their own ideas and their own words behind them, they cannot travel
further.” (p. 190)

“Those who love their own noise are impatient of everything else. They constantly defile the
silence of the forests and the mountains and the sea. They bore through silent nature in every
direction with their louds, for fear that the calm world might accuse them of their own
emptiness...The loud plane seems for a moment to deny the reality of the clouds and of the sky, by its
direction, its noise, and its pretended strength. The silence of the sky remains when the plane is
gone.” (p. 192)

“Those who do not know there is another life after this one, or who cannot bring themselves
to live as if they were meant to spend their eternity in God, resist the fruitful silence of their own
being by continual noise. Even when their tongues are still, their minds chatter without end and
without meaning, or they plunge themselves into the protective noise of machines, traffic, or radios.
When their own noise is momentarily exhausted, they rest in the noise of other men.” (p. 195)

Or, common to all spirituality but with a Christian aspect that transcends New Age as a result
of pure interior solitude, “We are both in time and out of it. We are poor, possessing all things.
Having nothing of our own to rely on, we have nothing to lose and nothing to fear. Everything is
locked away for our sure possession, beyond our reach, in Heaven. We live where our souls desire to
be, but our bodies no longer matter very much...” (p. 189)

“The soul that has thus found itself gravitates toward the desert but does not object to
remaining in the city, because it is everywhere alone.” (p. 189)

What is absolutely different in classical spirituality from New Age spirituality is the conviction
that we are in the midst of an encounter with a real personal God who wants to meet us as
Bridegroom (see Matthew 25:6).

“...we go forth to find him in solitude. There we communicate with Him without words,
without discursive thoughts, in the silence of being.” (p. 190)

“Because they (men of noise) do not know the silence of love, they cannot know the silence of
God, who is Charity, Who cannot destroy what He loves, who is bound, by His own law of charity, to
give life to all those who he draws into His own silence...the silence of Good Friday night and the
peace of Easter morning...We work out our salvation in silence and hope.” (p. 193)

Can a New Ager with the same intimacy speak of those near death as, in the words of Merton,
turning “the face of our soul, in constant desire, toward the face of Christ”? (p. 196)
ADDENDUM ON AUGUSTINE

- His Conversion from Gnostic Spirituality (from which New Age took many themes) to Catholic Spirituality:

A key figure in the contrast between New Age and Christianity is St. Augustine, the African 3-4\textsuperscript{th} century saint. Augustine was brought up in the Roman Empire. His mother was a Catholic Christian but his father was a pagan. In those days it was thought that committing any sin after baptism was so heinous that this sacrament was postponed until after a man or woman became an adult. The thought was that the teen years provided especially strong occasions for sin.

Augustine was a brilliant boy, but also delinquent, roaming about with a gang that indulged in petty theft as well as sexual sins. He was a seeker of truth and, as a young man, became deeply involved in a sect of Manichees. These people followed the precepts and practices of many different systems. They were criticized as Gnostics by the Christians. Gnostics were seers who were in the know about secret doctrines and rites. The Manichaean form included the notion that good and evil were equally powerful principles. Astrology was one of the studies of this group. Because they were so philosophical, Augustine took them more seriously than the Christians he knew. These he thought of as childish in their beliefs. Scripture was baffling to Augustine with all its stories and seeming contradictions. At one point, however, he engaged one of the leaders of the Manichees in long discussions. These left him convinced that this sect had little validity.

Eventually Augustine became a teacher of rhetoric in Milan, Italy. As a result of studying Greek philosophers such as the Platonists, Augustine came to believe that there was such a thing as pure immaterial being and that absolute truth could be found. The example and sermons of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan stirred his soul. Mired in sins of a sexual nature, however, Augustine was afraid to look into the Christian religion, his holy mother urged upon him so vehemently. His will was torn between the desires of the flesh and the longing for salvation.

Finally, through grace and example and an extraordinary mystical experience, Augustine broke through to embrace the Catholic faith. He went on to become a Christian philosopher, a bishop in Africa, and a saint. As we lay out for you the main differences between New Age and Christianity we will make reference to Augustine’s experiences.
The first major contrast concerns the nature of God. There are many concepts of the divine within New Age spiritualities. Sometimes the divine is thought of as energy, force, light. Sometimes the image is more traditional, but the words don’t mean the same thing as in Christian theology. For example if one talks about Christ-consciousness, the Christian might think this means the consciousness within the person of Jesus of his role in the salvation of mankind. A New Ager means, instead, that the human seeker becomes aware of inner spiritual forces such that he comes to see the universe and other people in a benign vs. a hostile manner.

The God of Judaeo-Christian revelation exists outside of his creation. That means he is transcendent. He is a Trinity of Divine Persons in one Nature. This God is absolute perfect being. That he is personal and conscious and active is signified by his revealing his name to Moses as “I AM WHO AM.” These words, repeated so often that many don’t pay attention, reveal God as a person = a self-conscious being. God reveals himself also as the holy one. Holiness means total goodness and supernatural power. A force or energy, by contrast, is not an “I,” not an absolute perfect personal being. A force certainly has power, but not the type of goodness that comes with a personal being of love.

To bring out the difference more clearly, consider if a magician came to you and asked if you wanted to be turned into a force as great as the ocean or as all the electric current in the world. There would be one proviso. You would not be aware of being this force, because you would have no personal consciousness. Would you consent?

Before his Christian conversion, Augustine could not imagine any being that was not material and thought of the spirit world as some kind of thinner matter. Afterwards Augustine realized that just as the truth his mind sought and grasped was immaterial, so there could be a spiritual realm. He also realized through faith that just as he, himself, was a living conscious being, so must be the Creator of such a being. Thought doesn’t exist in a vacuum but in a mind. So the absolute truth much exist in an absolute mind.

Another contrast can be made between Christianity and New Age concerning creation. For most New Agers since God is everything and everywhere (pantheism), there is no special act of creation by a transcendent God (above the universe). Everything always was, so it doesn’t need to be created. The Christian, however, believes that God chose to create the world out of love. The universe did not have to exist and didn’t always exist. To get a clearer picture of the significance of this difference consider the following choice:

You arrive in the universe as a adult from outer space. Then you are given a choice - to dwell in a house that is completely decorated, furnished and populated, or to build a house with materials you create, decorated as you choose, and populated with individuals you procreate. Which choice makes an on-looker think of you as a loving personal creator? Which choice is more impersonal?
A Swiss scholar of religions from whom we will quote much more later in this book, Jacques-Albert Cuttat, writes about the question of how the concept of creation by a personal God differs from the Eastern concept of emanation. He says (p. 18) that practically all Asiatic philosophies of the cosmos “consider the evolution of the objective cosmos not as a progress or an ascension, but, on the contrary, as a descent...the world-process as such is a perpetual departure from its divine origin toward worldly periphery...they are ultimately maya, i.e. a dream-like manifestation of the unmanifested, yet omnipresent, uniquely REAL...correspondingly, all Eastern ways leading to the Divine...consist of an inner counteract...Yoga, Zen and Taoist meditation are all a movement backward, an inner return to the pre-cosmic, pre-temporal Reality. This implies a radical detachment from the world as such, not only from evil...The first the last word of Eastern spirituality is “concentric retreat” toward the Divine Centre abiding in oneself....Asiatic spiritualities aim at total interiorization.

“In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, both these movements have an exactly opposite orientation. Their common holy Scripture, the Bible, describes the world-evolution as theocentric...not as descending from God, but as ascending toward God according to the Divine Plan...universal existence emerges first from non-being to mineral existence...then progresses to vegetal and animal life and finally culminates in man as in an epitome of the cosmos as well as a free image of God, so that through man the whole cosmos can and should culminate in God...Thus creation is a total invention – including matter – out of nothing...a progress...rising towards a Personal Reality...the result of a free Act of the absolute Person...Creation places an intrinsically real world and free creatures in front of an ultimately personal Creator...Therefore salvation or sanctification – monotheistic ways of union with God are, accordingly, not an inner ascending recession from the world and ego, but an ascending inner progression from world and ego, a spiritual movement forward towards a divine Thou, not a spiritual retreat into a pure Self...the basic inner gesture here is recollection before God, confrontation, not pure concentration within; full response to all values whether infinite or finite...” the Asian leads to blissful solitude where the Western leads to faith and hope in an omnipresent, providential, yet increasingly unpredictable “divinizing Love.”

Easterners try to find all within themselves (the seeker becomes the seer when he sees that what he is seeking is within him - Chopra) whereas the biblical approach is losing oneself in Christ to find it again. The Eastern is to abide within, the Western is ecstasy - to be lifted outside oneself. To live in God – communion. p. 20-21

But at the summit of these experiences, according to Cuttat there is a complementarity - for we all want to find the God within and all want real spiritual communion. see p. 21

(Note: Related to New Age - no Christian wants to be locked up in such a way as never to experience anything new and thrilling say, and really New Agers are seeking deep contact with the Mysterium and wishing for the completion of perfect love.)
Augustine as the synthesis:

Once Augustine embraced the doctrine of creation his awe and delight at the beauty of the universe knew no bounds. Instead of accepting it all as just there, he realized it was a gift of a loving God of infinite creative powers.

In most systems of New Age thought time moves in cycles, repeating, evolving, dissolving. Some believe that every 2,000 years requires a new Messiah. Ultimately reality has no will or purpose. The Christian, by contrast, believes that God created a linear time-line into which he, himself, enters to reveal his will. Jesus is the unique incarnation, the Messiah who teaches us how to live in such a way as to attain one day eternal happiness with him. Eternity is not merely a foreverness of cyclical time, but a different sphere where the soul is united in love to the timeless one: the God of love.

Once Augustine understood the linear nature of time, he became the first Christian philosopher of history. His famous classic, The City of God, was written to defend the Church against the belief of some Roman leaders that the empire was falling apart because of the Christians. When someone converted to Jesus, he or she stopped making sacrifices to the pagan gods who protected the empire. Roman officials excused their own failures by pointing to the Christians as to blame. The Roman gods must be angry at the defections. In The City of God Augustine proved that it was the loss of virtue among the corrupt Romans that caused the disintegration of Roman society.

JESUS

To turn to another difference between New Age and Christianity, let us consider the place of Jesus. Most often, in New Age spirituality, he is considered to be one of many manifestations of God on a par with the Buddha or miracle worker such as Sai Baba. For the Christian there is only one God. (“I am God; there is no other” (Is. 45:22) Jesus is the unique divine Son of God who died, rose from the dead, is seated at the right hand of the Father and will come again to judge all of mankind. Unlike other holy men and women he freely chose to die for our sins. Whereas many of those in New Age movements think there is no way to evaluate a unique claim to being the Son of God, Christians believe that the claims of Jesus and his mighty deeds show forth this truth. Only of Jesus does the Christian say with the apostle Thomas: “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28) Jesus is the one savior of all people, the “one mediator between God and the human race.” (1 Timothy 2:5)

Behind the plurality of divine incarnations New Agers explore probably lies the general scepticism about truth so characteristic of the 20th century. As John Paul II explains:
“A legitimate plurality of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid, which is one of today’s most widespread symptoms of lack of confidence in truth.” (Fides et Ratio #5)

Often there is a pluralism of views with no clear criteria for truth even within a specific area of New Age phenomena. For example in the town of Sedona, Arizona, famous for its unusual rock formations and vortexes, some believe there are fifty-six such vortexes while others number them as ten.

The life-story of Augustine illustrates this contrast. Before his conversion he was “all over the place” exploring every possible spiritual path that could be found in the Mediterranean. After he found the truth of Christ and the Church his prodigious energies found a unified focus and outreach. Far from being limited and narrowed, his wonderful rhetorical skill and writing style could be put at the service of the one God, the one Savior, and the one Church. He became the most seminal mind in the Church.

THE HUMAN PERSON

As mentioned under themes, most New Agers think that the spiritual nature of the human person is actually a sign of divinity within. A well known summary of wisdom in this regard is from ‘Heal Your Body’ by Louise L. Hay called “Deep at the center of my being there is an infinite well of love.” Here are some lines from it:

“I love myself, therefore, I love totally in the now, experiencing each moment as good and knowing that my future is bright, and joyous, and secure, for I am a beloved child of the universe and the universe lovingly takes care of me now and forever more. And so it is.”

The Christian does believe that the soul is spiritual and eternal. The way that God dwells in the soul is called immanence, and his presence is, indeed, a well of love. On the other hand, Christians believe that at the same time God is transcendent, beyond, at a level infinitely above the human soul. The way Christian philosophers describe the paradox of immanence and transcendence is with the word “participation.” This means that the human soul partakes of the divine through grace, but that does not make it divine in the sense that God is divine.

Before his acceptance of the Christian faith, Augustine found the self extremely puzzling. How, he wonders, in the Confessions, can the one self be so divided with apparently two wills - one wishing for holy things and the other infatuated with the life of the flesh. After finding Jesus he came to see that God was within, deeper than his own conflicted self. “Thou Lord, was more interior to my innermost” but he also saw that God was “superior to my summit.” But that did not mean that he was
divine. He would still have to struggle with his weaknesses. His joy was not to be God; his joy was to be loved by God.

SUFFERING

(Note - healing is a gift, not a right.)

Leaders of New Age spiritualities are certainly eager to help people deal with the problem of pain. The remedies usually have to do with change of attitude, deeper understanding of what can and what cannot be changed, and especially how to become detached from goals and addictions. The project of changing human consciousness so that we can create a reality of less pain and conflict could be described as “self-redemptive.” On the world-wide scale such transformation of consciousness is to lead to a new world order with global peace and perfect harmony. Often the idea of one-world government accompanies such hopes.

By contrast, Christian spirituality while keen on detachment from worldly things and outlooks, is more concerned with the human will and the purposeful turning away from God’s law to doing one’s own will. Not “thy will be done,” but “my will be done.” The Christian is only able to give up large and small rebelliousness against God by opening him or herself to being flooded with God’s love, available in prayer and the sacraments. Through meditation on the Word of God in Scripture and Tradition the Christian learns how to live in peace with self and how to help bring about the Kingdom of God “on earth as it is in heaven.” Only in heaven can there be perfect justice and mercy, for then God will be Lord of everything.

Key to Christian consciousness is the reality of the cross - the crucifixion of Jesus that won our salvation and carrying our own crosses.

At the critical moment of Augustine’s dramatic surrender to Christ, he was led by a voice to pick up Scripture and read whatever his eye fell upon. It was the passage from St. Paul about giving up lust and not worrying about one’s desires for pleasure. At this moment he realized that it was not by his own will-power and philosophy that he could overcome his lustful ways, but only by God’s grace.

AUTHORITY
The final authority in most New Age spiritualities is the seeker himself or herself. No matter how much one might want to fall at the feet of a charismatic holy “guru” figure, ultimately there is no reason not to walk away from such a mentor should he or she show clay feet.

By contrast, Christians believe in the total authority of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, and some in the authority of Bishops’ Councils and/or Peter as continued through the Papacy. Obedience is a crucial virtue for the Christian because he or she understands that because of original sin we are continually pulled toward evil. Far from seeing ourselves as infallible in spiritual judgment we beg to be liberated from self-deceit.

St. Augustine made sure that his exercise of authority as a Bishop was conducted in a loving way. He insisted that the priests of his diocese in Hippo, Africa live in his residence so that they could pray and study together. Close to the people, he was a constant solace to them with his magnificent spiritual sermons and his care for the temporal as well as their eternal well-being.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Most New Agers believe in reincarnation. Reincarnation is related to the notion of karma taken from Hinduism. Certain actions lead to bad consequences and others to good consequences but these consequences may not surface immediately. According to some, these bad consequences are not perfectly played out within one lifetime. Therefore, until ones karma is resolved one has to be reincarnated after each lifetime. The Christian hopes for eternal happiness through the redemption from sin that came with the crucifixion of the God-man, Jesus Christ. He or she believes that the love relationship developed on this earth with the Lord is meant to grow to the point where the soul is purified of sin and can enter heaven immediately after death. Those whose hearts are paralyzed with hate and who refuse the last invitation of love from Jesus they will receive at the time of death, have themselves chosen hell as their final abode. Those of good will still underdeveloped in love through worldliness and sin need to be purged before living with God forever.
Theme 9

Violent vs. Non-Violent Social Philosophies

Hitler and Mao vs. Gandhi and Solzehnitsyn

Introduction

In the face of injustice or the dream of a better world, is violence justified? In the 20th century there was enormous bloodshed from war, genocide, and abortion based on the idea that violence was justified for the sake of what appeared to be a more just or better outcome for nation, world, or oneself.

By contrast, the non-violent thinkers, such as Gandhi, insisted that violence only produces more violence. Only through the extreme sacrifice of violence in favor of peace making, they thought, would there ever be a better life or a better world. Joan Andrews, the pro-life activist sought to promote the cause of the innocent victims in the womb through non-violent tactics.

These two viewpoints have been promoted throughout the century. The Catholic view is that sometimes violence is justified, but more often not, especially when the violence is directed against the innocent.

Another fundamental question concerns human control over society. Is a totalitarian approach the answer? Such figures as Stalin and Mao insisted it was. What is the contrasting teaching of humanists and Christians such as Solzhenitsyn and Martin Luther King?

Adolf Hitler - 1889-1945

[This section of The Battle for the Twentieth Century Mind is based on the book Adolf Hitler by John Toland (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976). Note - the facts here reported are disputed by other historians. I am using Hitler’s life and thought as an illustration. I am not competent to judge between historians on relatively minor details. Note also that most of the quotes taken here are in common domain because written or spoken by Hitler himself more than 70 years ago.]
Hitler’s father was an Austrian civil servant, who was abusively alcoholic, beating the children. Hitler’s mother adored him. They were Catholic. As a boy Hitler thought of being a priest, but came to prefer artwork and architecture, and loved music, especially opera. He was a ring leader at school, but not too bad. In character he was stubborn, with a violent temper. He was inward and had no friends until he went to Vienna where he was rejected by the art schools of Vienna. This created a permanent sense of injustice and desire for revenge. He lived in Vienna sometimes begging, sometimes doing odd jobs.

This excerpt from the biography from many years later when he triumphantly marched into Vienna is most telling. Marching past the Imperial Hotel, he remembers a time of his young adulthood when he worked outside that same hotel:

“I could see the glittering lights and chandeliers in the lobby but I knew it was impossible for me to set foot inside. One night, after a bad blizzard, which piled up several feet of snow, I had a chance to make some money for food by shoveling snow. Ironically enough, the five or six of us in my group were sent to clean the street and sidewalk in front of the Imperial Hotel. (On that particular evening the Habsburgs happened to be entertaining inside.) I saw Karl and Zita step out of their imperial coach and grandly walk into this hotel over the red carpet. We poor devils shoveled the snow away on all sides and took our hats off every time the aristocrats arrived. They didn’t even look at us, although I still smell the perfume that came to our noses. We were about as important to them, or for that matter to Vienna, as the snow that kept coming down all night, and this hotel did not even have the decency to send a cup of hot coffee to us...(The cheerful music inside not only made him wish to cry but made him boil with the injustice of life) I resolved that night that someday I would come back to the Imperial Hotel and walk over the red carpet in that glittering interior where the Habsburgs danced. I didn’t know how or when, but I have waited for this day and tonight I am here.”

Hitler as a young man was very kind to his mother who became a widow. In the end he nursed her with fatal cancer and even cooked for her. He helped the Jewish doctor who treated her to survive during his persecution of the Jews. Hitler’s family rejected him for becoming such an arty bohemian as a young adult. He became destitute - lived in hovels, finally as a tramp, but then went to an enlightened hostel and there got involved with politics, ranting and raving. He was interested in the Christian Socialist party - hated poverty and injustice, pro-German. He screamed when he spoke but otherwise would be quiet. He had some Jewish friends. Jewish art dealers bought his little postcard-like paintings.

Hitler claimed that he became anti-Semitic on discovering that the Jews controlled prostitution, the music and art world and the Social Democrat press. In his hostel, he used to read magazines by a mystical theorist who thought that the Europeans were the master race and needed to maintain racial purity. The Aryans must rule the earth by destroying their dark, racially mixed enemies. (p. 46) One magazine talked about the limitless power of the Jews who controlled the
money. Hitler stayed at the hostel for 3 years. Then he decided to leave for Munich to be in the Fatherland. Peddled paintings door to door and in beer halls.

In Germany he started studying Marxism. He loved Munich and felt really happy there. Then came 1914. He was ecstatic as this chance for a Greater Germany. War fever swept the country. Young people wanted the war as an escape from boredom. The desire was to gather all men of German tongues into one Reich and one people as a master race to direct the progress of mankind. Hitler joined a regiment. The solders were full of joy. He was often almost hit under fire, but Hitler miraculously survived.

Consider all these chances for Hitler to die and he didn’t. Why did God allow it? He writes letters about the dear Lord saving his life. But some thought he was saved by demonic powers (p. 64.) While at the front he wrote a poem that included these lines:

“I often go on bitter nights to Wotan’s oak in the quiet glade with dark powers to weave a union...magic formula.”

Hitler was courageous and well liked and drew pictures for the others. He was sure that Germany would win. Hitler read Schopenhauer and learned from him the strength of blind will. Wounded in Berlin in the hospital he was horrified by the drop in morale which he attributed to the Jews who he thought were plotting Germany’s downfall. (p. 66) He thought Jews were controlling German production.

A basic theme of violent philosophies is scapegoating. Hitler couldn’t stand to think Germany was too weak to win the war, there had to be a scapegoat - the Jewish industrialists in this case. A question for us: why is hate so ugly and revenge so sweet?

He told a friend later that war teaches you a lot about human nature. He decided on the front that, "even if Christ was a true fighter, the turning of both cheeks is not a very good recipe for the front." (p. 68)

Hitler was appalled that back home workers were striking, hoping for an end to the war. At the front the ones retreating reviled the ones on the front lines as prolonging the war. Hitler said the pacifists and shirkers and the Reds were losing the war for them.

By now Hitler felt he belonged with the army and was full of self-confidence. He was proud of his manhood and loved having fought for Germany. Then he was gassed - went blind, recovered his sight but went blind again when he heard of Germany’s surrender. During this period had a vision which could have been a hypnosis induced state that he was to save Germany. From then on he hated Jews who he identified with Reds. There were Marxist uprisings in Germany, which seemed to be about to tear Germany to pieces. The Kaiser was driven off and all over Germany the workers were in charge who ordered an 8 hour day, unions, pensions.
Groups of young people rejecting bourgeois life sat around campfires under the direction of a Fuhrer singing songs and listening to passages from Nietzsche. These young people loved danger of the war. Like Hitler they were ashamed of the surrender and hated the Bolsheviks. These types defeated the Bolsheviks who would have taken over.

Hitler met Alfred Rosenberg a fanatic anti-Semite and anti-Marxist from Estonia, eager to keep Germany free from Jewish communism and Jewish Masonic plots. According to him the Hungarian Communist revolt was led by Jews. After all Marx was of Jewish lineage. These theories can be understood partly as having to do with what has been called terrestrial messianism. Lacking hope in an eternal kingdom, people with a strong sense of justice start seeking paradise on earth to be brought about through their works or their violence.

All this ferment came to a climax at the end of the war because of the Treaty of Versailles which greatly humiliated Germany and which was followed by terrible economic depression where from one day to the next money and property became worthless. There was fear of starvation as money kept going to paying off the war debt.

Hitler became a speaker for rightist groups. He attracted crowds. He joined a small workers group called national socialists and started writing about the liquidation of the Jewish people. In his speeches he talks in the language of the trenches vs. as an intellectual and this attracts. He electrifies groups ever larger in beer halls. He changed the party it from a little group into a large group. In Hitler’s manifesto he likened his program to Luther’s proclamation nailed to the Church door.

His plan, repeated in many speeches, was the union of all Germans in a Greater Reich, colonies for excess population, equality for Germany among nations; revocation of the Versailles Treaty, creation of a people’s army, ruthless battle against criminals to ensure law and order; abolition of all income unearned by work; confiscation of war profits; expropriation of land for communal purposes, profit sharing, socialization of great stores to small tradesmen; old age national health care, Jews to be treated as aliens, denied the right to hold public office, deported in times of need and expelled if they had emigrated after 1914. (See p. 68)

The audience was to yell out if they agreed. Chaos caused by Marxist-led strikes led to shootouts. The industrialists were interested in alternatives to Marxism. The Jewish plot issue was fostered by the Protocols of Zion, a forged document purported to be an account of the Jewish plot written by Jews. Hitler in his talks claimed that the Jews wanted to de-nationalize all nations for the final take over. He hinted at ways to remove the Jews from society.

(Incidently, the swastika, originally a sanskrit word meaning all is all, was a symbol of the Teutonic Knights.)

Hitler took over the party as a dictatorial leader, threatening otherwise to leave, and started organizing a private army of storm troopers. Hitler was jailed for riots and compared himself to
Christ being dragged off by the Jews. As early as 1922 Hitler said that if he ever had power every Jew would be hanged in the squares until there was not one left.

Mussolini was the one who called his movement Fascist and was about to take over Italy at this time by force. The black shirts marched into Bolshevized Italian towns and the garrisons were neutral or joined them. Hitler was called Germany’s Mussolini.

Some of the Generals joined Hitler seeing him as a leader who would not shrink from bloodshed. Hitler even got some US support as the man to overcome the Marxists because he knew how to speak to the people.

Asked about his love life he said he would never marry because the masses were his spouse - the masses are feminine.

Here is a key description of the reason for his success: “All men, rich or poor, have an inner sense of unfulfillment. Slumbering somewhere is the readiness to risk some final sacrifice, some adventure, in order to give a new shape to their lives. It is my job to channel that urge for political purposes...The humbler people are, the greater the craving to identify themselves with a cause bigger than themselves. If I can persuade them that the fate of the German nation is at stake, then they will become part of an irresistible movement, embracing all classes.”

As a personality, Hitler went from being fanatically excited, witty and charming, to glum and paranoid. He likened himself to Christ coming to get rid of the moneychangers - the Jews. He also grandiosely likened himself also to Napoleon.

Hitler, jailed after an uprising, spent a year in prison. In prison he studied Nietzsche and Marx. He decided that it is will power that counts not knowledge. “If God had only known the world and not willed it, there would still be chaos today.” (p. 187)

He dreamed of toppling Russian Communism. At the trial he said he couldn’t be tried as a criminal since his only interest was the honor of Germany. He spoke at his trial about the final court of judgment, God. In jail he started writing Mein Kampf - my struggle. By the time he left jail everyone was weeping. He had won all of them to his cause.

Hitler said he wanted to solve the Jewish question in the name of God, as the agent of God fighting off the Jews.” (p. 213.) He thought that God was giving him and his followers the gift of hate. (p. 219) He considered that Christ was the enemy of the capitalistic Jews of his time. (p. 222) He would continue Christ’s work. (p. 222) Hitler considered that Jesus was only half Jewish since he only had 2 Jewish grandparents due to the Immaculate Conception!

Hitler was often advised by astrologers. At one point one of these goes to his own village to get a mandrake - a root shaped like a man with all sorts of nefarious rites.
Hitler started organizing more and more storm troopers to defeat Marxism. Also, he worked out how German expansion is necessary for greatness. To win over the Communists Hitler would say that the Nazis were socialists, enemies of capitalism, and exploitation, unfair salaries, and “the evaluation of a human being according to wealth and property instead of responsibility and performance.” (p. 224) He recommended war to get more land for Germans. Hitler also had Darwinist ideas of the conquest of the weak by the strong. (p. 226) Might makes right. The need for expansion was linked to the elimination of the Jews on the basis that they were sapping German strength through intermarriage. He quoted Jesus: the lukewarm will be spit out of my mouth - to justify his virulence. (p. 260)

Toland mentions that in the Secret Book Hitler wrote and didn’t publish there are allusions to his own fear that his father might have had Jewish blood and that his mother was poisoned by the Jewish doctor’s cancer treatments. He had a terrible fear of cancer.

His bodyguard were called the S. S.

The Communists and the Nazis shared similar socialist goals, had contempt for parliamentary procedures, hated the police and thought the end justifies the means. Relate to East Communist Germany? (p. 239)

By 1930 his storm troopers were smashing the windows of Jewish shops.

General Hindenberg won the election but by a narrow margin. Hitler insisted on being Chancellor. After all sorts of pressure he got that role and because a lone Dutch Communist tried to burn the Reichstag he used this as an excuse to get emergency powers and kill off main Storm Trooper leaders who were restive and rowdy and won’t accept obedience to him.

At this point there forms an opinion among some of his own leaders that he is dangerous.

Hitler says he cannot marry his mistress because he is really married to Germany and would not be able to do justice to marriage and family.

At Oberaumagau people said that Hitler was today’s Christ and that a dissident general is Judas - the people consider Hitler the German Messiah.

When he occupied the Rhineland, which had been ceded to France in World War I, he rejoiced and thanked God who he believed helped only heroes like himself. He said that if this act where someday to cause unnecessary sufferings to his beloved German people, God should punish him. (p. 389)

1938: The generals were against the Czech invasion because they thought they could not win a world war, (p. 468) They even planned to arrest Hitler. Hitler (p. 470) claimed that “every generation must experience war.” (p. 470) The generals considered Hitler to be mad. They, in turn, were regarded
by Hitler as arrogant and not aware of his genius. An old German proverb (p. 482) “An end, even with terror, is better than terror without end.”

Chamberlain argued that it was insane to start a war over a far distant country Czechoslovakia. Armed conflict is a nightmare.

“But if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by force, I should feel it had to be resisted. Under such a domination life for people who believe in liberty would not be worth living: but war is a fearful thing, and we must be very clear, before we embark on it, that it is really the great issues that are at stake.” (p. 485)

The biographer mentions that during this time Carl Jung said Hitler was a mystic medicine man and his popularity and worship were because he told every German what they had in their unconscious inferiority complex, that they will overcome the superior ones by magic. (p. 497)

Not until 1938 did the Jewish persecution mount decisively with burning synagogues, and looting shops and Jews sent to camps by the S.S. which was called crystal night because of the sound of smashed windows. 20,000 sent to camps. Great protests from USA and France but US kept up trade with Germany.

Meanwhile Hitler purged anyone who disagreed with him because he became more and more monomaniac.

Hitler worked by intuition which Toland says is the equivalent of abandonment of logic in favor of impatience. (p. 528)

His revenge motive: joy at conquering the French who had vanquished Germany in 1918. Wanted to woo the Parisians into a fascist Europe and insisted on no looting or rape. (p. 619)

By the time Hitler decided to battle with Russia he had deified himself saying he “had emerged into a superhuman state, more godlike than human, and therefore as the best of the race of supermen, he was bound by none of the conventions of human morality and stood above the law.” (p. 646)

During the invasion of Russia the Nazi soldiers were to round up all Bolshevik leaders, Jews, gypsies, Asiatic inferiors and useless eaters such as the deranged and incurably sick. (p. 676)

Even the operators of the killing camps for Jews became miserable – either neurotics or brutes from the horror of it. Himmler, head of the S.S., ordered the ones shooting the Jews to assemble and told them that “Yours is a disgusting task, but as good Germans (you) should not enjoy doing it. Your conscience, however, should be in no way affected because you are soldiers who have to carry out every order without question. I alone, before God and the Fuhrer, bear the terrible responsibility for
what has to be done. Surely you have noticed that this bloody work was as odious to me and moved me to the depths of my soul. But I too am obeying the highest law by doing my duty.” (p. 677)

Hitler took 2 1/2 million prisoners. There were 1,700,000 dead on the Soviet side after only 6 months of fighting. (p. 685) In a speech to the German people in Berlin Hitler said: “Only when the entire German people become a single community of sacrifice can we hope and expect that Providence will stand by us in the future. Almighty God never helped a lazy man. Nor does he help a coward.”

He talked of God Almighty as his superior just as the generals have to obey him! The Reich was to last for a thousand years to come. (p. 689)

But mud and snow ruined the invasion of Moscow.

Meanwhile he thought of the US as totally in the hands of the Jews! After Pearl Harbor when he declared war on the US he considered it part of (p.695) his total war upon the two major enemies of human survival - international Marxism (Russia) and international finance capitalism (America), both “the creatures of international Jewry.”(p. 695)

In 1941 Hitler ordered the final solution for the Jews: gas chambers. Hitler likened the camps originally to the US solution to the Indian problem - like reservations.

Toland, the biographer, admits that even though Hitler was a Catholic, the hierarchy hated him. But Hitler considered that his extermination of the Jews was the work of God to rid the world of those who killed God. (p. 703)

Actually, according to Toland, most Germans and Poles did not know about the gas chambers. They thought their Jewish neighbors had been deported. When challenged on this, one leader said that everyone sensed something was wrong,

“...but they didn’t want to know. It was too comfortable to live on the system, to support our families in royal style, and to believe that it was all right.” (p. 758)

Hitler said that no one cared any more about the Turks massacring a million Armenians and so they would forget about the Jews after the fact. (p. 759 ff. ) The world would be grateful that they had lanced the Jewish abscess. In Warsaw in the ghetto the Jews finally revolted and fought back.

Toland says that the Vatican was torn in its response to Hitler because they thought Bolshevism more dangerous than Nazism, but he admits that the Vatican saved more Jewish lives than the Allies. (See p. 97)

(Compare with liberals and abortion now.)
About the Russian front Hitler said, “As long as there is one stouthearted man to hold up the banner, nothing has been lost. Faith moves mountains. In this respect, I am ice cold: if the German people are not prepared to give everything for the sake of their self-preservation, very well! Then let them disappear.” (p. 707)

200,000 Germans died in Russia, 708,000 were wounded. But they were to be supermen after getting rid of the Jews. They made slippers for soldiers out of the hair of the Jews going into the gas chamber.

“I could only say, ‘Jawohl,’ (equivalent of Yes, Sir.)” Hoss, the commandant of Auschwitz, later confessed.

“It didn’t occur to me at all that I would be held responsible. You see, in Germany it was understood that if something went wrong, then the man who gave the orders was responsible.”

Nor did these executioners ever question whether the Jews deserved their fate. ‘Don’t you see, we S.S. men were not supposed to think about these things; it never even occurred to us... We were all so trained to obey orders, without even thinking, that the thought of disobeying an order would simply never have occurred to anybody, and somebody else would have done it just as well if I hadn’t.’ Besides, those who participated in the exterminations had been trained so rigorously ‘that one would shoot his own brother if ordered to. Orders were everything.’

Interestingly the Germans are now under-populated because of abortion and birth control!

As more and more reverses took place with the US also in the War, people began to think Hitler was mad. He insisted on surrounded troops in Russian fighting to the death even though they had no food or ammunition left! (p. 729) He recommended that the general, if he had no hope, should shoot himself and leave this vale of tears to go to eternity and be immortalized by his nation. Instead the general surrendered to the Soviet general and begged for food for his men. 400,000 POW’s died of starvation. International Jewry was blamed.

Meanwhile the Italians gave up and Mussolini was arrested. Bombing of Hamburg by the Allies led to 70,000 people dead. A Viennese pilot sent gliders in to the country and rescued Mussolini but his spirit was broken.

At last the leaders began to think they could lose. By 1943 there was total mobilization of Germans based on the idea that Germany should never live under the whip of American Jews or Bolshevik commissars. (p. 778) The army had suffered 1 1/2 million casualties in a year. A plot by the military to assassinate Hitler fails because the briefcase with the bomb is moved out of full range. Hitler thought that it was a worker who placed the bomb and that Fate saved him for his mission. (p. 799) Later the propaganda was that these generals, now shot, or committing suicide, had caused the defeats in the other countries as saboteurs.
Hitler began to think of death as peace. His doctor considered that he was a neurotic with Caesar-mania.” (p. 821)

Meanwhile a million men were being killed in France.

Hitler spoke of himself this way: “Genius is a will-of-the wisp unless it is founded on perseverance and fanatical determination. That’s the most important thing in human existence....It’s merely a question of who can stand it longer. The one who must hold out longer is the one who’s got everything at stake.”

Toland remarks “What would be sheer madness to another was only logical for one with his obsession.”

At the end he was muttering about an atom bomb he would use to obliterate England. and also wondering who could follow in his footsteps after his death. And again that if the nation failed to have teutonic fury it had no worth and deserved destruction.

Hitler said that there was no need to plan for the remaining Germans after the war since “the good have been killed and only the inferior will remain.” (p. 857)

Before his death by suicide Hitler said the captain must go down with his ship. (p. 878)

When a younger officer yelled about how all the wonderful other German officers went to their deaths, sacrifices for the thirst for power of the leaders, Frau Goebbels, wife of the famous Nazi, replied that everything good has been defeated and a world without Hitler and National Socialism was not worth living in. She must kill herself and the children because God will understand that they are not meant for life after Hitler. (p. 880)

Just before his suicide Hitler married his mistress, Eva Braun, and had a little wedding party. In his last will he claimed credit for destroying the Jews.

In defeat with Berlin surrounded, Hitler shot himself at 56 with Eva doing the same. He said, in defeat, that he wanted their bodies to be cremated immediately: “I don’t want to be put on exhibition in a Russian wax museum.” (p. 887)

He said he wanted on his tombstone the words: “(I) was the victim of (my) generals.” (p. 888.)

Final comments from his biographer,Toland.

When he died so did National Socialism and the Thousand-Year Third Reich. Because of him, his beloved Germany lay in ruins. “The greatest irony of all was that the driving force of his life - his hatred and fear of Jews was thwarted. He had intended the elimination of six million Jews to be his great gift to the world. It would lead, instead, to the formation of a Jewish state.” (p. 891)
So much for the ends justifying the means.

It is, of course, not difficult to critique a violent philosophy of life such as Hitler’s as not only viciously evil but also clearly disastrous for all those who took part in executing it. Perhaps more important would be to trace the same themes in present-day terrorism and also, in another sense, in the acceptance of abortion. In both cases people think that the end justifies the means.

Mohatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Such a different life from that of Hitler though both men were famous and acclaimed and adored!

The following biographical information is taken from The Words of Gandhi, selected by Richard Attenborough, (N.Y.: Newmarket Press, 1982)

As was the custom in his time he married Kasturbai at the early age of 13 and then was sent off to study law in London. After becoming a lawyer he went to South Africa and worked for immigrant Indians.

While in South Africa, Gandhi started developing the idea of non-violent resistance: satyagrahi, truth force or soul-force.

He was jailed for protests. Then he went back to India and led the struggle for independence by means of non-violent protest. He had great religious tolerance of Moslems and Christians. He said he would have become a Christian had they not kicked him out of the Church for being non-white when he visited once. Gandhi used to fast practically until death against violence.

He persuaded the Indian people by spiritual and political means to get involved in vast non-violent strikes that paralyzed colonialism. After a while even the English in England began to side with Gandhi.

1947 brought independence, but Gandhi despaired over the violence caused by the partition of India with the Moslems starting their own Pakistani state. He was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic at age of 79.

Einstein said “Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

He had a great influence on Martin Luther King who influenced Operation Rescue indirectly.

Some points:

The spinning wheel issue - because of love for foreign made articles, the Indians shipped their wool overseas and then bought the foreign stuff for large prices, thus impoverishing themselves. The
campaign to get them back to the spinning wheel meant self-sufficiency. He disliked communism as making man a cog in the wheel.

Some sayings:

“Majority rule can become tyranny, we need to respect the rights of the minority.” p. 38

(regarding in S. Africa Indians forced to walk in the gutter that whites could pass unimpeded along the sidewalk.)

“It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings.” (p. 7)

(need for discipline vs. conscience without discipline.)

“Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.” (p. 13)

“Literacy must be one of the many means for intellectual development, but we have had in the past intellectual giants who were unlettered...it is a superstition to think that the fullest development of the man is impossible without a knowledge of the art of reading and writing. That knowledge undoubtedly adds grace to life, but is in no way indispensable for man’s moral, physical or material growth.” (p. 14)

“In India we have 3 million people who have to be satisfied with one meal a day...You and I have no right to anything we have until these three million are clothed and fed better.” (p. 16)

“The distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization is an indefinite multiplicity of human wants.” (p. 17)

“One must not possess anything which one does not really need...one must not keep a chair if one can do without it. In observing this principle one is led to a progressive simplification of one’s own life.” (p. 18)

“Love is the subtlest force in the world.”

“Love is a rare herb that makes a friend even of a sworn enemy and this herb grows out of nonviolence.” “I hold myself to be incapable to hating any being on earth. By a long course of prayerful discipline, I have ceased for over forty years to hate anybody.” (P. 22)

“Chastity is one of the greatest disciplines without which the mind cannot attain requisite firmness.” (p. 23) (Note he was anti-contraception, claiming that unless a man could attain control of his sexual powers in abstinence when necessary, he would not have control in any other sphere of life.)

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“Learning takes us through many stages in life but it fails us utterly in the hours of danger and temptation.” (p. 25)

“Democracy, disciplined and enlightened, is the finest thing in the world” (p. 29)

“Good travels at a snail’s pace. Those who want to do good are not selfish, they are not in a hurry, they know that to impregnate people with good requires a long time.” (p. 41)

On non-violence:

“I can imagine a fully armed man to be at heart a coward. Possession of arms implies an element of fear, if not cowardice. But true nonviolence is an impossibility without the possession of unadulterated fearlessness...Non-violence should never be used as a shield for cowardice. It is a weapon for the brave.” (P. 44)

“I see neither bravery nor sacrifice in destroying life or property for offense or defense.”

“It is no non-violence if we merely love those that love us. It is nonviolence only when we love those that hate us. I know how difficult it is to follow this grand law of love. But are not all great and good things difficult to do? Love of the hater is the most difficult of all. But by the grace of God even this most difficult thing becomes easy to accomplish if we want to do it.”

Enemies must be converted into friends with no rancor after non-violent resistance. (See p. 45)

“Its object should not be to punish the opponent or to inflict injury upon him. Even while non-cooperating with him, we must make him feel that in us he has a friend and we should try to reach his heart by rendering him humanitarian service whenever possible.”

Non-violence includes under not hurting others by evil thoughts, undue haste, lying, hatred, wishing others ill. (See p. 46)

“Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evildoer, but it means the pitting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant...And so I am not pleading for India to practice nonviolence because she is weak. I want her to practice nonviolence being conscious of her strength and power...I want India to recognize that she has a soul that cannot perish and that can rise triumphant above every physical weakness and defy the physical combination of a whole world... (p. 52-53)
Nonviolence, according to Gandhi, will not fail through inherent weakness. It may fail because of poverty of response...the high souled men, who are unable to suffer national humiliation any longer, will want to vent their wrath. They will take to violence.

Gandhi:

“Although non-cooperation is one of the main weapons in the armory of satyagraha, it should not be forgotten that it is, after all, only a means to secure the cooperation of the opponent consistently with truth and justice...Avoidance of all relationships with the opposing power, therefore, can never be a satyagrahi’s object, but transformation or purification of that relationship.” (p. 55)

“Nonviolence succeeds only when we have a real living faith in God.”

“Experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence.” (p. 57)

“Nonviolence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-cooperation with evil.” (p. 58)

“He alone who is strong enough to avenge a wrong knows how to love and forgive.” (p. 66)

Non-violence is not just a stopgap until one can win with violence. It can also be used in daily personal life by men, women, and children. (p. 68 ff.)

“I believe in God, not as a theory, but as a fact more real than that of life itself.” (p. 74)

“A man who throws himself on God ceases to fear man.” (p. 76)

(Note Gandhi uses He for God even though, in general Hindus think of the divine as impersonal) (p. 77)

“Why can we not see that if the sum total of the world’s activities was destructive, it would have come to an end long ago? Love sustains this planet of ours.” (p. 81)

“Lying is the mother of violence. A truthful man cannot long remain violent. He will perceive in the course of his search that he has no need to be violent and he will further discover that so long as there is the slightest trace of violence in him, he will fail to find the truth he is searching.” (p. 86)
“Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency. Man is a social being. Without interrelation with society he cannot realize its oneness with the universe or suppress his egotism.” (p. 87)

“As soon as the spirit of exploitation is gone, armaments will be felt as a positive unbearable burden. Real disarmament cannot come unless the nations of the world cease to exploit one another.” (p. 89)

“It may be long before the law of love will be recognized in internal affairs. The machineries of governments stand between and hide the hearts of one people from those of another.” (p. 92)

Gandhi wrote about a peace brigade:

“He or she must have a living faith in non-violence. This is impossible without a living faith in God. A non-violent man can do nothing save by the power and grace of God. without it he won’t have the courage to die without anger, without fear and without retaliation. Such courage comes from the belief that God sits in the hearts of all, and there should be no fear in the presence of God. (p. 94)

After the atom bomb he said that now the world would see that they had either suicide or non-violence. (p. 97)

Here is a cute joke about Gandhi from Internet:

Mahatma Gandhi, as you may know, walked barefoot most of the time, which produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little which made him rather frail and with his odd diet, he suffered from bad breath. This made him what?

“A super callused fragile mystic plagued with halitosis.”

In evaluation one can bring in the Catholic Just War principles. Was Gandhi’s success based on the fact that Englishmen were brutal but not mad? Would Gandhi have been able to overcome Hitler? Relate these questions to the motives for liberation theology.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)
Martin Luther King, Jr. is so well-known that I am only going to highlight ideas about non-violence that might be important for this section.

Taken from the book of selections edited by Washington: A Testament of Hope.

He was influenced by Gandhi. (p 7-9) King thought that the alternative to violence is nonviolent resistance.

Five points can be made concerning nonviolence as a method in bringing about better racial conditions.

First - It is not for the passive but requires constant action, trying to convince the opponent of his mistakes. It is passive only physically, not spiritually.

Second: the idea is not to defeat or humiliate the opponent but to win his friendship and cooperation. Nonviolent techniques “are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.” (Relate to World War I)

Third: One should direct the attack against the evil not the persons. It should be a victory not just for Negroes, but for justice. “We are out to defeat injustice and not white persons who may happen to be unjust.”

Fourth: One needs also to avoid internal “violence of spirit.” “In speaking of love at this point, we are not referring to some sentimental emotion. It would be nonsense to urge men to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense. “Love” in this connection means understanding good will...loving them because God loves them.” (Agapic love vs. eros, philia)

Fifth:

“The method of nonviolence is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. It is this deep faith in the future that causes the nonviolent resister to accept suffering without retaliation. He knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic companionship. This belief that God is on the side of truth and justice comes down to us from the long tradition of our Christian faith. There is something at the very center of our faith which reminds us that Good Friday may reign for a day, but ultimately it must give way to the triumphant beat of the Easter drums. Evil may so shape events that Caesar will occupy a palace and Christ a cross, but one day that same Christ will rise up and split history into A.D. and B.C. so that even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name. So in Montgomery we can walk and never get weary, because we know that there will be a great camp meeting in the promised land of freedom and justice...” Largely as a result of King’s movement, the Supreme Court did eventually rule that segregation was illegal.

Eldridge Cleaver (1935-1998)
Information for this unit comes from the book by Cleaver *Soul on Fire* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1978) This is an autobiographical book about a violent Black activist.

Cleaver had been 14 years for criminal activities in reform schools, detention centers, State prisons before leaving the U.S. He escaped a 7 year sentence for involvement in violence with the Black Panthers by leaving the United States for a communist country. Disillusioned with the communist countries, he went to Paris. Close to suicide he had a saving vision of Christ, surrendered to the authorities, came back to a jail cell in California and is now a crusader for Christian evangelization.

Here are some facts and thoughts from *Soul on Fire*:

In 1968 he said that if he should be elected President on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket, “I would not enter the White House, but would burn it down, erecting on its ruins a museum or monument to the decadence of the past...” (p. 18)

Cleaver once thought that the revolutionary black guerillas would join up with the Vietnam Vets and turn against Washington, led by the armed black panthers with hidden weapons. He thought there would be an open civil war. He planned this war in Algeria via Cuba. He was going to model this on Mao’s long march. Instead, after his conversion, he was willing to face a trial leading to a jail sentence where he could be killed by police or fiends or communists, but he was full of hope instead in the Holy Spirit.

When he fled the country the Panthers were being ransacked and fired upon by the FBI. Riots led to bloodshed in the cities. In 1968 the murder of M.L. King left a vacuum in the civil rights movement. In the 60’s the Panthers gave some kind of hope and honor to Blacks who were living in total depression in the ghettos. The Panthers were a political action party dedicated to overcoming killing of black citizens by police. (p. 25)The police “patrolled the black community like foreign troops.” So they created armed black patrols that follow the cops around the ghetto and monitored their conduct.

“When a black man or woman was shoved up against a wall or spread across the hood of a car, our Panthers would jump out and focus immediate community attention on the encounter advising the victim of his rights. The police got furious, but we gained the respect and admiration of millions of blacks for having the guts to face up to these bullies and urge others to do the same.” (P. 26)

This was done on the basis that here is a constitutional right to own arms. (p. 27) White America hated and feared the Panthers but also respected us. The police did all sorts of illegal things in retaliation - entry without warrants etc. He gives a list of all those killed by the police mostly youngsters. The Panthers would shoot back.

What was the background of this violent leader?
Cleaver was born in Arkansas, moved to Phoenix and then to Los Angeles. His father was a physically abusive man who used to hit his mother and when riled would smash everything in sight. Once his father retaliated against the preacher who had treated him unjustly on a property matter by going into his Church and hitting his head with a hammer and splintering the old man’s false teeth. His father beat Eldridge for defiance and beat his mother Saturday nights. He would never hit his father back when his father was hitting him, but always when his father was hitting his mother. Finally when he was a strong enough young man, Eldridge decided to kill his father. The day he decided to kill his father, his father didn’t beat him but left home for 5 years. (p. 63)

Now he began to direct his violence elsewhere. He started posing as an investigator and going into motels where couples were spending the night and then write them up and rape the wife. Then he got into drug dealing. He became rich. (p. 68) Writing about this after his conversion, Cleaver says that only Jesus Christ can redirect the personality of a criminal mind. He describes the Black Moslem movement, which was part of his story as depicted in his first bestseller: Soul on Ice. Elijah Mohammed bonded blacks together and insisted that drugs, shooting, and drinking brawls had to stop. He claimed that it was the white devils who were trying to burn out the blacks through drugs and crime. The Blacks were losers this way. Later the Panthers took this and ran the drug dealers out. Cleaver was greatly influenced by Malcolm X who was more of an intellectual.

In prison Cleaver started getting into ideas, literature, reading and study, especially Marxism. In prison he came up against prison psychiatry. From taking lots of mace for a high, he wound up crazy. Though he thought that one prison psychiatrist was helpful, others he hated for turning men into mice.

Leaving prison in 1966 Cleaver got into the San Francisco hippie scene. He saw this as a rebellion against the avarice and power hunger of the older generation. The non-violent civil rights movement had attracted whites to rebel against the power structure. He claims that drugs and pacifism were like the Boston Tea Party, a contemporary way to rebel against society by refusing to go to Vietnam to die. (p. 82)

In prison Cleaver resolved to become a revolutionary to defeat the ruling class. He was socialist in his plans to defeat capitalism. He hated government, and bureaucracies. He tried to get Blacks out of the idea of creating a future in the ghetto. Instead they should join him in plans to overthrow the establishment. During this time Cleaver married an activist black woman. King’s death fostered despair and interest in violence. He financed his revolutionary groups by income from his book Soul on Ice.

It was he who started calling the cops pigs. But he didn’t like the idea of the Muslims that all whites were evil. His mother taught him that there were good and bad whites. (p. 93) He did not invent the Panthers but joined them, impressed by their courage in carrying guns openly.
Cleaver wanted the Blacks to form their own nation and be part of the U.N. If the Black was supposed to be an American then why was he treated like a dog? (p. 96) These rebellious thoughts led to urban guerrilla warfare, seen as analogous to the revolution of Americans against the English.

Positively, the Panthers wanted freedom, release of all prisoners unjustly tried, Black juries, land. (p. 113) The Panthers came into a leadership vacuum where riots were going on and King couldn’t stop them.

After a skirmish with the police, Cleaver decided to break his bond and flee from US to Cuba. Dressed as a mime he escaped from his police surrounded house. He went from Cuba where he was disillusioned to Algeria. From there he visited Korea, China, North Vietnam. He liked best the North Vietnamese who were the most “civilized” and pro-Panther. In a letter about the International Black Panthers he used this telling phrase: we fight so that we will not bequeath “to our children the chains that now bind us.”

He got into trouble claiming that Algeria, so anti-colonial, should support the Panthers vs. the U. S. Government. He lauded Communist heroes such as Stalin and Mao. Later he would see that the corruption of the communists was as violent and inhumane as the powers they replaced. (p. 97)

His plan was to train guerillas in Cuba. But in Cuba he discovered that the communists were racists. Castro shipped Blacks off to Africa. In the Asian communist countries he could see that they had no tradition of individuals and their rights. In America you could protest the betrayal of the American dream as it affected Blacks, but in Communist countries there was no such ideal to appeal to. (p. 109) The Communist party in America promised support but did little. In the Asian countries he experienced lots of racism, for instance against the Japanese.

One of the greatest factors leading to Cleaver’s rethinking about life was the birth of his son and daughter who seemed like miracles. Because of his children Cleaver began to think there is a designer God. The children had souls. This truth was contrary to his previous anti-religious ideas.

Living in unfree countries he slowly began to realize that in the U. S. at least you could call the police and find out why someone was jailed. “Later I learned that without inner control, a moral perspective, and a spiritual balance that flowed out of Christian love, justice, and caring, the Communist promises were to become the largest fraud of all.”

Eventually after living in Communist countries he would say “I would rather be in prison in America than free somewhere else.” (p.98)

In Communist countries there could not be outburst in the press or any kind of legal recourse.

At that time some Panthers dreamed of assaults on the prisons, commando attacks at the Olympics. The hope was that anti-war activists would join in the revolution.
A fascinating side-effect of the trial of the Nixon aides was that Blacks disillusioned with America could see that the most powerful man in the country could be brought down by justice. The Constitution proved stronger than Nixon. (p. 103)

At that time there were splits in the Black Muslims and then in the Panthers.

Concerning this Cleaver wrote that the splits “would finally cause me to doubt completely the efficacy of social, political movements as the agent of true liberation and lasting salvation. Everything that I had trusted, supported, and believed had a propensity for melting under the heat and light of testing. At last Jesus would be the One who not only stood and tested time, governments, kingdoms, and nationalities; but I learned with increasing joy that He who was my judge was also my personal Savior.”(p. 77)

Most Blacks, tutored by Elijah Mohammed, the founder of the Black Moslems, could not stand the idea of a white Jesus. Cleaver now runs the Eldridge Cleaver Crusades and tries to explain universal religion to these bewildered Black Muslims.

Here is a description of the events leading up to Cleaver’s conversion. In 1972 he was living with his family under a false name in Paris. He couldn’t return to the States without serving his prison sentence. He started to become empty and restless. Meanwhile the Panthers split and voted him out as too militant and dangerous. Cleaver began to dislike the arrogance of the French. He felt alienated by French culture. He was impressed that Nixon was out and the FBI was being reformed. His old revolutionary friends were becoming leaders of cities. They didn’t want him back because they are now going up the ladder. He becomes depressed and thought of suicide.

One night in Southern France, Cleaver was staring “at the moon from a balcony and he saw his face in it and then his fallen heroes, Castro, Mao, Marx... passing in review - each one appearing for a moment of time, and then dropping out of sight, like fallen heroes. Finally at the end of the procession, in dazzling, shimmering light, the image of Jesus Christ appeared. That was the last straw. I just crumbled and started crying. I fell to my knees...and in the midst of this shaking and crying the Lord’s Prayer and the 23rd Psalm came into my mind. I hadn’t thought about these prayers for years. I started repeating them, and after a time I...jumped up and ran to my bookshelf and got the Bible. It was the family Bible my mother had given to me...

“That night I slept the most peaceful sleep I have ever known in my life...in the morning I could see in my mind the way, all the way back home…I saw a path of light that ran through a prison cell...This prison cell was a dark spot on this path of light, and the meaning, which was absolutely clear to me, was that I didn’t have to wait on any politician to help me get back home. I had it within my power to get back home by taking that first step, by surrendering; it was a certainty that everything was going to be all right.” (p. 212)
God had reached out and touched him and turned him around. He claims that God showed the way out of the dead-end of his choices, taking away all fear of police, courts, and prison.

People thought he had sold out, but he said he had sold out to Jesus. (p. 217)

Arrested on landing in NYC, he still “felt free because of God.” (p. 220)

Some Panthers denounced him as a FBI informer. (p. 222) His old friends wouldn’t visit him. Because of this he turned more and more to God. Alone in his cell he asked Jesus to be his personal savior and take away his sins. (p. 224) Tears of joy. Soon he was making new friends in Christ. After nine months of prison, he was out on bail on the generosity of a Christian friend. He got to see his mother who had prayed for her prodigal son for 30 years.

Presently he goes around to colleges and to prisons and appears on TV. He was so strong in the Lord that he could enjoy having a prayer session arranged by Colson, the ex-prisoner Nixon aide, with a former Klu Klux Klan leader. All three, born again. Jesus brought them together; also a Southern policeman.

He is now on a crusade against violence. This man who had spent almost half his life in prison and was awaiting trial for assault with intent to kill wrote: “The Lord has transported me from worldly revolutions to a radical dependence on his transforming power.” (p. 237)

Mao Tse-Tung (1893-1976)

This information is taken from The People’s Emperor: A Biography of Mao Tse-Tung by Dick Wilson (NY: Lee Publishers Group, Inc, (arranged with Doubleday & Co., Inc.)1979) Wilson is an English journalist. I have been told that this biography may be slanted and I am going to look at other sources to make corrections if necessary.

Wilson begins by describing Mao as a peasant boy climbing by grim determination to become ruler of a great nation. He governed a quarter of mankind for a quarter of a century. Mao remained to the end peasant like, frugal, wearing patched clothes and sleeping on a wooden board bed without springs or mattress, eating simple food.

According to Wilson, who seemed to me pro-Communist, Mao invented a completely new system of life, economy and government. ragged a decayed, corrupt and inefficient imperial order
into modernity, As a primary school headmaster in a minor provincial city, he became convinced that communism was the only possible instrument for China to cut cleanly through to social justice and economic advance: called the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. He was the champion of the underdog yet also the cause of violent turbulence. Mao himself admitted to the deaths of hundreds of thousands in the course of his introduction of communism after 1949, others say 50 million. Some Chinese said he was the biggest feudal despot in Chinese history.

Mao was also known also for defying Stalin to carry Marxism forward to a new modernity and relevance. Stalin ridiculed him as a “margarine Marxist.” Mao appealed to some European communists because he was a thinker. Castro thought him a ridiculous mortal whom his Party turned into a god. Others said he was like a living Buddha with a priestly court.

Mao’s 3 successive wives and children suffered greatly in various political situations but he survived many near deaths.

The author of this biography says that Mao failed to bring all the reforms he wanted and underestimated the resistance to them.

To understand Mao’s Communistic social philosophy it is necessary to know more about his life.

Mao’s province, Hunan, was known for interest in reform, education, better ideas about women, but intellectuals were blocked from power. Meanwhile it can not be underestimated how great was the humiliation to the Chinese because of imperialists taking off parts of China. The French had Indo-china; Japan had Korea and Taiwan.

Mao’s mother was a devout Buddhist. His father was a non-believer. His father was mean but enterprising. His father moved up from small farmer to big farmer and, then, a trader. At 13 Mao was forced to leave school to work on farm. In his relationship to his father he learned that if he rebelled he got somewhere but he lost if he was weak and submissive. Mao desperately wanted a modern education and borrowed from relatives to leave against his father’s will. Like Abraham Lincoln he read in bed with a hidden lamp. Finally with the money of the relatives he left home with a mosquito net, two old sheets, a few tunics and 2 books and went to a primary school. He begged to get in to learn the modern way vs. reading old romantic novels as in his previous school. He was a rebel in school, gathering the kids together and suggesting that they could retaliate against a mean teacher by killing him!

What about the social scene at that time? After WWI people were only interested in their own profit. They didn’t know how to work together in companies or unions. Only foreign enterprises were run well. Everyone was inspired by Japan defeating Russia in 1905. Mao read newspapers about political reform and about world heroes. He loved George Washington.
Mao joined the revolution against emperor, but he saw that the republic under Sun Yat-sen was weak because the old landlords would retake the territory. He read Darwin, Mill, Rousseau at the training school for teachers he attended. Pride and anger ruled him plus dogged attention to detail in scholarship especially geography and history. He wrote in his journal “my boundaries must be expanded so that the universe will become one great self.”

Mao believed great in sacrifice to reform the world - one should sacrifice self and family. Hard work and realism were needed. Traditional values block individualism. Mao was too busy thinking about large matters to talk about or get involved with women. He began to take cold baths and otherwise build up his strength.

He started building up a group of friends devoted to working for reform. In early days he used to say that the family impeded nationalism and that children should be educated free by the state and owe their first allegiance to the state.

Mao’s first known poem:

“to fight with Heaven is infinite pleasure!

to fight with earth is infinite pleasure!

to fight with men is infinite pleasure!” (p. 54)

In Mao’s group manifestos he opposed prostitution, gambling, concubinage. As students, Mao and his group started a free night school for workers to learn how to read and write and figure.

When Mao graduated from the teachers’ school he had not read Marx. His mind was a mix of liberalism, democratic reformism, utopian socialism, anti-imperialist and anti-militarism.

Next Mao went to Peking University. He started reading Tolstoy and Russian socialists. When the Revolution in Russia came he was ready to agree with others of a Marxist Study group that they should follow the lead of Russia as communists. Marxism appealed to his sense of injustice. (p. 70) He liked its rational and materialist premises, assertion of human equality and dignity but most of all that it had been used with success in Russia. He adopted the idea that China could not be liberated if the peasants weren’t liberated.

At this time he fell in love with his future wife, the daughter of his ethics teacher. He began to teach history at a Primary school in his native province. He started a Review which he sold himself on the street. In the second issue he put his manifesto entitled “The Great Union of the Popular Masses. It was about the need for everyone to form a revolutionary united front based on Marx - to form peasant and worker’s organizations. This was to overcome the sufferings of humanity and the darkness of society where the poor slave for the ease and comfort of the capitalists.
“The world is ours, the nation is ours, society is ours...Our Chinese people possesses great inherent capacities...One day, the reform of the Chinese people will be more profound than that of any other people, and the society of the Chinese people will be more radiant than that of any other people. We must all exert ourselves. Our golden age, our age of glory and splendor lies before us!” (p. 73)

Mao also started writing against the double standard and about arranged marriages.

He organized a student strike to protest against the corrupt governor and against Japanese imperialism. He also read the Communist Manifesto and Russian communist literature.

When Mao’s father died he didn’t return home to help with family headship. When he did finally it was to get his family to become communistic.

Next he started working for his province’s independence of neighboring war-lords with a view to making the improvements there a basis for national reform. Hunan should become a little republic “a new heaven and earth”

In 1920 he led a march of 10,000 for democratic government. He formed the first communist cell in Hunan based on those in Peking and Shanghai.

He started identifying with labor and peasants instead of being an intellectual who wouldn’t carry his own luggage or do manual labor.

Interestingly for our course Mao actually met Bertrand Russell who was teaching for a year in China and also John Dewey who was lecturing in China also. Russell was for Communism but against dictatorship and violence; wanted to raise consciousness and not have a bloody revolution or loss of freedom. Mao rejected this as unrealistic since the capitalists are in control and will never relinquish power without violence. (P. 84)

Mao got married, probably not in court, possibly because the woman, the daughter of his teacher, was pregnant.

His closest friend came back from France and argued against Mao. His friend was against capitalism and for communism but not without freedom.

“Without freedom there would be superhuman pressure needed to maintain equilibrium.”

Mao retorted that the leaders need power to carry out plans, to obtain prompt action. “In order to reform a country one must be hard with oneself and it is necessary to victimize a part of the people.” (p. 86)
Mao began organizing unions and strikes. In foreign mines for instance workers were beaten by management while working 12-15 hours a day for low pay and bad living conditions. The workers who gained from these strikes helped him later when he was underground. He rose in the Communist party at this time as they joined the Kuomintang in opposing the Northern warlords who cooperated with the imperialists.

Meanwhile Russian advisors were coming to help the new Party. Mao was more radical than the party and organized the peasants and the workers to a revolt where they were to confiscate land and collectivize even the lands of small landowners and peasant proprietors. He refused to obey the Russian and Indian communist advisors. He started the Red army, but was defeated and fled to reorganize a band of 400 in the mountains. He had grossly exaggerated how many peasants were ready to become revolutionaries.

He took a communist women in the mountains as his new “queen.” The author compares this time to Robin Hood in Sherwood forest. Mao set up his first soviet with a people’s council. He led guerrilla uprising against gentry to get food and weapons. He linked up with another leader Chu and Lin a General from the Kuomintang. In Mao’s Set rule for the army there is a prohibition against any looting or exploitation of the peasants.

Gradually his army fanned out, confiscating land, and distributing it to the peasants who were armed to defend that land.

In a battle in the city his wife was executed for refusing to give names of Communist leaders or renounce the cause.

Chang Kai-chek put a price of $500,000 on Mao’s head. Yet Mao still joined with Chiang against the Japanese. He enjoyed having his red army paid to fight. The Kuomintang would have finished off the Communists if not for being diverted to fight the Japanese. In spite of his mistress having born him many children, he married an actress. The other leaders thought this very bad. They still retained some of the old morals.

The famous Long March of over 6,000 miles was to escape Chiang. The biographer likens Mao to Churchill for Mao’s courage when defeat seemed assured. On the Long March the Maoists struggled terribly eating bark and drinking their own urine. So amazed was the Community party that they survived that afterwards they saw the future of China and mankind lay with Mao. (p. 181)

My commentary: one cannot say that people will only die for God - Mao and his men risked death all the time - out of hate and love for humanity?

By 1944 the cult of personality had grown and Mao is being described as the savior of the people with his words being considered absolute. He thinks of himself as a kind of emperor (p. 271)
In 1949 Mao took Peking. He had a great desire that the world respect China -that they would see what a great people the Chinese were.

Early on Mao was restive of Russian leadership because he thought only national leaders understood their own country.

Wherever he went he wrote poetry, some quite good. Here is a line you might like: “Mountains! Piercing the blue of heaven your barbs unblunted! The sky would fall/but for your strength supporting.” (p. 169)

Many were executed in the course of land reform, battles with corruption and with counter-revolutionaries. He admitted to 700,000 killed but his enemies say 20 million. Others say even more.

There was an odd discipline in the party, such as no birthday parties, no gifts, no long toasts, no long applause, no naming places after persons.

Mao could not understand how non-communist countries like England, Norway, Sweden could have such a high standard of living for the workers since they had not gotten rid of the middle class.

After Stalin was dethroned as a hero, Mao gets into the idea of “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend” (p. 325), after which 400,000 were purged for giving their opinions. After one month of freedom, many fled he country, and others voiced such bad opinions that they had to be stopped.

Mao started pushing family planning. He also predicted the eventual end of the family when no longer needed as an economic production unit. (p. 359)

Mao began to have more and more opposition because of lack of success of his policies leading to less and less food for the hard working peasants. (p. 381) Income fell by a third. Mao started doubting and saying it would take 60 years to catch up with the U.S.

The Cultural Revolution involved bringing the army and the students in to get rid of his opponents who he saw as new rightist revisionist traitors within the party. On the basis that there was a counter-revolution going on, he purged the party with deification of Mao by the young Red Guards. He went through the streets touching the people’s hands. But he himself started seeing that the violence of the Red Guard was not the right path. He didn’t want to replace the Party with anarchy. He had to suppress them.

Mao’s closest disciple tried to organize a coup to kill him, but failed.

1972 marked the famous Nixon visit. Mao broke with his wife after she did long interviews with an American journalist without his permission.
At the end of his life Mao didn’t rate the success of his revolution over 50%.( p. 484) For this he blamed the because young people as being too soft. He worried about a full scale capitalist restoration after his death. He appointed an official from his home province to follow him. In his last conference he told his followers to be brave and get rid of their scholarly air. (p. 488)

Mao died in 1976.

Conclusion by biographer: Mao was not attracted to Marxism as such but wanted a way to bring dignity and equality to human beings caught in an outmoded social structure. (p. 490) Mao took Marxism out of Europe into the Third World to the peasant class. He was driven by hate of his father and the pain of rejection by the more educated and by the Russians. In this he was like Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin - a man with an inferiority complex. In this he identified himself with the peasants. Even in success, he was remote in personality. Because he trusted no one he became an infallible dictator. He was unable to collaborate with men of real talent. He was not as sadistic as Russian leaders in his purges. He didn’t know enough to implement his own policies successfully.

The author says that 900 million people now enjoy a better life because of the Communist state!

Key ideas of Mao:

The state comes first over the family.

Marxism cannot be abstract but must be related to the actual history and culture of the country. In China first one had to destroy feudalism and imperialism and then usher in socialism. Marxism is not a religion but a tool. (p. 231)

The end justifies the means - “for thousands of years everyone said oppression is justified, exploitation is justified, rebellion is not justified. From the time when Marxism appears on the scene, this old judgment was turned upside down.” (p. 220)

“Communism is not love, it is a hammer to destroy the enemy.” (p. 490)

You can’t be hopeful unless you fight.

Utopian - there can be heaven on earth through political change.

Mao denies human nature - there is only class nature. Genuine love of humanity can only come with an end to classes.

Anti-religious. Mao told the Dalai Lama that religion is poison and retards progress.

Mao projected a time of no wars after capitalism would be defeated.

Free choice in marriage, no family compulsion or sale of girls for wives.
Mao forced the bourgeois to become proletarians. He didn’t understand the lack of incentive that comes with collectivization. Capitalism would have to die out since everything in history is fated to die.

Be strong! One of his mottos: “failure is the mother of success.” (p. 320)

Mao correctly thought that in hard times the heads of factories and schools should live poor with the masses.

From a letter to his daughter Chiang, “Heaven will entrust you with a great duty but first you must steel your own will with pain, work with your own hands, go hungry and be worn out and throw off your undisciplined behavior. Materialists should be afraid of nothing. The road is hard but the future is always radiant. You will suffer many reverses but never turn back” (p. 428)

In evaluation of Mao, of course main protest involves killing millions for the sake of an uncertain ideology. That his philosophy is atheistic is the key to its failure. On another plane we have the problem of incentive: Liu, a leader with Mao said that one had to keep some bourgeois around because these people have lots of energy and resourcefulness. (p. 398) Also Mao started dealing with the sons and daughters of the previous army people and communist heads who had become bourgeois and soft. This led to the forcing students to work on the land. He also recognized that the communist leaders had become new bureaucrats unsympathetic to workers and peasants.

Here are some questions for you that arise out of this brief story of Mao’s career: One cannot say that people will only die for God - Mao and his men risked death all the time - out of hate and love for humanity?

Or, consider, if you were an atheist what would you want to do about suffering and exploitation? How could you overcome resistance to justice without violence?

(Slogan in US during the 1930’s: If you’re not a communist by the age of 20 you have no heart. If you’re still a communist at the age of 30 you have no head.)

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn (1918)

Solzhenitsyn was one of the most famous anti-Communist Russians of the twentieth century. Because he was too poor to study literature as a youth he specialized in mathematics and physics. He was a high school teacher before World War II, and became a driver and then a soldier until his arrest in 1945. Solzhenitsyn was arrested because anti-Stalinist correspondence was found between him and a friend. Although there was not enough evidence to convict him, he nevertheless had to serve eight years in prison doing extremely hard manual labor until he was transferred to the research institute he later described in his famous novel The First Circle.
During his prison years he wrote much in secret. This enabled him to pursue his writing on the side. He tried to publish in the Soviet Union but his books were suppressed. Eventually, he was able to smuggle some of his book out to the West. He won the Nobel Prize in 1970. Exiled to Germany in 1974, he eventually settled in the United States with his family in 1976 where he lived in semi-seclusion in Vermont working on the history of the Gulag, the network of prison camps covering vast territories of the Soviet Union.

There was some shock when, during a commencement address at Harvard in 1978, Solzhenitsyn said that in spite of the horrors of Communist rule he could not wish his people to have lived in the decadent West with its vapid life-style of consumerism. On the other hand, there was great joy among Christians to see that this famous humanistic protestor against atheistic communism was turning toward God. “No one on earth has any other way left but - upward to God,” he said as quoted on an Internet site.

In 1990 he was admitted back to the Soviet Union where he has continued writing and also using television as a medium for his continued critique of the ills of society.

Here are some ideas of Solzhenitsyn:


(The Archipelago is a name Solzhenitsyn uses for the network of isles of hidden prisoners all over the Soviet Union.)

In this enterprise of intricate elaborate historical chronicling, Solzhenitsyn moves us quickly from the blueprint of Communism to its practice as seen by the victims.

Communism was to be the world solution for all injustice. So it had to work. And if it wasn’t working you needed to force people to conform to your plan. (Chervin’s analogy: think, if you will, of any situation of injustice - let us take abortion. In the middle of the night you might want to shoot abortionists, force people to be chaste, marry off all couples who are having sex - i.e. be totalitarian rather than have to keep seeing the injustice that bothers you most.)

Solzhenitsyn has a great interest in how humanity breaks forth in the most unexpected ways. He describes his own arrest when he was in the army and how a stiff, unfriendly commander took his hand and wished him well as he was being taken away. (p. 19-20)

Solzhenitsyn chronicles many, many different purges from 1917 on. One would expect imprisonment of rich landowners and state officials, but there were also peasants and intellectuals and religious people. One woman was given a ten-year sentence for writing about the forbidding of religious education: “You can pray freely, but just so God alone can hear.” Also nationalistic groups within regions, then students, also engineers.
All these arrests in the millions came under one Act, Article 58 under crimes against the state. You could be executed for refusal as a prisoner to work when in a state of starvation - the punishment was to be shot. Or even an intent to betray was enough. (See p. 60) All this was exacerbated by a system of quotas where there had to be “x” number of arrests per district so as to increase the supply of forced labor.

Note that before his death Stalin was preparing a total purge of the Jews. (p. 92)

How surprised would be enlightened people of the beginning of the 20th century to think that all the tortures of the terrible Tsars would be increased in the modern century of progress! (p. 93) Besides physical torture they would play recordings sounding like your wife screaming and tell you she would be tortured more unless you gave your fake confession. All this involved pseudo-trials.

“So what is the answer? How can you stand your ground when you are weak and sensitive to pain, when people you love are still alive, when you are unprepared?

“So what do you need to make you stronger than the interrogator and the whole trap?

“From the moment you go to prison you must put your cozy past firmly behind you. At the very threshold, you must say to yourself: ‘My life is over, a little early to be sure, but there’s nothing to be done about it. I shall never return to freedom. I am condemned to die - now or a little later. But later on, in truth, it will be even harder, and so the sooner the better. I no longer have any property whatsoever. For me those I love have died, and for them I have died. From today on, my body is useless and alien to me. Only my spirit and my conscience remain precious and important to me. Confronted with such a prisoner, the interrogation will tremble. Only the man who has renounced everything can win that victory.” (p. 130)

He referred to the philosopher Berdiaev who was arrested and did not beg or plead but simply set forth his moral and religious principles which had led him to refuse to accept the political authority established in Russia. They liberated him. An old woman who was a Christian told them that they could do nothing to frighten her. (p. 131)

“There is nothing you can do with me even if you cut me into pieces. After all, you are afraid of your bosses, and you are afraid of each other, and you are even afraid of killing me (they wanted her information about an underground Christian group). But I am not afraid of anything. I would be glad to be judged by God right this minute.” (p. 131)

What was going on in the heads of the interrogators? They are not taken from those of broad culture, or logic or empathy. They have to carry out orders and be impervious to suffering. They knew the cases were fabricated. In this they were just like the Nazis. (see p. 145-147) What motivated them
was the easy life they could lead in this job, supplementary pay, promotions if they could supply many confessions.

“That is why they felt no mercy, but, instead, an explosion of resentment and rage toward those maliciously stubborn prisoners who opposed being fitted into the totals, who would not capitulate to sleeplessness or the punishment cell or hunger. By refusing to confess they menaced the interrogator’s personal standing. It was as though they wanted to bring him down. In such circumstances all measures were justified! If it’s to be war, then war it will be! We’ll ram the tube down your throat - swallow that salt water!”

The interrogators were motivated by power and greed for money. There was no limit to this because they had no sense of a higher power. (See p. 147)

Even if you are otherwise inferior in age or rank, if you have power as a Communist you can destroy anyone. This is terrific power. Also to get the women you want. You can throw the husband in prison or threaten to kill the girl’s father. Whatever.

They were also interested in looting the possessions of those arrested.

The hard question is whether under temptation one would have become an interrogator oneself? (p. 160) Solzhenitsyn reflects on how when he became an officer in the army he forgot what it was like to be a subordinate and became prideful and cruel just like the others. (p. 163)

But what the Russian communists did was bolstered by ideology. (p. 174) For this ideology justifies the interrogators deeds, so that he is honored vs. villified. “Thanks to ideology, the twentieth century was fated to experience evildoing on a scale calculated in the millions. This cannot be denied, nor passed over, nor suppressed…”

All people waver between good and evil, but when you cross a certain threshold of evil it is much harder to return to the good.

He asks how come West Germany condemned some 86,000 of war crimes but the Soviet Union never does this. How can the Soviet Union be purged of these crimes? (p.176) When Solzhenitsyn was writing this he was told he should not stir up the past.

In the chapter “First Cell, First Love” he talks about the wonderful solidarity among the prisoners after being isolated and interrogated by enemies. He speaks of the joy of saying “we” about yourself with others, whereas in freedom you clung to your individuality over against the hypocritical “we” of conformity. (p. 184)

“You are not alone in the world! Wise, spiritual beings - human beings - still exist.”
Theme 10

Despair of Love vs. Christian Love

Sartre vs. John Paul II

Introduction

This section is not done yet.

Some Notes:
Sartre: 1905-1980

Basic Ideas of Sartre:
atheist existentialist - “existence precedes essence”
absolute freedom vs. bad faith vs. authenticity.
in-itself - solid opaque being like the tree
for-itself  free from all necessity

God cannot exist because an in-itself, for-itself is a contradiction
love as destructive appropriation
ethics as choice and self-created values.

John Paul II
Sartre thinks that what is called love between man and woman is usually destructive appropriation. John Paul II shows what real love is between man and woman. These are excerpts from Love and Responsibility, written when he was a philosophy professor priest.

These excerpts are from Dr. M Healy’s book of excerpts from the philosophy of John Paul II. More is available. Note how the attitudes described as ego-centric by John Paul II play a role in the play No-Exit and the good attitudes open a very different vista from that of Sartre’s characters.

CHAPTER I: THE PERSON AND THE SEXUAL URGE

ANALYSIS OF THE VERB ‘TO USE’:

_The Person as the Subject and Object of Action_—Every subject also exists as an object, an objective ‘something’ or ‘somebody’. As an object, a man is ‘somebody’—and this sets him apart from every other entity in the visible world, which as an object is only “something”. It is not enough to define man as an individual of the species _Homo sapiens_. The term ‘person’ has been coined to signify that a man cannot be wholly contained within the concept ‘individual member of the species’, but that there is something more to him. Compared to inanimate objects, plants (with a rich sensual life), and even animals (with their strivings related to cognition and desire at a certain level), man (an individual being of a rational nature) is a personal subject distinguished from even the most advanced animals by a specific inner self, an inner life, characteristic only of persons. Inner life means spiritual life. It revolves around truth and goodness.

A human person, as a distinctly defined subject, establishes contact with all other entities precisely through the inner self, and neither the ‘natural’ contacts which are also its prerogative, since it has a body and in a certain sense ‘is a body’, nor the sensual contacts in which it resembles the animals, constitute its characteristic way of communication with the world. Moreover, man’s nature differs fundamentally from that of the animals in that it includes the power of self-determination, based on reflection, and manifested in the fact that a man acts from choice. This power is called free will. Because a human being—a person—possesses free will, he is his own master (_sui juris_). This characteristic goes with another distinctive attribute that personality is not capable of transmission, not transferable (_alteri incommunicabilis_). This means not only that the person is unique and unrepeatable (which is true of every entity), but also that the incommunicable, the _inalienable_, in a person is intrinsic to that person’s inner self, to the power of self-determination, free will. _No one else can want for me_. I am, and I must be, independent in my actions. In human relationships, in dealings between persons of different sexes, and especially in the sexual relationship, persons are alike the subjects and objects of action. It is now necessary to consider carefully the principles to which a human being’s actions must conform when the object is another human person.
The First Meaning of the Verb ‘to Use’—To use means to employ some object of action as a means to an end, thus subordinating that object both to the end and to the agent. Man in his various activities makes use of the whole created universe, takes advantage of all its resources for ends which he sets himself (with ethical limits as to squandering or destroying resources or causing suffering in the higher animals), for he alone understands them. But how does this apply to persons (employer-employee, officer-foot soldier, parent-child [even unborn])? Ethically, a person must not be merely the means to an end for another person. This is precluded by the very nature of personhood, by what a person is. For a person is a thinking subject, and capable of making decisions: these most notably, are the attributes we find in the inner self or a person. This being so, every person is by nature capable of determining his or her aims. Anyone who treats a person as the means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right. Obviously the ends of the person should be genuinely good, since the pursuit of evil ends is contrary to the rational nature of the person, but a person may never be treated as the means to an end. This principle has universal validity. Nobody can use a person as a means toward an end, no human being, nor yet God the Creator. On the part of God, indeed, it is totally out of the question, since, by giving man an intelligent and free nature, he has thereby ordained that each man alone will decide for himself the ends of his activity, and not be a blind tool of someone else’s ends. God allows man to learn His supernatural ends, but the decision to strive towards an end, the choice of course, is left to man’s free will. God does not redeem man against his will...

‘Love’ as the opposite of ‘Using’—If we seek a positive statement of this moral dictum, we begin to discern love as the only clear alternative to using a person as the means to an end, or the instrument of one’s own actions. Man’s capacity for love depends on his willingness consciously to seek a good together with others, and to subordinate himself to that good for the sake of others, or to others for the sake of that good. Compared to any mere need, striving, drive or instinct as we might find in the animal world, love is exclusively the portion of human persons. To love means to free oneself from the mere utilitarian or ‘consumer’ attitude towards other persons (including employees, foot soldiers, etc.): it means to be united in a common good and in love of some form. For example, in a common love of defense of the fatherland even a foot soldier is not merely used by an officer as a blind tool, as a means to an end.

Concerning ‘woman and man’—the background to sexual ethics—here, and even especially here, only love can preclude the use of one person by another. How is it possible to ensure that one person does not become for the other—the man for the woman or the woman for the man—nothing more than the means to an end, i.e., an object used exclusively for the attainment of a selfish end? To exclude this possibility, they must share the same end. Where marriage is concerned, this end is procreation (the future generation, a family) and, at the same time, the continual ripening of the relationship between two people in all the areas of activity which conjugal life includes. But this statement of the objective purpose of marriage does not yet solve the problem, for the sexual relationship presents more opportunities than most for treating a person—sometimes even without realizing it—as an object of use. Indeed, if we take this basic relationship ‘woman-man’ in the
broadest sense, and not merely within the limits of marriage, then the love of which we speak is identified with a particular readiness to subordinate oneself to that good which 'humanity'—or more precisely the value of the person—suggests.

'The Second Meaning of the Verb 'to Use'—Our thinking and our acts of will—and it is these which determine the objective structure of human activity—are accompanied by various emotional overtones or states, caring a positive (ranging from sensual satisfaction to emotional contentment to a profound, total joy) or negative (sensual disgust, emotional discontent, or a deep sadness) charge. These emotional-affective experiences are especially vivid in relation to a person of the opposite sex and to the sexual relationship proper. This is why the second meaning of the verb ‘to use’ looms particularly large in this area of activity. ‘To use’ (=to enjoy) means to experience pleasure, the pleasure which in slightly different senses is associated both with the activity itself and with the object of the activity. In any association between man and woman, and in the sexual relationship itself, the object of the activity is of course always a person. And it is a person who becomes the proper source of various forms of pleasure, or even of delight. But the sexuality of man is on the personal and moral level, not merely on the natural and instinctive level as in animals. Sexual morality comes into being not only because persons are aware of the purpose of sexual life, but also because they are aware that they are persons. The whole moral problem of ‘using’ as the antithesis of love is connected with this knowledge of theirs. For man, precisely because he has the power to reason, can, in his actions, not only clearly distinguish pleasure from its opposite, but can also isolate it, so to speak, and treat it as a distinct aim of his activity. His actions are then shaped only with a view to the pleasure he wishes to obtain, or the pain he wishes to avoid. If actions involving a person of the opposite sex are shaped exclusively or primarily with this in view, then that person will become only the means to an end—and ‘use’ in its second meaning (=enjoy) represents, as we see, a particular variant of ‘use’ in its first meaning. But a person of the opposite sex cannot be for another person only the means to an end—in this case sexual pleasure or delight. The belief that a human being is a person leads to the acceptance of the postulate that enjoyment must be subordinated to love. ‘Use’, not only in the first, broader and objective meaning, but also in its second, narrower, more subjective meaning can be raised to the level appropriate to an interpersonal relationship only by love. Only ‘caring’ precludes ‘using’ in the second sense as well as in the first. Thus ethics must distinguish very carefully between whatever shows ‘loving kindness’, and whatever shows not that but the intention to ‘use’ a person even when it disguises itself as love and seeks to legitimate itself under that name.

Critique of Utilitarianism—True to its etymology ('to use'), ‘to take advantage of'), ‘utilitarianism’ puts the emphasis on the usefulness or otherwise of any and every human activity. Utilitarians regard the principle of the maximization of pleasure accompanied by the minimization of pain as the primary rule of human morality, with the rider that it must be observed not only by individuals, egotistically, but also collectively, by society. But pleasure and pain are always connected with concrete action, so that it is not possible to anticipate them precisely, let alone to plan for them or—as the utilitarians would have us do—even compute them in advance. However, the real mistake here is the recognition of pleasure in itself as the sole or at least at any rate the greatest good, to which everything else in the
activity of an individual or a society should be subordinated. Whereas pleasure in itself is not the sole good, nor is it the proper aim of man’s activity, as we shall have the opportunity to see later. Pleasure is essentially incidental, contingent, something which may occur in the course of an action. Naturally, then, to organize your actions with pleasure itself as the exclusive or primary aim is the contradiction with the proper structure of human action. Quite obviously, that which is truly good, that which morality and conscience bid me to do, often involves some measure of pain and requires the renunciation of some pleasure...

This makes for great difficulties in the various areas of human coexistence, but would seem to be a particular threat in the sphere of sexual relations. The great danger lies in the fact that starting from utilitarian premises it is not clear how the cohabitation or association of people of different sex can be put on a plane of real love, and so freed from the dangers of ‘using’ a person...and of treating a person as the means to an end. Utilitarianism seems to be a programme of thoroughgoing egoism quite incapable of evolving into authentic altruism. Pleasure is, of its nature, a good for the moment and only for a particular subject, it is not a super-subjective or trans-subjective good. It is crystal clear that if utilitarian principles are followed, a subjective understanding of the good (equating the good with the pleasurable) leads directly, though there may be no conscious intention of this, to egoism. The only escape from this otherwise inevitable egoism is by recognizing beyond any purely subjective good (i.e., beyond pleasure) an objective good, which can also unite persons—and thereby acquire the characteristics of a common good. Such an objective common good is the foundation of love, and individual persons, who jointly choose a common good, in doing so subject themselves to it. Thanks to it they are united by a true, objective bond of love which enables them to liberate themselves from subjectivism and from egoism which it inevitably conceals. Love is the unification of persons.

Moreover, love cannot be reduced to a mere harmonization of egoisms—which could never deliver one from egoism and which would leave love without objective reality. ‘Love’ in such a utilitarian conception is a union of egoisms, which can hold together only on condition that they confront each other with nothing unpleasant, nothing to conflict with their mutual pleasure. Therefore, love so understood is self-evidently merely a pretense which has to be carefully cultivated to keep the underlying reality hidden: the reality of egoism, and the greediest kind of egoism at that, exploiting another person to obtain for itself its own ‘maximum pleasure’. Each of the persons is mainly concerned with gratifying his or her own egoism, but at the same time consents to serve someone else’s egoism, because this can provide the opportunity for such gratification—and just as long as it does so. There is an ineluctable, an overwhelming necessity in this pattern (the only possible pattern when utilitarian thinking and attitudes are acted upon): if I treat someone else as a means and a tool in relation to myself I cannot help regarding myself in the same light...

The Commandment to Love and the Personalistic Norm—The commandment formulated in the New Testament, demanding love towards persons, is implicitly opposed to the principle of utilitarianism, which as we have seen is unable to guarantee the love of one human being, one person, for another. If the commandment to love, and the love which is the object of the commandment, are to have any
meaning, we must find a basis for them other than the utilitarian premise and the utilitarian system of values. This can only be the personalistic principle and the personalistic norm, i.e., that the person is the kind of good that does not admit of mere use, of being approached as a mere means to an end. In its positive form, the personalistic form confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate response is love. The foundation for the commandment to love must also be found not in a utilitarian system of values but in a personalist axiology, within whose framework the value of the person is always greater than the value of pleasure (which is why a person cannot be subordinated to this lesser end, cannot be the means to an end, in this case pleasure).

This personalistic norm, this commandment, defines a certain way of relating to God and to people. This way of relating, this attitude, is in agreement with what the person is, with the value which the person represents, and therefore it is fair. Fairness takes precedence of mere utility—although it does not cancel it but only subordinates it: in dealings with another person everything that is at once of use to oneself and fair to that person falls within the limits set by the commandment of love. The personalistic norm in the form of the commandment to love also assumes that this relation, this attitude, will not only be fair but just. For to be just always means giving others what is rightly due to them. A person’s rightly due is to be treated as an object of love, not as an object for use. Although we can correctly say that whoever loves a person is for that very reason just to that person, it would be quite untrue to assert that love for a person consists merely in being just. Still, there can be no doubt that the one who loves will, ipso facto, be just towards the other person as a person.

This interpretation of love and justice in the personalistic norm is very important for sexual morality. For in the sexual context what is sometimes characterized as love may very easily be quite unjust to a person. This occurs not because sensuality and sentimentality play a special part in forming this love between persons of different sex, but rather because love in the sexual context lends itself to interpretation (sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious) along utilitarian lines. In a sense this kind of love is wide open to such an interpretation, which turns to account the natural gravitation of its sensual and sentimental ingredients in the direction of pleasure. It is easy to go from the experience of pleasure not merely to the quest for pleasure, but to the quest for pleasure for its own sake, to accepting it as a superlative value and the proper basis for behavior. This is the very essence of the distortions which occur in the love between man and woman. It is also the basis for the distinction which St. Augustine makes between uti (intent upon pleasure for its own sake with no concern for the object of pleasure) and frui (finding joy in a totally committed relationship with the object precisely because this is what the nature of the object demands). The commandment to love shows the way to enjoyment in this sense—frui—in the association of persons of different sex both within and outside marriage.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SEXUAL URGE

*Instinct or Urge?* - ‘instinct’ means a certain mode of action which automatically declares its origin. This is the reflex mode of action, which is not dependent on conscious thought. But man is by nature
capable of rising above instinct in his actions: there is in man a principle which makes him capable of considered behavior, of self-determination. Now ‘urge’ suggests the action of urging, or instigation, always felt to be to some extent in conflict with freedom. However, it can be given another meaning more suitable to man’s real nature. When we speak of the sexual urge in man we have in mind not an interior source of specific actions ‘imposed in advance’, but a certain orientation, a certain direction in man’s life implicit in his very nature: a natural drive born in all human beings, a vector of aspiration along which their whole existence develops and perfects itself from within. This is something that ‘happens in man’ (begins to take place without any initiative on his part) and this internal happening creates as it were a base for definite actions, for considered actions, in which man exercises self-determination, decides for himself about his own actions and takes responsibility for them. This is the point at which human freedom and the sex urge meet. Man is not responsible for what happens in him in the sphere of sex since he is obviously not himself the cause of it, but he is entirely responsible for what he does in this sphere.

The Sexual Urge as an Attribute of the Individual—every human being is by nature a sexual being and belongs to one of two sexes (hermaphroditism and other sickness or deformity does not mitigate against the fact that there is a human nature and that it is divided into two sexes). This fact is manifested internally but also turns outward and manifests itself in a certain natural predilection for, a tendency to seek, the other sex. Sexual attraction makes obvious the fact that the attributes of the two sexes are complementary, so that a man and a woman can complete each other. (Ultimately, through the prism of this need, one might be led to a deeper understanding of one’s own limitations and inadequacy, and even, indirectly, of the contingent character of existence.) In any case, each sex possesses some specific value for the other based on the existence of the sexual urge. But the sexual urge is not merely towards attributes of the opposite sex as such. It is always directed towards another human being—this is the normal form which it takes. If it is directed towards the sexual attributes as such this must be recognized as an impoverishment or even a perversion of the urge. The natural direction of the sexual urge is towards a human being of the other sex and not merely towards ‘the other sex’ as such. It is just because of this that the sexual urge can provide a framework within which, and the basis on which, the possibility of love arises—because the objects affected are both people. Nonetheless, love is not merely a biological or psycho-physiological crystallization of the sexual urge, though love may grow out of it and develop on that basis; love is given its definitive shape by acts of the will at the level of the person. The sexual urge only furnishes, so to speak, in the form of all that ‘happens’ in man’s inner being under its influence, what might be called the stuff from which action is made. Since there is nothing in all this to deprive man of the power of self-determination, the sexual urge (despite its great force) is by its nature dependent on the person and is in the control of the person; in the person, as opposed to animals, it is naturally subordinate to the will and to the specific dynamics of freedom. Thus the sexual urge can transcend the determinism of the natural order by an act of love and its manifestation must be evaluated on the plane of love: forming a link in the chain of responsibility, responsibility for love. Hence the sexual urge is an attribute and a force common to humanity at large, at work in every human being. Living in society
we are continually concerned with the various forms of coexistence of the two sexes and for this reason ethics must put these relationships on a level consonant both with the dignity of human persons and with the common good of society.

The Sexual Urge and Existence—Independent of love and of the personal level and though it furnishes what we may call material for love between persons (man and woman), the sexual urge shows its proper end in existence for the species of Homo, the constant prolongation of its existence. Now existence—of the human species and of each individual person within it—is the first and basic good of every creature. Thus we have here a fact which is of existential, and not merely biological character, and therefore is the prerogative of philosophy. This is very important when we are trying to determine the true importance of the sexual urge, which has obvious implications in the realm of sexual morality. If the sexual urge has a merely biological significance it can be regarded as something to be used. We can agree that it is an object for man to enjoy just like any other object of nature, animate or inanimate. But if the sexual urge has an existential character, if it is bound up with the very existence of human person—that first and most basic good—then it must be subject to the principles which are binding in respect of the person. Hence, although the sexual urge is there for man to use, it must never be used in the absence of, or worse still, in a way which contradicts, love for the person. Therefore, the type of love between man and woman which incorporates the sexual urge (with its proper purpose of existence of the species Homo, the procreation of new human persons) can take its correct shape only in so far as it develops close harmony with that proper purpose. An outright conflict with that purpose will also undermine love between persons. The importance of the existential significance of the sexual urge only emerges into consciousness when man is moved by love to take on himself the natural purpose of that urge. This is in fact the character of true conjugal love between two persons, a man and a woman, who have consciously taken the decision to participate in the whole natural order of existence, to further the existence of the species Homo. Looked at more closely and concretely, these two persons, the man and the woman, facilitate the existence of another concrete person, their own child, blood of their blood, and flesh of their flesh. This person is at once an affirmation and a continuation of their own love. The natural order of human existence is not in conflict with love between persons but in strict harmony with it.

The Religious Interpretation—A man and a woman by means of procreation (bringing a new human being into the world), participate in their own fashion in the work of creation. They are the rational co-creators of a new human being, a person. The parents take part in the genesis of a person, not merely an organism. The human body is the body of a person because it forms a unity of substance with the human spirit. The human spirit is not born merely in consequence of the physical union of man and woman in itself. The spirit can never originate from the body, nor be born and come into being in the same way as the body. The sexual relationship between man and woman is fundamentally a physical relationship, though it also should be the result of spiritual love. A relationship between spirits which beget a new embodied spirit is something unknown to the natural order. Therefore, the essence of the human person is the work of God himself. It is He who creates the spiritual and immortal soul of that being, the organism of which begins to exist as a consequence
of physical relations between man and woman. Furthermore, while love owes its fertility in the biological sense to the sexual urge, it must also possess a fertility of its own in the spiritual, moral and personal sphere. It is here that the full productive power of love between two persons, man and woman, is concentrated, in the work of rearing new persons. This is its proper end, its natural orientation. Education is a creative activity with persons as its only possible object—only a person can be educated, an animal can only be trained. This work of education may in a certain sense be called the continuous creation of a personality and is not left wholly and entirely to the parents. Rather, God himself takes part in it, in His own person, by his grace. The parents, though, if they are not to fail in their proper role, that of co-creators, must make their contribution here too. Note that when it comes to the sexual urge and all that it implies, the expressions ‘the order of nature’ and ‘biological order’ must not be confused or regarded as identical. The ‘biological order’ does indeed mean the same as the order of nature but only insofar as this is accessible to the methods of empirical and descriptive natural science, and not as a specific order of existence with an obvious relationship to the First Cause, to God the Creator.

The Rigorist Interpretation—This is a puritanical view (with paradoxical links to sensualist empiricism) which can easily lapse into a utilitarianism as well. It holds that, in using man and woman and their sexual intercourse to assure the existence of the species Homo, the Creator Himself uses persons as the means to his end. It follows that conjugal life and sexual intercourse are good only because they serve the purpose of procreation. Man and woman use—and do well to use—one another and marriage as mere means for procreation (first sense of ‘use’) while descrying the seeking of pleasure and enjoyment in intercourse (second sense of ‘use’) as wrong and impure, but a necessary evil that must be tolerated.

But the Creator, in giving men and women a rational nature and the capacity consciously to decide upon their own actions, thereby made it possible for them to choose freely the end to which sexual intercourse naturally leads. And where two persons can join in choosing a certain good as their end there also exists the possibility of love. The Creator, then, does not utilize persons merely as the means or instruments of his creative power but offers them the possibility of a special realization of love. It is for them to put their sexual relations on the plane of love, the appropriate plane for human persons, or on a lower plane. The Creator’s will is not only preservation of the species by way of sexual intercourse but also its preservation on the basis of a love worthy of human persons, according to the commandment of love. The problem for ethics is how to use sex without treating the person as an object for use. Puritanical rigorists with their one-sided spiritualism so intent on overcoming the uti in sex, unavoidably leave sexual enjoyment s merely an evil, but necessary, by-product of the sexual act. The only way to overcome this is through St. Augustine’s fundamentally different attitude of frui. There exists a joy which is consonant both with the nature of the sexual urge and with the dignity of the human persons. This joy, this frui may be bestowed either by the great variety of pleasures connected with differences of sex, or by the sexual enjoyment which conjugal relations can
bring. The Creator designed this joy, and linked it with love between man and woman insofar as that love develops on the basis of the sexual urge in a normal manner, in other words in a manner worthy of human persons.

The ‘Libidinistic’ Interpretation—Linked with Freud, this approach sees the pursuit of pleasure, in a narrow and subjective sense, as the primary aim or drive in human life and the sexual urge as the most intense and strongly felt experience of it. The transmission of life, procreation, is in this conception only a secondary end, an end per accidens. This almost totally negates the inner life of the person (capable of knowing the truth, comprehending the true ends, and participating in the common good of the work of creation) and reduces the person to a subject ‘externally’ sensitized to enjoyable sensory stimuli of a sexual nature. This puts human psychology on the same level as animal psychology. But a subject endowed with an ‘inner self’ as man is, a subject who is a person, cannot abandon to instinct the whole responsibility for the use of the sexual urge and make enjoyment his sole aim - but must assume full responsibility for the way in which the sexual urge is used. The libidinistic distortion is a frank form of utilitarianism. Those like Freud who have eyes merely for the subjective purpose of the urge will also logically aim at preserving in full the subjective purpose (sexual pleasure) while at the same time curbing or even suppressing the objective purpose (procreation). Utilitarians think of this as a purely technical problem, but Catholic moral teaching regards it from first to last as an ethical problem on personalist grounds: no one must take the ‘calculus of pleasure’ as his sole guide where a relationship with another person is concerned—a person can never be an object of use. That is the nub of the conflict.

Furthermore, however correct or incorrect the demographic difficulties raised by economists may be, the general problem of sexual relationships between am man and a woman cannot be solved in such a way as to contradict the personalist norm. We have to do here with the value of the person, which is for all humanity the most precious of goods—more immediate and greater than any economic good...

Final Observations—The Church has always taught that the primary end of marriage is procreation (providing the means of continuing existence), but that it has a secondary end of mutual help (a conjugal life for man and woman), and a tertiary aim of being a remedy for concupiscence (giving a legitimate orientation for desire). It must be stated, however, that in marriage the ends mentioned above are to be realized on the basis of the personalistic norm. Sexual morality and therefore conjugal morality consists of a stable and mature synthesis of nature’s purpose with the personalistic norm. The latter is a principle on which the proper realization of each of the aims mentioned, and of all of them together, depends—and by proper I mean a manner befitting man as a person. The same principle also guarantees that the ends will be achieved in the order of importance accorded them here, from any deviation from this is incompatible with the objective dignity of the human person. The practical realization of all the purposes of marriage must then also mean the successful practice of love as a virtue—for only as a virtue does love satisfy the commandment of the Gospel and the demands of the personalistic norm embodied in that commandment. The idea that the purpose of
marriage could be realized on some basis other than the personalistic norm would be utterly un-Christian, because it would not conform to the fundamental ethical postulate of the Gospels. For this reason we too must be very much on guard against trivialization of the teachings of the purposes of marriage.

With this in mind, it seems equally clear that the term ‘mutual help’ cannot be interpreted simply as ‘mutual love’ as if the other ends (procreation and giving a legitimate orientation to desire) were somehow distinct from ‘love’ and only ‘mutual help’ were grounded in love. Rather, all three ends in their proper order (procreation/continuing existence, mutual help/conjugal life, and remedy for concupiscence/legitimate orientation for desire) are grounded in the virtue of love and so must fit with the personalistic norm. But there is no question of opposing love to procreation nor yet suggesting that procreation take precedence over love.

These aims can, moreover, only be realized in practice as a single complex aim. To rule out, totally and positively, the possibility of procreation undoubtedly reduces or even destroys the possibility of an enduring marital relationship of mutual education. If there is an intimate cooperation between man and woman in a marriage, and if they are able to educate and complement each other, their love matures to the point at which it is the proper basis for a family. However, marriage is not identical with the family, and always remains above all an intimate bond between two people. The third purpose, a remedy for concupiscence, in its turn depends upon the other two factors for its practical realization by human beings. We must recognize once again that those who cut themselves off absolutely from the natural results of conjugal intercourse ruin the spontaneity and depth of their experiences, especially if artificial means are used to this end. Lack of mutual understanding, and of rational concern for the full wellbeing of a partner, leads if anything still more certainly to the same result.

CHAPTER II: THE PERSON AND LOVE

METAPHYSICAL ANALYSIS OF LOVE

The Word ‘Love’—The word ‘love’ has more than one meaning. In this book we narrow down the range of its meaning to love between two persons who differ with respect to sex. Even here it has various meanings. But love is always a mutual relationship between persons, based on particular attitudes toward the good, individually and jointly. We will do a general metaphysical analysis (love as attraction, as a desire, as goodwill). Then we will do a psychological analysis (love of man and woman takes shape deep down in the psyche of two persons, and is bound up with the high sexual vitality of human beings, requiring psycho-physiological analysis). Finally, these will culminate in an ethical analysis (love between man and woman possesses a personal character with profound ethical significance: love as virtue).

Love as Attraction—Love as attraction is a basic component of the love between man and woman. This is based in a concrete sense impression of the other as well as an intellectual knowledge of the
other, but these are also influenced by the emotions and the will. To be attracted does not mean just thinking about some person as a good, but involves a commitment in the will to think of that person as a good. This is based in one’s knowledge of the other but with an interpenetration of reason and will. The emotions too are present at the birth of love favoring the development of the attraction between a man and a woman with a positive emotional-affective reaction.

The kind of good or person which an individual finds attractive will depend on many factors: heredity, environment, and one’s own free choices in developing the self. But love will always go beyond just attractive qualities to the person. Nonetheless the depth and quality of the love will be affected by the kinds of qualities through which the attraction comes. *Attraction is of the essence of love and is indeed love, although love is not merely attraction.* Emotional-affective reactions have the power to guide and orient cognitive acts, but must not overwhelm or eliminate the role of knowledge in love. Love must be anchored in the truth of the human person in general and about the truth about this particular person. Our emotional life can color things either positively or negatively but this must be balanced by a knowledge of the truth. Our response to the other cannot be based only on partial truths about the other, such as just his/her sexual attractiveness, charm, or emotional “fit” with our needs at the moment. In responding to others as persons, we must see their inner as well as outer beauty and be attracted to and respectful of their *full beauty and dignity as persons* and not just as pleasing in various respects.

*Love as Desire*—Love as desire of also of the very essence of the love between man and woman, though love is not only desire. Desire is rooted in the fact that the human person is limited, is not self-sufficient, and therefore needs other beings (persons—ultimately God) to complete his own being. Particularly, on the natural level, man and woman need one another to complete their own being. The sexual urge or sexual desire is an indication of this objective need. But *love as desire* is altogether different from just *desire* by itself in which the other is just used as a means of satisfaction. A man may, for instance, desire a woman in this way: a human person then becomes a means for the satisfaction of desire, just as a nutriment serves to satisfy hunger. But this utilitarian attitude does violence to the dignity of the human person and to the whole truth about the human person. Love-as-desire then is not merely desire. Love is apprehended as *a longing for the person*, and not as mere sensual desire. It is felt as a longing for some good for its own sake: ‘I want you because you are a good for me’. If desire alone is predominant it can deform love between man and woman and rob them both of it. Therefore the true lover will strive to see that desire alone does not dominate and overwhelm all else that love comprises.

*Love as Goodwill*—Genuine love brings with it the fullest realization of man’s possibilities and of his existence, but of course only if it is directed toward a genuine good in a true way. A “false” love will have opposite consequences of destruction, construction and evil. Love between man and woman would be evil in this way if it went no further than love-as-desire, for love as desire is not the whole essence of love between persons. It is not enough to long for a person as a good for one self, one must also, and above all, long for that person’s good. This is love as goodwill or as benevolence and it
must be at the heart of one’s response to the other person or the love will not be genuine but will
develop back into an egoism. Thus what is primary is not ‘I long for you as a good’ but ‘I long for your
good, I long for that which is good for you’. This is the deepest point of love and must finally inform
love-as-desire and love-as-attraction, though the latter two are also essential to love between man
and woman. Genuine love as goodwill can keep company with love as desire, and even with desire
itself, provided that desire does not overwhelm all else in the love of man and woman, does not
become its entire content and meaning.

The Problem of Reciprocity—Love also exists between two individuals as a single entity in which they
are joined. The route from one ‘I’ (possessing its own inner self—‘a little world’ created by God) to
another leads through the free will. If this love is a one-way street (unrequited love) it will be fraught
with pain and suffering. But love by its very nature is not unilateral but bilateral, something shared: it
involves not just two ‘I’s but a single ‘we’. This is reciprocity. This illuminates the previous discussion.
The fact is that a person who desires another as a good desires above all that person’s love in return
for his or her own love, desires that is to say another person above all as co-creator of love and not
merely as object of appetite. The desire for reciprocity does not cancel out the disinterested
character of love. Reciprocity brings with it a synthesis, as it were, of love as desire and love as
goodwill.

Of course the quality and the permanence of the love depend upon the character of the good
on which reciprocity or friendship is based, as Aristotle says. If it is a genuine good (an honest good)
reciprocity is something deep, mature and virtually indestructible. On the other hand if reciprocity is
created only by self-interest, utility (a utilitarian good) or pleasure then it is superficial and
impermanent. It depends on what both persons contribute to it. If each person contributes genuine
personal love—a love of the highest ethical value, virtuous love - then reciprocity assumes the
characteristics of durability and reliability (a friend who will never prove false) and becomes a source
of peace and joy. But if utility or pleasure is the main reason for a relationship on the part of one or
both partners, then trust, peace and joy will not be the result, but suspicions and jealousies. Their
‘mutual love’ will only last as long as they are a source of pleasure or profit to one another; once this
is gone, the illusion of ‘reciprocity’ will burst like a bubble. Genuine reciprocity inevitably
presupposes altruism in both persons; it cannot arise from two egoisms. Two conclusions follow: 1)
love must always be analyzed from an ethical point of view and 2) people should always carefully
‘verify’ their love before exchanging declarations and trying to build their lives on it.

From Sympathy to Friendship—Sympathy means above all that which ‘happens’ between people in the
realm of their emotions—that by means of which emotional and affective experiences unite people.
This is love at a purely emotional stage, at which no decision of the will, no act of choice, as yet plays
its proper role. Only sympathy has the power to make people feel very close to one another, but there
is a hint here of subjectivism and passivity.

Friendship, as has been said, consists in a full commitment of the will to another person with a
view to that person’s good. There is, therefore, a need for sympathy to ripen into friendship and this
process normally demands time and reflection. What is necessary is to supplement the sympathetic emotion toward another person with an objective knowledge of and belief in the value of that person. Only on this basis can the will actively commit itself. Friendship demands a sincere commitment of the will with the fullest possible justification. However, it is also necessary to supplement friendship with sympathy, without which it will remain cold and incommunicable.

It is a mistake to leave love at the level of sympathy and to think that when sympathy breaks down love is also at an end. What lies behind this mistake is an incongruity between the feelings of the subject and objective reality: the subjective and objective shapes of love do not exactly fit. It is part of the ‘education of love’ to overcome such gaps. Love cannot be merely a matter of ‘consuming’ sympathy, or of finding an outlet for one’s feelings in it (frequently accompanied by sexual relief). No, love consists in the thoroughgoing transformation of sympathy into friendship. It is of its very nature creative and constructive, and not merely bent on enjoyment. Sympathy is always only a signal, and decidedly not a fully formed personal relationship. Ti must first establish itself on a firm foundation of friendship, just as friendship must be reinforced by the climate and temperature of sympathy. Sympathy and friendship are two processes which must interpenetrate without hindering each other. This is where the ‘art’ of education in love comes into its own.

Comradeship is distinct from both sympathy and friendship. It differs from sympathy in that it is not confined mainly to the emotional-affective sphere of life, but rests on objective foundations as joint work, common goals, shared concerns, etc. It differs from friendship in that it is not an expression of the principle ‘I want your good as much as I want my own”. Sharing brought about by particular objective factors is, then, the distinctive feature of comradeship. It favors the development of love’s objective side, without which it is always incomplete. The ‘we’ of comradeship lacks the cohesion and depth of friendship, but being able to live as comrades in a distinct circle develops characteristics and abilities helpful in founding and maintaining a family community and in creating of a good atmosphere for family life.

Betrothed Love—Betrothed love is something different from and more than all the forms of love so far analyzed, though they are also a dimension of it. When betrothed love enters into an interpersonal relationship something more than friendship results: two people give themselves to each other. The essence of this love, its decisive character, is this self-giving, the giving of one’s own person to another, the surrender of one’s ‘I’. But how is this possible if the person is untransferrable, incommunicable, his own master, etc. Of its very nature, no person can be transferred or ceded to another. Yet what is impossible and illegitimate in the natural order and in a physical sense, can come about in the order of love and in a moral sense. In this sense, one person can give himself or herself, can surrender entirely to another (whether to a human person or to God), and such a giving of the self creates a special form of love which we define as betrothed love this fact goes to prove that the person has a dynamism of its own and that specific laws govern its existence and evolution. The fullest and most uncompromising form of love consists precisely in self-giving, in making one’s in alienable and nontransferable ‘I’ to someone else’s property. This is doubly paradoxical: firstly in that
it is possible to step outside to step outside one’s own “I” in this way, and secondly in that the “I” far from being destroyed or impaired as a result is enlarged and enriched—of course in a super-physical, a moral sense. Such self-surrender presupposes a mature vision of values and a will ready and able to commit itself in this particular way. Betrothed love can never be a fortuitous or imperfect event in the life of the person. It always constitutes a special crystallization of the whole human ‘I’, determined because of its love to dispose of itself in this particular way. In giving ourselves we find clear proof that we possess ourselves.

‘Self-giving’, in the sense in which we are discussing it, should not be identified (confused) with ‘giving oneself’ in a merely psychological sense, still less with surrender in a merely physical sense. Further, on the psychological level, it must not only be the woman who experiences ‘giving herself’ while the man experiences only the correlative of ‘conquest’ or ‘possession’. The acts of reciprocal self-giving, of mutual self-surrender, of mutual betrothed love must reciprocate each other in order to live up to the personalistic norm. Hence a special duty devolves upon the man: he must give to ‘conquest’ or ‘possession’ its appropriate form and content—which means that he too must give himself, no less than she does. Giving oneself only sexually, without the full gift of the person to validate it, must lead to those forms of utilitarianism which we have previously analyzed. A personalistic interpretation is absolutely necessary in this context. Thus, the moral code which has the commandment to love as its center finds itself in perfect agreement with the identification of marriage with betrothed love, or rather—looking at it from and educational point of view—with the treatment of marriage as the result of this form of love.

When a woman gives herself to a man as she does in matrimony this—morally speaking—precludes a simultaneous gift of herself to other persons in the same way. Sexual intercourse has the effect of limiting betrothed love to a single pair of persons, though at the same time it gains in intensity. Moreover, only when it is so limited can that love open itself fully to the new persons who are the natural result of marital love between man and woman. There can be no question of a sexual giving of oneself which does not mean a giving of the person—and does not come in one way or another within the orbit of those demands which we have a right to make of betrothed love. These demands are derived from the personalistic norm. Betrothed love, though of its nature it differs from all the forms of love previously analyzed, can nevertheless not develop in isolation from them, in particular goodwill and friendship. Without these allies it may find itself in a very dangerous void, and the persons involved in it may feel helpless in face of conditions, internal and external, which they have inadvertently permitted to arise within themselves or between themselves.
Theme 11

Suffering as Proof of Atheism vs. God as the Answer to Suffering

Albert Camus vs. C.S. Lewis

Incomplete – Notes:

Reading

From Camus - *The Plague*

C.S. Lewis - *The Problem of Pain*
Albert Camus (1913-1956)

Notes from *Biography Portrait of Camus* by Morvan Lebesque (N.Y.: Herder and Herder, 1971)

Camus was born in Algeria in 1913. He moved to France and became a journalist. During World War II he was active in the French Resistance. Dates of his most famous writings include: *The Stranger*, 1941; *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 1942; *The Plague*, 1947, *The Rebel*, 1951 and *The Fall*, 1956. Camus died in car accident 1960 after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. His work was described at that award ceremony as illuminating the problems of human conscience of our times.”

Camus’ basic issue was how we can have ethical commitment and personal goodness without God. In *The Stranger* Camus shows how indifferent and self-centered someone can be without God. In *The Plague* he draws us a picture of the goodness a man could have without a religious basis. He was trying to get across, perhaps, how kindness is a self-evident virtue in a world of suffering.

Here are some notes by me concerning the problem of suffering from an agnostic standpoint, and some related quotations from *The Plague*, translated by Stuart Gilbert (N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1945).

*The Plague* is an existentialist novel. The plot deals with a devastating modern plague in the 1940’s taking place in the Algerian town of Oran. The plague causes terribly painful deaths in epidemic proportions. The plague is symbolic of the evils both in human nature and those of World War II. The contrast is between a Christian philosophy of life and that of agnostic/atheistic humanism. The Christian philosophy of life is expressed primarily by the ideas of a Catholic priest, Fr. Paneloux, a Jesuit. The “new” humanism Camus lauds is represented by Dr. Bernard Rieux who expends heroic energies in trying to help the victims of the plague as the main medical officer of the town and also in his personal treatment of hundreds of patients.

Here is a description of the practical hedonistic atheism of most of the townspeople:
“Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world; yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise....”

“When a war breaks out, people say: ‘It’s too stupid; it can’t last long.’ But though a war may well be ‘too stupid,’ that doesn’t prevent its lasting. Stupidity has a knack of getting its way; as we should see if we were not always so much wrapped up in ourselves....”

“A pestilence isn’t a thing made to man’s measure; therefore we tell ourselves that pestilence is a mere bogey of the mind, a bad dream that will pass away. But it doesn’t always pass away and, from one bad dream to another, it is men who pass away, and the humanists first of all, because they haven’t taken their precautions.” (pp. 34-35)

Here is a description of the numb Stoicism of Dr. Rieux as he continues to give his all to the unbearably sick people of the town:

“Lifting the coverlet and chemise, he gazed in silence at the red blotches on the girl’s thighs and stomach, the swollen ganglia. After one glance the mother broke into shrill, uncontrollable cries of grief. And every evening mothers wiled thus, with a distraught abstraction, as their eyes fell on those fatal stigmata on limbs and bellies; every evening hands gripped Rieux’s arms, there was a rush of useless words, promises, and tears; every evening the nearing tocsin of the ambulance provoked scenes as vain as every form of grief. Rieux had nothing to look forward to but a long sequence of such scenes, renewed again and again. Yes, plague, like abstraction, was monotonous; perhaps only one factor changed, and that was Rieux himself. Standing at the foot of the statue of the Republic that evening, he felt it; all he was conscious of was a bleak indifference steadily gaining on him...” (p. 83)

Here is an excerpt from the first sermon Fr. Paneloux gave to try to explain to the full congregations of parishioners why God would allow such a terrible suffering to come upon them: “Calamity has come on you, my brethren, and my brethren, you deserved it...The first time this scourge appears in history, it was wielded to strike down the enemies of God. Pharaoh set himself up against the divine will, and the plague beat him to his knees. Thus from the dawn of recorded history
the scourge of God has humbled the proud of heart and laid low those who hardened themselves against Him. Ponder this well, my friends, and fall on your knees.” (pp. 87-88) He adds that the people had come to rely on mercy for their sins instead of repenting. God got sick of waiting for the town to change. “God is not mocked. You believed some brief formalities, some bending of the knee, would recompense Him well enough for your criminal indifference. These brief encounters could not sate the fierce hunger of His love....And this is why, wearied of waiting for you to come to Him, He loosed on your this visitation...Now, at last, you know the hour has come to bend your thoughts to first and last things.” (p. 89)

Months later at the slow agonizing death of a child, the same priest admits that faith is not simply the just response to God Almighty, but something won over severe struggle with the mystery of suffering. Till the end, Dr. Rieux serves at great risk out of a human care for those in pain without hope in immortality for them or reward for himself.

On the Problem of Suffering:

John Paul II from Easter Vigil and Other Poems (p. 72)

“When I contain the dual weight of terror and hope and reach depths translucent as sky, then no one will say that I simplify.”

NEXT READ C. S. LEWIS’ THE PROBLEM OF PAIN TO SEE HOW HE ANSWERS CAMUS AND OTHER DOUBTERS AS TO WHETHER A GOD OF LOVE IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE PAIN IN THIS WORLD.
SUGGESTED INCOMPLETE READING LIST

FOR THE THEMES OF THE BATTLE FOR THE 20TH CENTURY MIND

Theme 1: On Subjectivity vs. Objectivity in Philosophy of Religion:

Main Readings:

William James - *Varieties of Religious Experience*

G.K. Chesterton - *Orthodoxy*

Supplementary:


William James: *The Will to Believe*

William James: *A Pluralistic Universe*

William James: Pragmatism

Theme 2: On Atheism vs. Theism:

Main Readings:

Bertrand Russell: Autobiography

Bertrand Russell: Analytic Philosophy from his own *History of Western Philosophy, An Outline of Philosophy,*

Bertrand Russell: Why I am not a Christian.

Etienne Gilson: God and Contemporary Thought

*The Unity of Philosophical Experience*

*Being and Some Philosophers*

*God and Philosophy*

*Elements of Christian Philosophy*

Theme 5: Woman
Main Readings:

Chervin, Ronda: “Philosophical Reflections on the Feminine and Masculine Human Nature.”

De Beauvoir, Simone: The Second Sex, Translated and Edited by H. M. Parshley (N.Y.: Random House, 1989 - originally published in English in 1952)


Supplementary Readings:


Friedan, Betty: The Feminine Mystique

John Paul II: Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women


Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: Man and Woman

Little, Joyce: Church and Chaos (?)

Theme 6: Psychoanalysis.....

Main Readings:

Freud, Sigmund: A General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis (Great Books OLCC library)

Jung, Carl: Modern Man in Search of a Soul


Wehr, Gerhard: Illustrated Biography of Jung. (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1989)

Frankl, Viktor: The Doctor and the Soul, An Introduction to Logotherapy (N.Y.: Knopf, 1955)

Supplementary Readings:

Freud, Sigmund: Outline of Psychoanalysis

Freud, Sigmund: The Interpretation of Dreams

Freud, Sigmund: Civilization and Its Discontents

Freud, Sigmund: Moses and Monotheism

Freud, Sigmund: Totem and Taboo

Dempsey, Peter J.R.: Freud, Psychoanalysis, Catholicism

Eysenck, H.J., Sense and Nonsense in Psychology (in our OLCC library)

Jung, Carl: Psychological Types, 1921

Jung, Carl: Psychology and Religion, 1940

Jung, Carl: Memories, Dreams, and Reflections, 1957


Stern, Karl: The Flight from Woman (call Amazon.com)

Baars, Conrad


Theme 7: Social Engineering, Free Will...

Main Readings:


Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: Ethics.

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: Morality and Situations Ethics.
Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: Transformation in Christ.

Supplementary Readings:

Skinner, B.F.:

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: Chastity and Married Love(?).


Von Hildebrand, Dietrich: The Art of Living.

Bergson, Henri: Time and Free Will.

Low, Abraham: Self-Help through Will Training.

Rand, Ayn: The Fountainhead.

Theme 8: New Age...

Main Readings:


Merton, Thomas: The Seven Story Mountain.

Merton, Thomas: No Man is an Island. (N.Y.: Doubleday Image, 1955)

Supplementary Readings:

Hesse, Herman: Siddhartha.

Percy, Walker: Love in the Ruins.

Von Speyr, Adrienne: The Handmaid of the Lord.

John Paul II: Threshold of Hope.

The Way of the Pilgrim - edited by French
Theme 9 Violence...

Main Readings:

Hitler, Adolf: Mein Kampf.


Supplementary Readings:

Mao:


Solzehnitsyn, Alexander: One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.

Maritain, Jacques: The Person and the Common Good.

Cleaver, Eldridge: Soul on Ice.


King, Martin Luther, Jr.: Stride Toward Freedom.

King, Martin Luther, Jr.: The Strength to Love.

King, Martin Luther, Jr.: Why We Can’t.
King, Martin Luther, Jr.: *Where Do We Go from here: Chaos or Community.*

King, Martin Luther, Jr.: *The Trumpet of Conscience.*

King, Martin Luther, Jr.: *A Testament of Hope - the Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: Harper, 1986)

Halecki, Oscar, Eugenio Pacelli: *Pope of Peace* (on reserve OLCC library)

- *Peace in Our Day* - U.S. Bishops
- *La Carré, John: The Little Drummer Girl.*

**Theme 10: Love...**

**Main Reading:**

Sartre, Jean-Paul: *No-Exit.*

John Paul II: Excerpts from *Love and Responsibility.*

**Recommended Reading:**

Sartre, Jean-Paul: *Nausea.*

Sartre, Jean-Paul: *Being and Nothingness.*

Sartre, Jean-Paul: *The Wall.*

Sartre, Jean-Paul: *Portrait of an Anti-Semite.*

Sartre, Jean-Paul: *The Words.*

Sartre, Jean-Paul: *Existentialism is a Humanism.*

Camus, Albert: *The Stranger.*

Gironella, Jose Maria: *The Cypresses Believe in God.*

O’Brien, Michael: *Sojourners.*

Theme 11: *Suffering...*

**Recommended Reading:**

Camus, Albert: *The Plague.*

Recommended Reading:

Camus, Albert: The Stranger

Camus, Albert: The Fall


Camus, Albert: The Rebel

Lewis, C.S.: Till We Have Faces.

Lewis, C.S.: A Grief Observed