Comments by Virgil Warren on "Disorder and Revolt" in
<u>Authentic Cosmopolitanism</u>
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Chapter 4, entitled "Disorder and Revolt," addresses the impact of sinning on thinking as one aspect of depraved behavior generally. Perverted thought amidst general depravity connects in turn with university, most relevantly to formal Christian university as part of the over-all Christian enterprise mandated in the Great Commission (cosmopolitanism).

The approach traces the depravity phenomenon from elements in the thought of Aristotle through Aquinas to Lonergan, taking notice of Augustine and the Reformed tradition along the way—without necessarily appealing to the hypostatic and legal elements of their theories of sin as distinct from phenomenology.

Noetic Effects of Sinning

Sinning <u>suppresses</u> information it does not find convenient for what it wants to maintain (note "blind spot," "scotosis"; 98). It cherry-picks data to obtain favorable, predetermined conclusions. It refuses to listen to "the rest of the story." It matches Paul's observation that people refuse to have God in their knowledge (Romans **1**:28). Denial is usually easier than providing evidence.

Sinning <u>equivocates</u> unlike things to create the desired conclusions. The practice appears in political debates. In the controversy over publicly funding abortions, for example, abortion— late-term and all—gets subsumed under women's health. Of course, pregnancy is not a disease that a person has some right to be healed from like the mumps. Rare cases involving a mother's life become highlighted so as to draw attention away from the vast majority of unwanted pregnancies due to sexual immorality. A fetus is not like a tumor someone might want removed; tumors have no potential for human functioning. Pregnancies from rape and incest become emotionally laden calls to justifying abortions generally. The thought pattern departs from the legal principle that hard cases make bad law.

Equivocation shows up, as well, in contemporary efforts to normalize homosexual behavior by making it analogous to the race issue in the American past, and any objecting to the sexual behavior is painted as hate speech in order to silence objection. Of course, race is not a chosen act between persons; yet the behavior is pressed for acceptance under that comparison. Guilt on another front is used to stymie resistance to this matter.

<u>Exaggeration</u> combines with confusions already stated and paves the way for advocating public policies that would probably not pass if such misrepresentations were not part of the packaging.

Sinning <u>rejects</u> evidence or observations, not because they are not well grounded, but because the person sees that they lead to a conclusion not wanted. So he comes back and tries to

find some excuse for objecting to the facts so he does not have to accept the conclusion and conform to relevant expectancies.

Sinning tries to construct the discussion to make the other view shoulder the <u>negative burden of proof</u>. It attempts to call on the other to <u>disprove</u> the ill-founded claim, which is often something that cannot be done because sufficient evidence is not available. The difficulty that lies in disproving something is then made to look like the ill-founded belief is true.

<u>Caricature</u> tries to misrepresent God's truth in front of those who are not well-informed about it. By arguing against the misrepresentation, sinning creates the impression that the truth itself is a flawed viewpoint.

These mental maneuvers largely fall under Lonergan's "bias" (98-102).

Reflections

A. In discussions of depravity, the words *nature*, *being*, *sin* can be unclear, because they seem to mean ontic nature ("stuff") in some cases, and characteristic behavior in others: "man's nature includes his ability to think"; vs. "he's grumpy all the time; that's just his nature." The phenomenological language advocated in this presentation can avoid that imprecision. More importantly it can avoid reification and faculty psychology, and consequently those biblically unwarranted inferences that root depraved behavior in biologically inheritable hypostasis, an idea that originated in non-biblical, Greek philosophy. That last mental leap from word to referent unnecessarily foments a plethora of complicated theological maneuvers and hermeneutical turns that can impugn divine self-consistency and holiness.

B. Phenomenological language still requires avoiding the reification that is not easily overcome by language usage itself. Adopting phenomenological language does allow every act to be regarded as a cluster of compenetrating and interdependent facets (cp. 95, ¶4). A choosing event, for example, is not something a "will" does; willing refers to an "experience" that includes thinking ideas or purposes as well having feelings that better move the willing. People use the word *will* without ever having seen one; hence, the word really comes from an act event, not a thing—it may get reified if the speaker leaps to an unexperienced, postulated referent he considers a "something." But, that is not what caused the <u>word</u> to come into usage or what caused the person to use it in a given case.

Mind, will, and the various appetites can be left as mental abstractions just like being, action, and relationship are; they are "meta-physicals" in the mind aside from whether there are one-for-one correlations in the real "physical." Phenomenological speech leaves the speaker free, then, to suspend judgment on the ontology involved.

C. Phenomenological language can serve as a corrective in articulating the Christian faith. The exhortation is to get beyond the terminology, to the thought beyond the words, beyond language—reality thinking. Adjusting the linguistic issue does not automatically correct the proper awareness of the referent. One way to get beyond the gap between language and referent, idea and reality, metaphysics and "physics," is to be comfortable with not knowing exactly what

the ontic referent is. We can get to where we need to go without understanding how an internal combustion engine works.

That is something a Christian can do because he has decided to trust at the functional level the One who is source of all knowledge and has revealed sufficient knowledge for that functioning—as summed up in interpersonal behavior: love. Furthermore, it is something we do not have to understand for the practical function of life. "The wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err" in what matters between people, and between people and God—together with the responsibilities involved. He is free in his ontic postulations to hypothesize and research, using practical outcomes to test our theoretical pursuits and revelation as a curb and guide on what makes sense. He knows and understands enough for practical purposes, which after all is the point anyway.

Being created in the image of an interpersonal God, we can infer that our summarizing characteristic is interpersonal capacity along with all the attendant behaviors, goals, and relationships that pertain thereunto.

D. Commonly writers speak of mankind's original state as morally <u>good</u> (original "justice/just-ness" as in Aquinas? 87-88), perhaps as a take-off on God's comment that his creation was "very good" (Genesis **1**:31). The expression speaks more generally, however, in that it describes God's whole creative work, most of which was impersonal—and morality applies only to personal beings. So "good" does not describe morally good, but functionally good in being able to conform to the purpose these creations were to serve. Beginning with morally <u>neutral</u> allows good <u>and</u> evil to "become" by action. That works better because an act cannot be created anyway (only indirectly with deterministic creations).

The approach allows for pervertible neutrality within limited freedom, and most significantly provides the way to remove God from being the creator of evil; instead, evil can become action and be perpetuated through "the free will of secondary agencies" (Satan as "father of lies"; John **8**:44). The task of the theologian becomes understanding how sin among mankind is (a) universal, (b) all-pervasive, (c) and inescapable. From the standpoint of revelation, any use of sanctified imagination must begin with the information and necessary inferences from it as regards human ontology, and end up allowing for these three features of anthropology and soteriology.

E. Drawing attention to the noetic effects of sin points up the observation that formal education—even formal Christian education—<u>contributes</u> to education for life—education for use—rather than <u>conveys</u> the whole of what is needed. Formal education most easily addresses noetic matters, but people are more than information repositories and reasoning machines, and the accompanying factors in the real situation mean that the noetic aspect is affected by sinning just as surely as the others. Education for the whole person has to be carried forward by the living church, the indwelt body of Christ (interpersonalism). In other words <u>university</u> has to be broadened to something synonymous with the Great Commission (cosmopolitanism), where apprenticeship, internship, family, and daily interpersonal Christian living are vehicles of education properly so called.

Otherwise, the Christian "university" ends up doing with education what science often tries to do with methodological naturalism. "Science" goes beyond its appropriate realm (observable, recurrent, natural process) and tries to arrogate to itself the role of lone purveyor of truth. That automatically eliminates unobservable, one-time, and supernatural occurrence, and ends up with inadequate, artificial conclusions. Scientism absolutely disallows supernatural causation because "it is not scientific," as if that were a relevant critique. Such "begging the question" represents empiricism gone awry in science falsely so-called.

Addendum: Factors in the Sin Problem

1. Persons interacting with persons is the most complex reality we know. In keeping with that observation, love is the most complex manner of living.

2. The image of God in man consists of the interpersonal capacity.

3. Being ("stuff"), action, and relationship are three necessary, compenetrating, interdependent components in every "event."

4. Of the above three, being—and to some extent relationship—is creatable; action is not.

5. The creatable endowments of humankind can be summarized under mind (noetic), will (volitional), and appetites (affections/desires/drives/appetites/emotions) (cp. Aristotle; 96, ¶1).

6. Four givens of human nature are desire for (a) security (as an inference from experienced relative weakness), worth (meaningfulness, self-esteem), love, and innocence.

7. Only what is creatable is biologically inheritable.

8. Good and bad are always figured relative to purpose, whether moral or non-moral.

9. Sin is a chosen behavior between persons relative to a standard of behavior that is figured relative to nature and purpose. That means it is not a substance or a deformity (privation) in the form of substance relative to pristine condition (Augustine).

10. Scripture deals almost exclusively with the functional level as to what is good or bad. It gives little information about the creatable elements of "stuff" that makes possible the various endowments it assumes in establishing its expectancies and giving its directives—the "mechanics" of the *imago dei*. So to speak, scripture enters the situation through the front door on the ground floor of the human condition without explaining how God laid the foundation to make possible the human endowments and expectancies.

11. Scripture gives no indication that humankind differed in moral capacity after the Fall—whether by natural result of sin or by divine curse for it—than what that capacity was before the Fall in a biologically inheritable sense—although some scriptures have been accommodated to that end (contrast 88, ¶4; 99, ¶3). The situation partakes of the dictum that acquired characteristics are not inherited (sinfulness).

12. Sinning is sufficiently explained by the clustered interaction of three morally neutral factors: (a) viewpoint of consciousness (time and place), (b) psycho-physical drives/appetites/desires/affections/emotions, and (c) the interpersonal capacity.

> Morally neutral, creatable factors come from grace. So "nature is not separated from grace" (90, ¶3); grace provides all things not produced by the created self; grace is

not just for correcting faults that person produces. "Sufficiently explained" contrasts with additionally invoking the hypostatic and legal categories into the explanation for universal, all-pervasive, inescapable sin—inescapable as to power, penalty, and presence.

13. The three sufficient factors are all pervertible by free-will action that <u>originates</u> and <u>perpetuates</u> the sinning phenomenon in the very beginning and all along the way with each person. The factors can be variously used, mis-used, and ab-used; free will is a potential concomitant with creating moral capacity and necessary for avoiding determinism. Sinning takes the neutral and means it for negative.

 (a) By free will, the viewpoint of consciousness can pervert into self-centeredness as egocentrism (vs. egocentricity).

 (b) By free will, psycho-physical drives can be met in inappropriate ways, given their very nature themselves and given the purposes God had in mind for endowing us with them. They can all be provided for within God's provisions; that is, God has not built in any desire for which he has not likewise provided a wholesome, fulfilling way to meet. (cp. "nature fails in nothing necessary," Aristotle; 93, ¶3)

 (c) The social circumstance can contain <u>misunderstood good example</u>, <u>evil example</u>, evil directed at the responding person (<u>temptation</u>), <u>reinforcement</u> (social acceptance and approval after successful temptation).

14. The fact that evil is universal, all-pervasive, and something from which we cannot save ourselves ("The Big Three") comes from the basic fact that it is <u>easier</u> to sin—or to put it differently, it is easier not to love.

 (a) It is <u>easier</u> to live from one's own viewpoint than to project consciousness over behind the eyes of the other and decide from that perspective what to come back to one's own perspective and do. We have the capacity to project consciousness over behind the eyes of the other, but it is easier not to "stop and think" about that element in the process of choosing to act. The second great commandment is clarified by the Golden Rule. Treating others the way you want to be treated is more than doing to them what you would want done to you—because people, their needs, and their circumstances differ. "The way you would have <u>them</u> do to <u>you</u>" brings in the "inter" factor (note 102, ¶3). It is easier to live by the <u>immediate</u> than by the long-term; to live for the <u>self</u> than to live for the Other.

 (b) It is <u>easier</u> to live by appetites/desires than by transcendent values when the two types conflict. Present desire seems more real than the as-yet not experienced future. It is easier to live by experienced desire than by "spiritual" values; to live by the world we can see than for the One we cannot see.

 (c) It is <u>easier</u> to yield to evil social pressure than to resist it.
Sin tempts us to substitute the immediate for the long term, drives for values, and self for others (cp. "pursuit of limited good," 99).

15. Beyond originating evil there comes perpetuating evil, which includes the created capacity for <u>habit formation</u>, and that in turn can combine with drives from the physical dimension and lead to <u>addiction</u>. Habit formation is itself a neutral capacity useful for good and bad. It replaces "radical change of being" ("stuff") in historical theology as affected by Greek hypostatic philosophy. The idea here refers to a psychological phenomenon—a functioning. "Addiction" builds on top of that by disordering chemical balances.

16. A word does not necessarily correspond to a "thing." Reification is an unnecessary projection about reality as based on the fact that there is a word.

17. Sin is an act, guilt arises from an act, penalty is for guilt. Act-guilt-penalty are personal, individual, and non-transferable (cp. Ezekiel **18**:4-24).

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