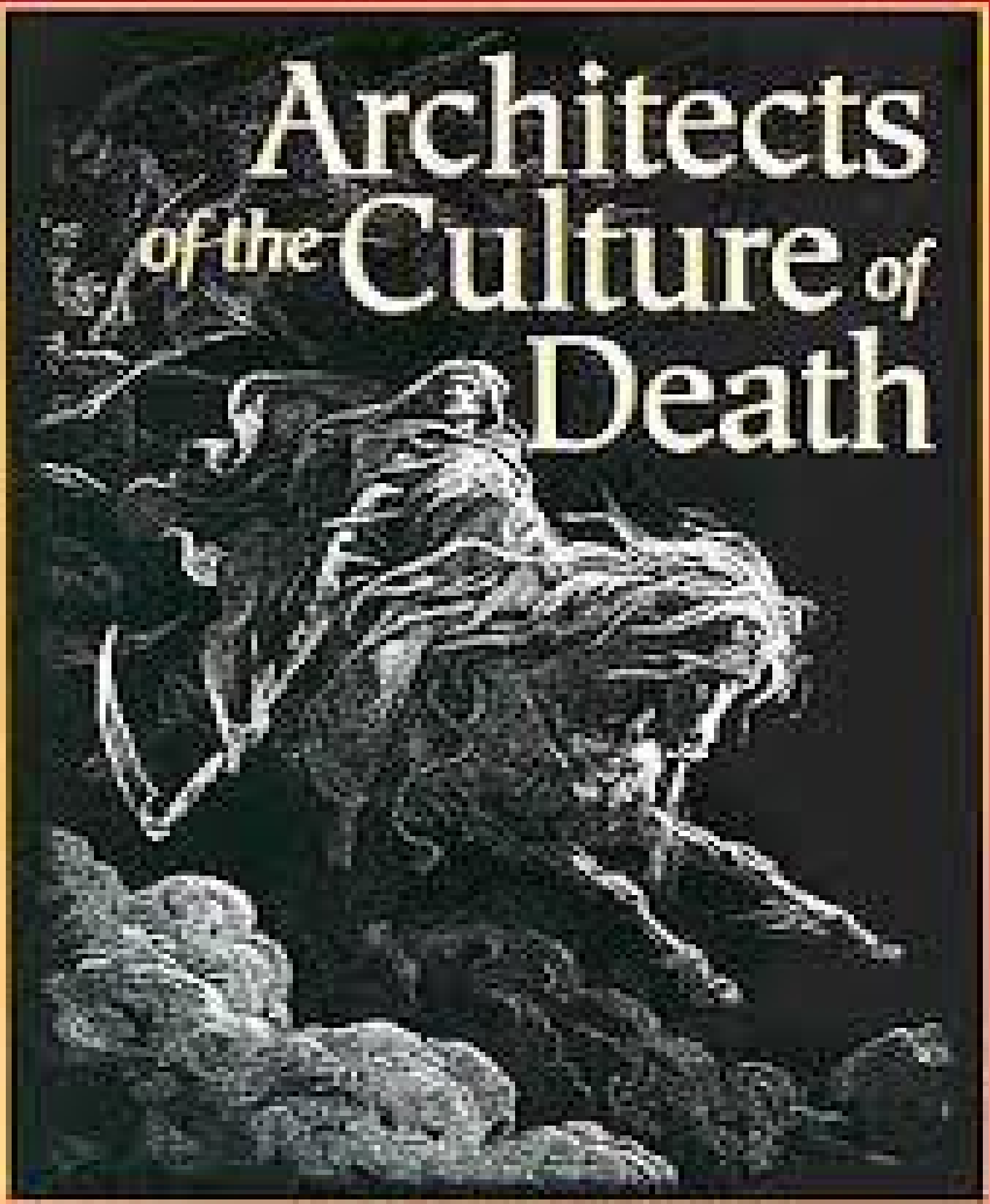
Donald De Marco · Benjamin Wiker

Architects of the Culture of Death



Ignatius

ARCHITECTS OF THE CULTURE OF DEATH

DONALD DE MARCO
&
BENJAMIN D. WIKER

IGNATIUS PRESS
SAN FRANCISCO

This book expands on a series of articles previously published in
The National Catholic Register.
Reprinted by permission.
Cover art: Death on a Pale Horse
Engraving by Paul-Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

Cover design by Riz Boncan Marsella

ISBN 1-58617-016-3
Library of Congress Control Number 2003115835
Printed in the United States of America ©

This book is humbly dedicated to
Gerry Campbell and Floyd Centore,
both indomitable servants of the Culture of Life.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

I don't know about you, but I love a suspense-filled action drama. When a writer can draw you into the war room of the enemy as they strategize waging a historic battle, and keep you on the edge of your seat, then you know that whatever happens, you will be grateful that he wrote the tale.

But this book is no tale! It is an all too true, action-packed, riveting, and educational expose. The cameo account about each of the architects of the Culture of Death reveals little-known facts that are shocking and incredible. As the reader moves from one personality to the next, a sordid philosophy unfolds, one that bears a striking resemblance to the invitation a certain viper extended to Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Recall that she was naive, but at the same time curious and prideful. When told she could be a god herself, she fell prey. Not much has changed since then, as this book makes perfectly clear.

Man's struggle to fend off the age-old temptation can be terribly difficult when the culture presents illusory images of what is true and what is not, such as the myths that women are actually in an equality competition with men, or that abortion is a mere personal choice, or that every human being is autonomous, disconnected from every other.

Who created these myths? In these pages you will find the answer, and you will not want to put the book down until you have mastered the art of seeing through the veil that has blinded so many of our fellow men. There is a single thread that ties each architect to the next; there is an artful mosaic dedicated to destroying reason, logic, and life.

The master-builders of the Culture of Death collaborated— perhaps unwittingly—in creating an intricate game plan composed of half-truths, innuendo, and carefully placed academic fabrications craftily woven together and ensconced in a veneer of public relations finesse. Their individual salesmanship is second only to the gullibility of their audience and to the willing acceptance of their fare by the mainstream media.

Lest I give the plot away, I will close with a challenge to the reader: if you can finish reading this book and remain totally unchanged by what you learn, then you really didn't pay attention. Read it again.

Judie Brown
President American Life League Inc.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dave Pearson and the National Catholic Register for first printing shorter versions of some of these architects, and Don de Marco for his patience awaiting the book's completion. Even more, I would like to thank my dear wife, Teresa, who convinced me of the importance of this book and helped me see it through.

—B.D.W.

I would like to thank Judie Brown for her enthusiastic support of this project and for graciously writing the introduction. Thanks are also warranted to the editors of Social Justice Review, Interim, Culture Wars, and Celebrate Life for their encouragement and for publishing articles based on some of the "architects", though not in the expanded forms in which they appear in this volume. Their permission for printing the versions contained herein is acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

—D.D.M.

INTRODUCTION

Every building has an architect, someone who conceives the image of the edifice before it is built. If an entire culture is something constructed by human beings, then it also is based upon a particular design. Of course, in contrast to a single building, a culture is an ongoing work of far greater complexity and subtlety, and since the work stretches from decades into centuries, it has more than one architect. The many architects of a single, identifiable culture are those whose contributions to the overall plan are consistent with the original image.

An important example, of course, is Christian culture. The great image is, ultimately, given in the Person of Jesus Christ, understood as fully divine and fully human, and in the consequent doctrines that illuminate, legitimately develop, and safeguard this image. Christian culture, then, if it is truly Christian, will be built, both in its larger structure and in its finer details, according to this image.

The architects of Christian culture are nearly uncountable— the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Paul, St. Isidore, St. Cyprian, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Leo, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Thomas Aquinas, and on through the rest of the saints; the bishops, who sat patiently and prayerfully through councils; the popes, who directed the Church through continual turbulence; the founders of religious orders; the eminent theologians; the great religious artists; the great religious writers, composers, and builders of churches; the great Christian lawmakers. All contributed to the ongoing effort to build and rebuild Christian culture.

Again, at the heart of this ongoing enterprise of culture building was the central guiding image of God become man, suffering and dying for each and every human soul, because each and every human being is made in the image of God and therefore of infinite worth in the eyes of the Creator. This God had purposely created the universe and given humanity an exalted place within it. But human rebellion unseated humanity from its rightful place, and the cure offered by God was effected through the mysterious drama of the Incarnation, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. All true architects of Christian culture built according to the image of this great drama.

It is precisely because of the infinite value of each human person, as revealed especially in the great drama of Jesus Christ, that truly Christian culture must be a Culture of Life, a culture that sees the protection of persons and their moral, intellectual, and spiritual development as the defining goals of society.

Whatever contradicts these goals can have no place in the Culture of Life.

Thus, in the Didache(TheTeaching of theTwelve Apostles), one of the earliest non-New Testament documents that has survived, we find a stark choice given those who would consider becoming Christians. The Didache was an initiation manual for converts, telling them what Christian holiness demanded and, consequently, what they must leave behind from the pagan culture. Its first words are, " There are two ways [or roads], one of life and one of death, but there is a great difference between the two ways."[1] Significantly, we find the following prohibitions among its admonitions:

You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not corrupt boys. You shall not commit fornication. You shall not steal. You shall not use magic. You shall not administer drugs [referring not only to "magic" potions, but especially to contraceptives/abortifacients].[2] You shall not slaughter a child in abortion, nor slay a begotten one. You shall not desire the goods of others.[3]

Looking over this list, it becomes quite clear that many of the pagan practices of Rome—the very ones that the first converts to Christianity were called to reject as leading to the way of death—have somehow, twenty centuries later, become part of contemporary culture again. Homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, interest in the occult, contraception, abortion, euthanasia, and infanticide—we have embraced all of them and even added incest and bestiality to the list.

What accounts for the historical return to such dark pagan moral practices after so many centuries of Christian culture? The answer is the rise of a new image of humanity, a new kind of paganism, with its own particular architects, who self-consciously built a new culture within the existing culture of Christianity, which they sought to destroy and displace. Those who built according to this image are the architects of the Culture of Death.

As the reader will soon find out, these architects reject the central image of Christianity and replace it with a new image, one in which humanity is the unintended result of blind, natural forces rather than a creation of God in his own image and, consequently, one in which human beings are purely material creatures cast into existence by indifferent nature and forced to define salvation for themselves. The new doctrine of salvation is, to say the least, multifaceted—salvation by the expression of naked instinct, by sexual indulgence, by bloody proletarian revolution, by raw acts of the will, by population control, by contraception, by scien-tism, by eugenics, and on and on.

What all share, however, is a common rejection of the great image of

Christianity and hence a common rejection of human beings as persons, that is, rational creatures who are made in the image of God, who are a unity of immortal, rational soul and body. Indeed, we could well define modernity as the ongoing depersonalization of humanity, the attempt to reduce human beings to the subhuman, not only according to some abstract definition but also in regard to every aspect of our humanity. The origin of life has become depersonalized by the ever expanding technological displacement of natural procreation by unnatural, mechanical methods of conception. Sexuality, thus torn from its proper expression as the unitive and procreative consummation of marriage, has been reduced to pleasure seeking, where other persons and even oneself become mere objects or occasions of pleasure. Death, too, has been depersonalized, as the clamor for euthanasia makes clear that all too many regard the humane treatment of human beings to be equivalent to the humane treatment of animals, so that it becomes an equivalent act of mercy to "put down" the elderly and suffering human beings in the same way and for the same reason that we put down elderly and suffering pets.

But as will become apparent by reading the architects included in this volume, the reduction of human beings to something less than persons—to the status of mere animals and even lower, to mere fortuitous chemical combinations — is accompanied, ironically, by a Promethean exaltation of human beings as self-made gods. We have, in depersonalizing ourselves, oddly enough, become our own idolaters. We can make sense of this seeming irony by realizing that the root of depersonalization is actually the rejection of the Person of all persons, God. Thus, atheism leads directly to depersonalization. Having stripped the universe of its Creator and human beings of the source of their humanity, we then imagine ourselves to be the only source of order, the most godlike beings in a godless cosmos, and hence the only thing worthy of worship and obedience. So it is that the rejection of the will of the Divine ultimately leads to the divinization of our own will.

This confusion of creator with creature causes a darkening of the intellect that brings about a consequent darkening of the will—such is the central point of John Paul II's great encyclical Evangelium vitae (The Gospel of Life). In this encyclical, the Holy Father introduces the important distinction between the Culture of Life and the Culture of Death.

In seeking the deepest roots of the struggle between the "culture of life" and the "culture of death," we ... have to go to the heart of the tragedy being experienced by modern man: the eclipse of the sense of God and man, typical of a social and cultural climate dominated by secularism.[4]

For John Paul II, this eclipse is best understood as a "sad vicious circle," wherein the rejection of God causes an immediate "tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life; [and] in turn, the systematic violation of the moral law, especially in the serious matter of respect for human life and its dignity, produces a kind of progressive darkening of the capacity to discern God's living and saving presence."[5]One is reminded of the Augustinian dictum that sin is the punishment for sin.

As recent developments in medical technology make clear, in rejecting God, we have not rejected the functions properly attributed to God, but merely taken them as our own. It is now we who define good and evil; we who define birth, life, and death; and we who shall create ourselves according to the image we happen to desire. The first tablet of our self-delivered Decalogue declares that we shall have no other gods besides ourselves, and the second, as a consequence, declares that each must love his own will above all else.

It is this sad and vicious circle, this self-willed eclipse of the true sense of God and man, that defines the Culture of Death. The rejection of Christianity (and hence its moral dictates), coupled with the desire to define our own destiny (and hence define good and evil ourselves), has resulted in the powerful secularized culture that dominates both Europe and America today, a culture that currently embraces sexual libertinism, homosexual acts, contraception, and abortion not only in law, but also in literature, music, art, and drama.

But again, the Culture of Death did not just suddenly happen, arising from nowhere and seizing us unwilling and unaware. Such an immense and fundamental change could not have come about without a host of architects of the Culture of Death working over a long period of time, ceaselessly planning, tearing down, and rebuilding every part, level, and facet of the culture. If we had limitless space and time, as well as energy and resolve, we could provide a multivolume compendium of such architects, stretching all the way back to the roots of secularism in the Renaissance and beyond that, to the materialist cosmologies of the ancient Greeks, which were revived in the Renaissance to lend intellectual support to modern secularism.[6] Having done this, we could then canvass the very latest news reports and provide an in-depth account of the most current assaults on humanity.

Since we are limited by space and time, however, we have narrowed our focus to some of the most influential architects of the last two centuries and have done so for two reasons. On the one hand, there are many fine treatments of the more distant origins of secularism, but these often leave us with the impression that we are the hapless victims of the sins of ancestors, remote in place and time.

On the other hand, too many accounts of our contemporary moral malaise give the impression that everything was fine until the rebellions of the 1960s, or the invention of television or of the pill, or the advent of Roe v. Wade,or the entry of women into the workforce, and so on. In focusing on the last two centuries, we hope to connect the more distant sources of secularism to the most recent manifestations, thereby filling the gap and showing the continuity.

In manifesting the evil defining and fueling the Culture of Death, we have chosen to present biographies of persons, rather than accounts of ideas. We do this for several important reasons. To begin with, for most readers, biographies are inherently more interesting. But even more important, biographies make clear that ideas have consequences only because they are created, embraced, and lived out in persons. That is why we wrote a book entitled Architects of the Culture of Death, not Architecture of the Culture of Death. As will become clear quite quickly, the slow but sure construction of the Culture of Death depended on actual individuals making real choices according to particular malformed notions of God and human nature. The malformation was often caused in part by a twisted home life, a twisted view of nature, twisted sexual desires, twisted good intentions, or twisted Utopian visions. Yet, in each biography, we also see real persons really choosing (to return to the Didache), standing poised between the "two ways, one of life and one of death," and then, most unfortunately, taking the latter road.

For this same reason, we have chosen figures who contribute on both the most abstruse theoretical level and on the most mundane practical level, for without both visionary architects dreaming up schemes and very practical architects laying down the actual structures, great cultural shifts cannot occur.

The good news, in regard to these last points, is this: the Culture of Life depends, for its ultimate victory, on personsmaking actual choices, choices carried out according to definite plans, choices made real by concrete actions. On each of us rests this grave responsibility, to choose this day whom and what we shall serve, either to act as architects and slaves of the relentless construction of the Culture of Death or to become architects and willing workers rebuilding the Culture of Life on every level.

An obvious cure for the Culture of Death's incessant depersonalization is the regeneration of the proper understanding of human beings as persons. To act as persons, we must understand ourselves and others as persons. Pope John Paul II's emphasis on Personalism awakens us to this fundamental reality, a reality hidden from us all too long by the reigning reductionist views of the culture. In Personalism, the focus is on the human being understood as both a unique individual and a responsible member of society, and so it avoids the simplistic

casting of human beings as either isolated individuals or faceless members of mass society. At the same time, Personalism inveighs against reducing the human being to a lower being (such as a brute or, even lower than that, to a mere complex chemical structure) and also against the elevation of human beings to self-creators. It criticizes such views, but does not do so by flatly rejecting the various modern philosophies from which they arose. As John Paul II has noted on many occasions, the Personalist school of philosophy enables us to take legitimate insights from diverse strands of modern philosophy, purify and transform them, and use them to understand more clearly and more deeply the inherent dignity and distinctiveness of human beings as persons. Yet, even while critically appropriating modern insights, the Personalism of John Paul II is entirely consistent with the metaphysics and morality of St. Thomas, even if some of the terminology might differ. In particular, we note that in Thomism, the focus is likewise on the true and distinct nature of the human being, but as it is manifested in the natural law, the law of human nature, which is itself a reflection of the eternal law.

With good reason, therefore, we have chosen the philosophical context of evaluation and critique of our various architects to be, largely, the metaphysics and natural law reasoning of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Personalism of Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II). Both Thomism and Personalism coincide to reinforce the distinct and dignified nature of human beings, though from slightly different angles of emphasis. We believe these slightly different angles—to borrow from optics—help to give us a more three-dimensional picture.

We have grouped individual architects according to their most decisive contributions to the Culture of Death. These are reasonably distinct categories, although five general themes recur throughout our study: militant atheism, the isolation of the will from the consequences of its choices, an absolu-tization of freedom, an obsession with sex, and a loss of a sense a human dignity. The seven categories are as follows: (1) The Will Worshippers: Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Ayn Rand; (2) The Eugenic Evolutionists: Charles Darwin, Francis Galton, and Ernst Haeckel; (3) The Secular Utopianists: Karl Marx, Auguste Comte, and Judith Jarvis Thomson; (4) The Atheistic Existentialists:Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Elisabeth Badinter; (5) The Pleasure Seekers: Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich, and Helen Gurley Brown; (6) The Sex Planners: Margaret Mead, Alfred Kinsey, Margaret Sanger, Clarence Gamble, and Alan Gutt-macher; and (7) The Death Peddlers: Derek Humphrey, Jack Kevorkian, and Peter Singer.

Individually these categories touch the heart of each figure's main contribution to the Culture of Death; collectively they well represent the

spectrum of their contributions to it: the act of the will in rebellion against God (The Will Worshippers); the conviction that human nature is not created by God, but is a mere accident of nature that may be purged, pruned, and transformed by our own efforts (The Eugenic Evolutionists); the attempt to set up an earthly paradise through force (The Secular Utopianists); the denial that human existence has any God-intended meaning (The Atheistic Existentialists); the redefinition of the meaning of human life in terms of sexual pleasure (The Pleasure Seekers); the grandiose project to enlist government coercion in redefining and manipulating sexuality and family (The Sex Planners); and the attempt to define the limits of meaningful life and the time and terms of death (The Death Peddlers).

We can see, in this spectrum, a movement from the will's self-elevation (which is the beginning of all human rebellion against God) to the consequent loss or diminishment of the understanding of human nature. Following this rebellion and fall, we desire both to become gods ourselves even while we reject God and then, in our self-elevation, ironically attempt to reduce ourselves to mere pleasure-seeking creatures, who, when deprived of pleasure by age, sickness, or boredom, are fit only for self-extinction by either our own hands or the hands of others. As John Paul II noted, it is a sad and vicious circle indeed.

When we fit all these pieces together, all these aspects of the Culture of Death, we can see that what may have first appeared to be a single moral issue—for example, abortion—is actually an integral piece of the whole complex edifice of the Culture of Death. In order to reinstate the truly moral position in each of the morally troubled areas plaguing our society, then, we will need to reinstate the entire Culture of Life. It is a daunting task, but to reiterate the very first words that the Holy Father said to us when he began his pontificate, "Be not afraid!"

[1] Philip Schaff, Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (New York: Funk and Wag-nails, 1885), I.I, pp. 162-63. Translation by B.D.W.

[2] The Greek is pharmakeuseis. It is the same word used by St. Paul in Gal. 5:20.

[3] Schaff, Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, 2.2, pp. 168-69. Translation by B. D. W.

[4] John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no. 21.

[5] Ibid.

[6] For a longer account, readers may refer to Benjamin Wiker, Moral

Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists (Downers Grove, III.: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

PART ONE

THE WILL WORSHIPPERS

Arthur Schopenhauer

Philosophy was born the moment it was discovered that there is a critical difference between appearance and reality.The way things really are is not simply the way they appear to us. The surface of a table appears solid and static to us. Yet, according to physics, it is highly porous and charged with electrical particles. It has been said that philosophy begins in wonder. It may also be said that it begins in curiosity.To philosophize is to attempt opening the door that allows us to cross the threshold of appearance and enter into the kingdom of reality. In addition, philosophy requires courage, for we do not know what is on the other side of the door until we open it. We need courage to stand firm in the face of the unknown. Philosophy also demands candor so that we can report what we see as it is, with neither embellishment nor belittlement. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788—1860) opened that hallowed door, “the single narrow door to the truth,”[1] as he called it, and saw something, apparently without flinching, that was more horrifying than what any previous philosopher had ever witnessed. Two questions arise: What did he see, and was what he saw reality or merely an appearance?

Reaching all the way back to Plato and at the heart of Judaism and Christianity, we find the conviction that reality is fundamentally good. The fact that modern philosophy has divorced itself in many fundamental respects from ancient and medieval thinking should not obscure this deeply rooted affirmation of reality’s ultimate goodness. From the time of Descartes, the Father of Modern Philosophy, in the seventeenth century, to that of Georg Hegel two centuries later, philosophers also believed that whatever existed on the other side of the door was benign as well as congenial to the human intellect. On the other side of appearance (phenomena), philosophers assumed, was a realm (noumena)that was orderly and aesthetically pleasing.

But when Schopenhauer opened the door that led from appearance to reality, he believed that he saw reality uncovered, and it was something malignant and most disagreeable to the human mind. It was not congenial, divinely designed order, but Will—raging, blind, naked, suffocating, godless Will!

Schopenhauer believed that he had discovered the “thing-in-itself” and described it as “a blind incessant impulse.”[2]“Will is the thing-in-itself, the inner content, the essence of the world.”[3] It is the “primordial being” (Urwesen), the “primordial source” of that which is (Urquelle des Seinden), the

prime mover of all activity. It has no goal outside of itself and its gratuitous action. It is found everywhere: in the pull of gravitation, the crystallization of rocks, the movements of the stars and planets, the appetites of brute animals, and the volitions of man. This unwieldy and pervasive force, for Schopenhauer, manifests itself as Nature. It is futile for an individual to fight against this force, since it has no regard for him and is bent on his ultimate destruction. Nature, the very embodiment of Will, is destined to destroy the very individuals it wills into existence.[4]

What Schopenhauer actually saw was the world as it appears to a modern view—that Nature is the result, not of a benevolent, designing deity, but a blind, meaningless dance of physical forces and mindless chance. If we may leap ahead to our own time, he saw Nature as it appears to famed Darwinist Richard Dawkins: “The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is at bottom, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but pointless indifference.”[5] In contrast to Schopenhauer, Dawkins asserts, “Nature is not cruel, only pitilessly indifferent.” But this pitiless indifference is, as Dawkins admits, no less callous. “This is one of the hardest lessons to learn. We cannot admit that things might be neither good nor evil, neither cruel nor kind, but simply callous—indifferent to all suffering, lacking all purpose.”[6] Such is the vision of nature that appears when God is removed.

Schopenhauer was one of the first to understand the full implications of atheism and, as if he were springing an evil genie from a bottle, unleashed the notion of Nature as “blind Will” into the modern world, where it continues to play a significant role in philosophy, though in a variety of curious incarnations. For Friedrich Nietzsche, who read Schopenhauer avidly, it becomes “the Will to power.” For Sigmund Freud, it lodges in the instinctive power of the “libido.” Wilhelm Reich locates it at the “irrational core of sexual desire.” Jean-Paul Sartre finds it everywhere and experiences it in the form of “nausea.” Simone de Beauvoir is sickened by the way it “suffocated women biologically” and makes them its easy prey. Elisabeth Badinter seeks to escape from its “oppressiveness” by escaping into an “absolutized Ego.” Schopenhauer is the father of a legacy in modern philosophy known as “Vitalistic Irrationality.”[7] It is a legacy, Manichaean in essence, that reacts with horror at the presence of Nature, the irrational tool of a merciless Will.

Given his contention that Nature is not associated with the Will of a benevolent, intelligent Creator, Schopenhauer’s Will—the “thing-in-itself,” the underlying nature of reality—is thoroughly and completely dissociated from reason. It is Frankenstein’s monster cut loose from his maker’s capacities for reason and self-control. In the face of Nature understood as an insuppressible

and irrational force, there are only two possible responses: submission or escape. Schopenhauer chose the latter, though he thought that escape, through either art or asceticism, is extremely difficult and possible for only a few.

Schopenhauer's celebrated "pessimism" is solidly anchored in his metaphysics: that is, grounded in the fundamental assumption that Nature is not kind but cruel, bringing about life only to destroy it and raising hope only to annihilate it. Its malefic essence, therefore, can never be uprooted. In the final analysis, only death can save us from pitiless Nature. No one before or since has struck the chord of pessimism so harshly and yet has written about it more engagingly than Arthur Schopenhauer. He is to metaphysics what Edgar Allan Poe is to "Tales from the Grotesque and Arabesque." He makes the gruesome synonymous with Nature and misery synonymous with life:

> We begin in the madness of carnal desire and the transport of voluptuousness, we end in the dissolution of all our parts and the musty stench of corpses. And the road from one to the other too goes, in regard to our well-being and enjoyment of life, steadily downhill: happily dreaming childhood, exultant youth, toil-filled years of manhood, infirm and often wretched old age, the torment of the last illness and finally the throes of death—does it not look as if existence were an error the consequences of which gradually grow more and more manifest?[8]

We should "regard every man," Schopenhauer advises us, "first and foremost as a being who exists only as a consequence of his culpability and whose life is an expiation of the crime of being born."[9] Only in death is there hope. Death is larger than life, which is merely the Will in its objectified form. Death releases us from the madness and suffering of life. At the same time, evil is more powerful and more real than good: "For evil is precisely that which is positive, that which makes itself palpable, and good, on the other hand, that is, all happiness and gratification, is that which is negative, the mere abolition of a desire and extinction of a pain."[10] Evil endures, whereas what fleeting measure of good we might enjoy expires as soon as our appetite for it is satiated. Life itself, then, is inherently evil. It is also evil, Schopenhauer claims, because the higher the organism, the greater the suffering. He invites us to weigh the delights of existence against its pains by asking us to compare the feelings of an animal engaged in eating another with those of the animal being eaten.

For Judaism and Christianity, creation is essentially good, and evil is a privation or lacking of good. Goodness and being are identical, as Aquinas argues. From this understanding of nature, a Culture of Life may flower. But

when this metaphysics is inverted, when evil and being are considered synonymous, it is apparent that a Culture of Death will ensue. Thus, a Culture of Death, for Schopenhauer, is merely the natural acting out of his Metaphysics of Death. A more virulent pessimism has never been penned. Schopenhauer sweeps the field. The distinguished historian Will Durant was not being intemperate or unfair when he said of the West's foremost pessimist, "Given a diseased constitution and a neurotic mind, a life of empty leisure and gloomy ennui, and there emerges the proper physiology for Schopenhauer's philosophy."[11]

Yet Schopenhauer's impact on modernity, especially in regard to dissociating reason from will, is inestimable. According to Thomas Mann, "Schopenhauer, as psychologist of the will, is the father of all modern psychology. From him the line runs, by way of the psychological radicalism of Nietzsche, straight to Freud and the men who built up the psychology of the unconscious and applied it to mental science."[12]And Karl Stern contends that "one can trace a direct descent from the irredeemable non-reason of Schopenhauer's 'Will' to that incomprehensible phase of madness in this century that nearly succeeded in destroying the world."[13]Yet, the "madness" seems to continue unabated.

But to understand Schopenhauer more fully, we must realize that his philosophy is not only the result of seeing clearly what the rejection of a benevolent Creator of nature means; his thought is also, in no small part, autobiography writ large. As Durant suggests, Schopenhauer's background may provide important clues that help explain his utterly bleak philosophy.

There is good reason to believe that his parents endured a loveless marriage. Heinrich Schopenhauer was thirty-eight when he married the nineteen-year-old Johanna Trosiener, who was recovering at the time from an unhappy love affair. Three years later, Arthur was born. At the age of forty-eight, his father fell through an opening in one of his warehouses into a canal and drowned. There was suspicion that the incident was suicide. Schopenhauer's paternal grandmother had died insane. His mother, one of the most popular novelists of her day, upon her husband's demise "took to free love," as her son discreetly tells us. When she finally remarried, she took a husband who was twenty years her junior. Arthur reacted to her new state the way Hamlet did to his mother's remarriage. Bitter quarrels ensued. In a letter to her son, she told him, "You are unbearable and burdensome, and very hard to live with; all your good qualities are overshadowed by your conceit."[14]

Schopenhauer's relationship with his mother verged on, if it did not coincide with, hatred. When Goethe told Johanna that her son would one day become a very famous man, she responded by saying that she had never heard of

two geniuses in the same family. Once, after a rather heated quarrel, she pushed her son and rival down a flight of stairs, whereupon Arthur heaped further insult upon her by prophesying that she would be known to posterity only through him. After the incident, he never saw his mother again over the course of her last twenty-four years of life. Will Durant has said of Schopenhauer, “A man who has not known a mother’s love—and worse, has known a mother’s hatred— has no cause to be infatuated with the world.”[15]

Nietzsche once said of Schopenhauer, whose writing he greatly admired, “He was absolutely alone, with not a single friend; and between one and none there lies infinity.”[16] His comment was not entirely correct. Schopenhauer did own a poodle, whom he called Atma (the Brahmins’ term for the World-Soul). Fellow citizens, however, derisively referred to his canine companion as “Young Schopenhauer.”

Nor was Schopenhauer merely an innocent sufferer. In fact, there is little to admire in the personal life of Arthur Schopenhauer. He was a vain recluse, haunted in his earlier years by his sexual indulgences, in his later years by his lust for fame and a bitter contempt for his academic contemporaries. Ever fearful and suspicious, he never trusted his neck to a barber’s razor, kept his pipes under lock and key, and slept with loaded pistols at his bedside. Psychiatrist Karl Stern attests that Schopenhauer “died in crotchety self-isolation, an embittered old bachelor, full of a thousand pet hates (of which misogyny and anti-Semitism are only two).”[17]Schopenhauer seems to be a particularly clear example of how a philosopher’s life illuminates his doctrine, how his philosophy is an expression of the man.

Rene Descartes separated mind from matter and tried to reconnect them. Schopenhauer outlined a different kind of dualism, one between mind and life, in which the latter dominated the former. He portrayed mind and life as antagonistic to each other, while despising life as the hapless instrument of an engulfing Will. Here is the reintroduction of a Man-ichaean spirit—a fear and loathing of the flesh—that Christianity, based as it is on the Incarnation of Christ, has always endeavored to eradicate. If life, which for Schopenhauer is synonymous with Nature, is evil in itself, then there can be no Mother of God who can bear a Savior. Motherhood, because it is profoundly imbedded in matter (materia),cannot refrain from doing the bidding of Will.

In fact, Schopenhauer’s extreme, antagonistic dualism leads directly to his degradation of women. He separates the sexes in the same way that he separates life from mind. Genius, he maintains, is best understood as “will-less knowledge.” Only men are capable of genius. Women are the passive servants of Will. In his “Essay on Women,” he scorns their beauty and contends that women

“are incapable of taking a purely objective interest in anything.... The most distinguished intellects among the whole sex have never managed to produce a single achievement in the fine arts that is really genuine and original; or given to the world any work of permanent value in any sphere.” He regards women as either shrews or sinners; he can envision no other type. He believes that deceit is inherent to women and doubts whether they should ever be put under oath. He accuses women of thinking that it is a man’s business to make money and theirs to spend it. He indicts them for their extravagance, complaining that “their chief out-door sport is shopping.” Rather caustically, he remarks that “when the laws gave women equal rights, they ought also to have endowed them with masculine intellects.” Schopenhauer’s literary executors saw fit to suppress some of his remarks about the female sex. Those that were published, however, were more than enough to establish his reputation as an inveterate misogynist of exceptional purity. In one of his later works, Parerga and Paralipomena, published in 1851, he portrays woman as the unresisting pawn of Nature, essentially no different in her operations than brute animals:

For, as Nature has endowed the lion with claws and fang, elephant with tusks, the bull with horns and the jelly fish with obscuring liquid—in the same way she has endowed woman with deceit, for her protection and defense; all the power which (Nature) has given to Man in the form of physical strength and reason, she has lent to woman under the guise of that gift (deceit).... To use it on any occasion comes as natural to her as it comes to those animals to use their weapons, and she considers it as her right.[18]

Various critics of philosophy have been severe in denouncing a philosophical tradition that has its roots in Platonism for separating thought from life (logos from bios). Such a separation, they argue, leaves philosophy cold and impersonal. Schopenhauer turns the tables and separates life from thought (bios from logos),but in the process presents a philosophy that is dark and foreboding. He also sets human beings against themselves, situating “the focus of the will” in “the genitals,” and regarding “the brain” as the focus for “the other side of the world, the world as idea”[19]

And so we return to the original question. Did Schopenhauer, the allegedly curious, courageous, and candid philosopher, really see—once he opened the door to reality, once he lifted the veil of Maya—the horror that he describes, or was it merely a harrowing reflection, a mirror image of his own tormented self? Some commentators have claimed that Schopenhauer identified Nature with woman and was projecting his self-loathing onto them for having contracted

syphilis from them when he was a young man.[20] Others have theorized that his philosophy is a vindictive image of the hatred he bore for his verbally sadistic mother.[21] Whatever motivated Schopenhauer to produce a view of Nature and woman that is unparalleled in its unrelenting negativity, the fact remains that he released a notion of the irresistible power of Will for the modern world to feast on that many of his intellectual heirs found much to their liking.

Schopenhauer's philosophy may be conveniently summarized by a concatenation of three words: Will, Strife, and Misery. Will exerts itself everywhere as a primordial urge to beget life. But since it proceeds without any principle of organization—what medieval philosophers and theologians referred to as Providence—the stage is set for untold struggle and strife. As each individual living thing strives to continue in existence, the world becomes a vast field of conflict. This cruel, rapacious, and heartless conflict invariably breeds much misery. And it is the human being who experiences misery in its most acute form. It is a case of homo homini lupus est (man is a wolf to his fellow man).[22] "The miseries in life can so increase," he tells us, "that the death which hitherto has been feared above all things is eagerly seized upon."[23] Hence, it may very well be that "the brevity of life, which is so constantly lamented, may be the best quality it possesses."24 The elderly, often wretched, desire death. Those who die young are blessed by life's most singular virtue.

It is supremely ironic that radical feminism in the contemporary world, especially the variety that is repulsed by a woman's biological nature, has philosophical and historical roots in the one thinker whose misogyny is without peer. It is equally ironic that the philosopher who identifies the metaphysical core of reality with Nature and Life envisions life as a curse and death as a release from its misery.

We conclude, then, that Schopenhauer did not see reality, exactly, when he opened the door and beheld his terrifying metaphysical vision. The primordial Will he allegedly saw, Will wholly dissociated from reason, seems to be either a pure fiction or a symptom of hysteria. How is it possible that the cosmos, with all its burgeoning and highly organized life forms, could proceed independently of an organizing principle, a Mind, or a Designer? Blind Will could hardly be a sufficient cause that could generate the incalculable complexities and extraordinary unity of the human being, for example. By severing life from a designer as well as from a destiny, Schopenhauer makes life appear to be less than worth living. There is a certain truth in this, however. Mere life, endlessly, pointlessly replicating itself, may, indeed, not be worth living. But there is no reason to believe that life arises in the complete absence of either a Maker or a meaning. Bereft of both efficient and final causes, the cultural organization of

life does begin to appear to be a Culture of Death. Schopenhauer did not believe that an intelligent God lay behind the order of perception. Thus, everything that exists is gratuitous and irrational. And so it must eventually appear in this distorted way to all who reject the essential goodness of nature as designed by a benevolent God.

But human beings could not endure life in a cosmos bred from chaos. We naturally rebel in the face of the gratuitous and the irrational. We are, after all, rational beings and recoil in horror whenever chaos and irrationality seem to rise up and threaten our existence. Schopenhauer himself sought escape from the madness of Nature and the persistence of Will. But his program for escape, through art and aestheticism, is esoteric, difficult, temporary, and ultimately futile. Schopenhauer does not offer hope for the many, a plan of social justice, a life that is animated by love. Nonetheless, his influence is considerable, not only in the field of philosophy but also in other areas, such as with the composer Richard Wagner; the novelist Thomas Mann; and the poets Goethe, Flaubert, and Baudelaire.

Perhaps Schopenhauer's most pernicious influence is found among those who have misinterpreted his separation of the instinctive force of life from any rational structure as a welcomed blow for "freedom." Understood in Schopenhauer's terms, such "freedom" is not joyful. And, as should be all too clear, such liberation is really synonymous with death. The force of life (including the sexual impulse) needs to be integrated, along with reason, into the fabric of the whole person, in order for freedom to have its proper meaning as "freedom of fulfillment." A Culture of Life has meaning only when reason and freedom animate and harmonize with life. "Freedom of separation" is but a false image of freedom. Dissociating reason from life impairs life and deprives it of its protection and proper direction. The Culture of Life, then, is a culture that celebrates the unification of life, freedom, and reason. The Culture of Life is really the culture of the unified person.

—D.D.M.

[1] Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: K. Paul, Trench, Truber, 1906), 2:354.

[2] Arthur Schopenhauer, "The World as Will and Idea," in The Philosophy of Schopenhauer, ed. Irwin Edman (New York: Random House, 1928), p. 217.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 219

[5] G. Easterbrook, “Science and God: A Warning Trend,” Science 277 (1977): 890-93, quoted in Michael Behe, William Dembski, and Stephen Myer, Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 104.

[6] Richard Dawkins, River out of Eden(New York: Basic Books, 1995), p. 96.

[7] Cornelio Fabro, God in Exile: Modern Atheism, trans. Arthur Gibson (New York: Newman Press, 1968), p. 872.

[8] Arthur Schopenhauer, Essays and Aphorisms, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Classics, 1970), pp. 51—54.

[9] Ibid., pp. 41-50.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 304.

[12] The Living Thoughts of Schopenhauer (London: Cassell, 1939), p. 28.

[13] Karl Stern, Flight from Woman (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1965), p. 22.

[14] Ibid., p. 303.

[15] Ibid., p. 344.

[16] Fhedrich Nietzsche, Schopenhauer as Educator, trans. James W. Hillesheim and Malcom R. Simpson (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1955), sect. 8.

[17] Stern, Flight from Woman, p. 121.

[18] Cited in ibid., p. 112.

[19] Edman, ed., Philosophy of Schopenhauer, p. 274.

[20] E. Michael Jones, Monsters from the Id (Dallas: Spence, 2000), p. 121.

[21] Stern, Flight from Woman, pp. 107-22.

[22] Edman, ed., Philosophy of Schopenhauer, p. 113.

[23] Ibid., p. 268. 24Ibid., p. 267.

Friedrich Nietzsche

It was 1870, and the Franco-Prussian War had just begun. A twenty-five-year-old philologist, on his way to the front, observed a cavalry battalion exhibiting impressive clatter and pomp as it passed through the town of Frankfurt. Taken by the spectacle, the young scholar had a vision, out of which was to grow his entire philosophy: “I felt for the first time that the strongest and highest Will to Life does not find expression in a miserable struggle for existence, but in a Will to War, a Will to Power, a Will to Overpower.”[1]

This “vision” belonged to Friedrich Nietzsche, and his life and his writings would give flesh and form to it. It was a grandiose vision and called for the emergence of a Superman who would have the steel courage and the brute strength to attempt things that would cause less sturdy souls to tremble. Bad eyesight and a fall from a horse disqualified him from being an active soldier. As an alternative, he went into the ambulance service, where he labored arduously. But he was not suited constitutionally for dealing close at hand with the gruesome effects of war. The sight of blood made him ill. He contracted diphtheria and dysentery and was sent home in ruins. If Nietzsche would ever become the Superman he had envisioned, it would be not on the battlefield but rather in the classroom or through the publishing world.

Two lines of causality prepared Nietzsche’s startling vision: one negative and reactionary, the other positive and exhilarating. Together they formed a powerful amalgam that provided the momentum for Nietzsche’s life course.

Friedrich Nietzsche was born in 1844 to a Lutheran minister. A long line of clergymen lay behind each of his parents. All his family members expected that Friedrich himself would one day become a minister. Even his schoolmates called him “the little minister.” Nietzsche’s father, who had tutored several members of the royal family, rejoiced when his son, who would be his only son, was born on the birthday of Friedrich William IV. He named the boy after their king. In 1848, when little Friedrich was four years old, tragedy struck when his father died as a result of a fall. One of the consequences of this unhappy incident was that Friedrich would be raised by a quartet of women: his mother, his grandmother, and two maiden aunts. His only sibling was his sister, Elisabeth. The womenfolk “petted him into an almost feminine delicacy and sensibility”[2] His reaction, perhaps over-reaction, was understandable. He made up his mind that he was not going to be a minister.

In 1865, Nietzsche discovered Schopenhauer’s The World as Will and Idea.

He found it “a mirror in which I espied the world, life, and my own nature depicted with frightful grandeur.”[3] He enthusiastically accepted Schopenhauer’s concept of an instinctive, irrational Will and used it as the centerpiece of his philosophy. He also took great delight in what he regarded as Schopenhauer’s “unashamed atheism.”[4] In Nietzsche’s eyes, Schopenhauer was the first avowed and trenchant atheist in the annals of German history. Like Schopenhauer, he wholeheartedly accepted the notion that atheism is a necessary precondition for the advance of philosophical thought.

Nietzsche rejected the Christianity of his ancestors and embraced the Will to Life as his new god. In his first book, The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche, the word-doctor, named and baptized his newly adopted deity:

> Thus it happened that . .. my vital instinct turned against ethics and founded a radical counter-doctrine, slanted es-thetically, to oppose the Christian libel on life. But it still wanted a name. Being a philologist, that is to say a man of words, I christened it rather arbitrarily—for who can tell the real name of the Antichrist? —with the name of a Greek god, Dionysos.[5]

Nietzsche was enthralled with his new god. For him, Dionysus (Bacchus) was Life, instinctive and undiluted. Christianity, he charged, was nothing but “a will to deny life.” It was “a secret instinct of destruction, a principle of calumny, a reductive agent—the beginning of the end—and, for that very reason, the Supreme Danger.”[6] From the very beginning, in Nietzsche’s estimation, Christianity was preoccupied with self-loathing. It hated this world, feared beauty and sensuality, and deflected its followers from life by directing their real, natural interests toward their “neighbor” and toward an “after life.”[7]

Dionysus, the apotheosis of art, became Nietzsche’s god and role model. In his Birth of Tragedy he tells of the two gods whom the Greeks had venerated in art. Dionysus was their first such divinity. He is their god of song and music, of dance and drama. He is also their god of wine and revelry, of joy in action, ecstatic motion, instinct and adventure, and, above all, dauntless suffering. Then came Apollo, the god of peace, leisure, and repose, of logic, contemplation, and philosophic calm. Nietzsche ascribes a restless masculine power to Dionysus and a quiet feminine quality to Apollo.

Although he contends that the noblest of Greek art is a union of these two ideals, it is only too clear from his writing that it is Dionysus who has thoroughly captured Nietzsche’s soul. For Nietzsche, the arrival of Socrates and Plato on the Greek scene signaled the cooling of the Diony-sian spirit and the domination of Apollo. At this time, intellect replaced instinct, critical philosophy replaced

philosophical poetry, science replaced art, and dialectic replaced the Olympic Games. Nietzsche excoriates Plato as a “pre-Christian Christian,” while condemning Socrates’ counsel to “know thyself” as barbaric.[8]

Nietzsche’s appraisal of Socrates would later turn to passionate venom. In his final work, The Will to Power, which he left unpublished (it was published posthumously, 1909— 1910), he states that “Socrates represents a moment of the most profound perversity in the history of values.” He scathingly refers to him as a “moral-maniac,” a “buffoon,”and a “tyrant.” He characterizes the Socratic method as “exaggeration, eccentricity, caricature,” “self-derision, dialectical dryness.”[9]

Nietzsche’s Dionysian temper had little patience with the calm, inquiring minds of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. He saw philosophy not so much as a harmony of Dionysian and Apollonian tempers, but exclusively in terms of the former. In The Will to Power, he states that “philosophy, as I have understood it and lived up to the present, is the voluntary quest of the repulsive and atrocious aspects of existence.”[10] Could he have made his preference for Dionysian intoxication more evident than in the following passage?

> Intoxication must first have heightened the excitability of the entire machine: no art results before this happens. All kinds of intoxication, however different in their origin, have the power to do this: above all the intoxication of sexual excitement, the oldest and most primitive form of intoxication. Likewise, the intoxication of feasting, of contest, of the brave deed, of victory, of all agitation; the intoxication of cruelty; intoxication in destruction; intoxication under certain meteorological influences, for example the intoxication of spring; or under the influence of narcotics; finally the intoxication of the will, the intoxication of an overloaded and distended will.[11]

Nietzsche found, at least for a while, a new springtime for both Germany and the Dionysian spirit in the music of Richard Wagner. “Out of the Dionysian recesses of the German soul” he writes, “has sprung a power which has nothing in common with the presuppositions of Socratic culture and which that culture can neither explain nor justify. ... I refer to German music, in its mighty course from Bach to Beethoven, and from Beethoven to Wagner. How can the petty intellectualism of our day deal with the monster that has arisen out of the infinite deeps?”[12] He was particularly swept away by the third act, the “Love/Death” scene from Tristan and Isolde, experiencing “the very heartbeat of the world-will” and feeling “the unruly lust for life rush into all the veins of the world, now as a thundering torrent and now as a delicately foaming brook.”[13]

Nietzsche, despite his unbridled enthusiasm for Wagner's early work, never forgave the composer of The Ring of the Nibelungs for creating Parsifal (1882). The opera is an exaltation of Christianity. It pays solemn homage to the Spear that pierced Christ's side as well as to the Cup of the Last Supper. Moreover, its protagonist, Parsifal, is a most un-Nietzschean character, a pure soul who is able to resist all sexual temptations. In the end, Parsifal is rewarded for his steadfast purity when he is made king.

This was a crushing blow to Nietzsche. Wagner had been a second father for the orphaned philosopher, the man who seemed to be the embodiment of the Dionysian spirit. Nietzsche was thoroughly conversant in music, played the piano as a gifted amateur, and even composed a few "tone poems."[14] He had praised Wagner as extravagantly as he had reviled Socrates:

Whatever Wagner cannot do is wrong. Wagner can nevertheless do many things, but he will not, from rigor of principle. Whatever Wagner can do, no one can do after him, no one has done before him, no one shall ever do again. Wagner is a god.[15]

But after Parsifal, Nietzsche could not forgive his former exemplar and never spoke to him again. Nietzsche was orphaned for a second time. All his gods had become irrelevant. His first god, the God of his parents, was "dead"; Dionysus was trapped in antiquity; and Wagner had proved unworthy. Nietzsche needed to find a new god and teacher. He found him in the form of the Persian deity Zoroaster. And so, in 1883, he wrote his impassioned philosophical poem, his masterpiece, Thus Spake Zarathustra. It would be his Dionysian, anti-Christian retort to Parsifal. "I could sing a song, and will sing it, although I am alone in an empty house and must sing it into mine own ears."[16] Writing from a profound loneliness, Nietzsche sang the song of his new god. "This work stands alone," he would later say of it in his autobiographical account, Ecce Homo: "Do not let us mention the poets in the same breath; nothing perhaps had ever been produced out of such a superabundance of strength. . . . If all the spirit and goodness of every great soul were collected together, the whole could not create a single one of Zarathustra's discourses."

Publishers took a less enthusiastic view of Zarathustra. Nietzsche paid for its publication out of his own pocket. Forty copies were sold. Seven were given away. No one praised it.

Nietzsche's loneliness, despite the zest for Life that he proclaimed, was edging toward a dangerous precipice.

Exemplifying Nietzsche's own state of soul, Zarathustra comes down from

his ten-year mountain meditations to preach to the crowd. The crowd, however, is more interested in watching the performance of a rope dancer. The adventurous dancer is walking across a rope stretched between two towers. “Rope,” for Nietzsche, is a metaphor. “Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman—a rope over an abyss.”[17] Something goes wrong, and the dancer falls into the abyss to his death. Zarathustra lifts him to his shoulders and carries him away. “Because thou hast made danger thy calling, therefore I shall bury thee with my own hands.”[18] Live dangerously is Zarathustra’s wise counsel. Erect your cities beside Vesuvius; send your ships to unexplored seas; live in a state of war.

The lustful, adventurous life that Nietzsche endorses must court death. The image of the tightrope walker, in bringing death and life so close together that they virtually coincide, brings a heady rush of excitement. Life is never more lively than when it is on the brink of death. “I am not a man,” he tells us in his autobiography. “I am dynamite.”

The unrelenting emphasis on the self in all of Nietzsche’s works, especially in Zarathustra,leaves little room for thought of one’s neighbor. When Zarathustra, the voice of ultimate authority and wisdom, says, “My brethren, I advise you not to neighbor-love—I advise you to furthest love”[19] he is urging his followers to look to the distant Superman. We should love the “remotest ones, be not considerate of thy neighborl”[20]

Such emphasis on the self and his heroic, death-defying obligations naturally intensified Nietzsche’s loneliness. “O lonesomeness! My home, lonesomeness! How blessedly and tenderly speaketh thy voice unto me!”[21] He had to be his own god, his own father, and his own hero. This would be a more than formidable task for anyone.

In 1889, when he was forty-four, the creator of Zarathustra, who had struggled with ill health all his life, suffered a stroke of apoplexy. He stumbled blindly to his attic room, where he dashed off mad letters to four of his associates and signed them “Dionysos” and “The Crucified One.” One of the recipients hurried to his aid and found him assaulting the piano with his elbows while singing and crying in Di-onysian ecstasy. He was taken to an asylum. When he was examined in the sanatorium at Jena on March 27, 1889, as further evidence of his madness, he told the physician, “It is my wife, Cosima Wagner, who brought me here.”[22] On August 25, 1900, the man who passionately believed in the Superman quietly passed away.

Nietzsche, the man who ridiculed the Socratic admonition to “know thyself” as being lame and tepid, ended up by not knowing who he was and thinking he was Dionysus, Christ, or Richard Wagner, or all three. Philosopher

William Barrett commented sympathetically on Nietzsche's sad fate when he reminded us, "He who would make the descent into the lower regions runs the risk of succumbing to what the primitives call 'the perils of the soul'—the unknown Titans that lie within, below the surface of our selves."[23]

Nietzsche was one of the loneliest men who ever existed. In attempting to become his own god, he severed all lines of communication with everyone around him. There was no one left to help him to know who he was. He became a sacrificial victim to the god he mistakenly identified with Life. The Titans had fittingly responded to Dionysus, who customarily drove his followers into frenzies of destruction, by tearing him to pieces. Nietzsche idealized the Will to Power. In the end, he was incurably mad, blinded and paralyzed by syphilis, and in the care of two women, first his mother and then his sister. (Ironically, he had ridiculed women. In Zarathustra, he wrote, "The happiness of woman is 'He will'." "Thou goest to women? Do not forget thy whip.")[24] The question he raised in The Joyful Wisdom, where he first speaks of the death of God—"Do we not stray as through infinite Nothingness?"[25] —had been answered for him. The character Nietzsche who used to utter these fateful words was himself a madman.

When Nietzsche was thirteen years of age, he wrote his first essay on ethics, in which he made God the father of evil.[26] That same year, he penned his first autobiography, a self-preoccupation he would repeat no less than eight times over the next decade. Two years later he had an ominous dream that he records in Ecce Homo. In the dream, he was journeying through a gloomy wood at night on his way to a Lutheran town when "a piercing shriek from a neighboring lunatic asylum" terrified him. He then encountered a hunter whose "features were wild and uncanny," suggesting that Nietzsche travel, instead, to Teutschental (German Valley). The hunter raised his whistle to his lips and blew such "a shrill note" that Nietzsche awakened from his nightmare.

The dream suggests that the young Nietzsche was at a crossroad in his life. One road pointed to Lutheran Christianity, the religion of his family. The other led to the primitive, pagan German soil. This dream was not an isolated occurrence, but consistent with other dreams and visions that Nietzsche poured out in his writings. We know that he shunned Christianity and took the path back to the soil, and to the lunatic asylum. "His intellect is lost in chaos," said the philosopher George Santayana of Nietzsche. "His heart denies itself the relief of tears and can vent itself only in forced laughter and mock hopes that gladden nobody, least of all himself."[27]

As Santayana's comment implies, Nietzsche's posturing is ultimately hollow and unconvincing. All his strutting and thumping about evil being the

only true virtue and good being the most abject vice are all playacting. His assertion that milk is for babes and that the strong man should be soaked in blood and alcohol crosses into pathology. Nietzsche remained a boy who never grew up, the boy who plays at violence—"bang, bang, you're dead"—but remains, at his ferocious best, only a sheep in wolf's clothing.

Yet, despite the sad lesson of his own life, especially its tragic ending, Nietzsche's influence is boundless, and it continues to charm a wide variety of people, even if they do not understand the obvious implications of what he is saying. Among these people are rebellious university students, heavy metal rockers, radical feminists who hunger for "empowerment," and pro-choice enthusiasts who believe that morality resides exclusively in the will.

But some did understand clearly what Nietzsche was preaching. His influence in shaping Nazism is a matter of continuing discussion. In his critical study Nietzsche,written in 1940, Crane Brinton makes the following observation:

Point for point he preached .. . most of the cardinal articles of the professed Nazi creed—a transvaluation of all values, the sanctity of the will to power, the right and duty of the strong to dominate, the sole right of great states to exist, a renewing, a rebirth, of German and hence European society. . .. The unrelieved tension, the feverish aspiration, the driving madness, the great noise Nietzsche made for himself, the Nazi elite is making for an uncomfortably large part of the world."[28]

When Brinton penned these words, he did not know how right he was. He was speaking philosophically. Writing at the dawn of World War II, history would soon vindicate Brinton's judgment. Even if Nietzsche would not have believed in Nazism, it is clear enough that Nazism believed in him. Ideas can be more deadly than their creators. The man who called himself "dynamite" was weak, lonely, and ineffectual while he lived. In truth, it is his ideas that have been dynamite.

In Zarathustra, Nietzsche exclaims, "Better to have no God, better to set up destiny on one's own account, better to be a fool, better to be God oneself!"[29] This is the tumultuous yet hollow sound of a desperate ego refusing to be what it is and, in defiance, threatening to turn the world upside down. It is a temper tantrum expressed in poetic form. But it remains sterile. And when it is adopted and imitated, it breeds chaos.

As Jacques Maritain has rightly remarked, "atheism cannot be lived."[30] The good we aspire to, the natural object of the human will, is goodness itself,

not the fulfillment of our ego. Atheism ties a person in knots. It rejects the pure goodness that is the true object of the will and replaces it with an illusory good. Being one's own god is not heroic. It is foolish and self-destructive. And it is so because it is essentially unrealistic. Genuine heroism takes place within the realm of the real. Real courage demands more than posturing. "Thus every will, even the most perverse, desires God without knowing it," argues Maritain. Further, no rebellion against the order of the Creator can ever be truly creative, but must end in destruction, so that "every absolute experience of atheism, if it is conscientiously and rigorously followed, ends by provoking its psychical dissolution, in suicide."3'

By exalting the human will above all else and declaring the death of God, Nietzsche provides the Culture of Death with a passionate and enticing antiphilosophy to be used as its foundation. In praising the isolated self in defiance of all law, custom, and sociality, Nietzsche furnishes us with a grand-sounding program for justifying whatever the will desires. The unhappy result, following the pattern of Nietzsche's own life, is a culture bent on its own self-destruction, that is, its own suicide. It is the same culture of modernity that G. W F. Hegel has sardonically characterized as "Good Friday without Easter Sunday."

—D.D.M.

[1] Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, The Young Nietzsche, trans. A.M. Ludovici (London: 1912), 1:235.

[2] Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 403.

[3] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, cited in ibid., p. 404. Nietzsche dedicated this work to Schopenhauer, an "exalted pioneer."

[4] See James Collins, The Existentialists: A Critical Study (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), p. 21.

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, trans. Francis Golffing (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956), p. 11.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[8] Ibid., p. 34.

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Will to Power," trans. A.M. Ludovici, in Reality, Man and Existence: Essential Works of Existentialism, ed. H.J. Blackham

(New York: Bantam, 1965), pp. 98-99.

[10] Ibid., p. 115.

[11] Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, U.K.: 1968), pp. 71-72. Nietzsche's subtitle for this work is "How to Philosophize with a Hammer."

[12] Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy, p. 119.

[13] Ibid., p. 127.

[14] Jacques Barzun, Darwin, Marx, Wagner(Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday,

1958), p. 298.

[15] Quoted in ibid., p. 301.

[16] Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, trans. Thomas Common (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), p. 213.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[19] Ibid., p. 64.

[20] Ibid., p. 221.

[21] Ibid., p. 204.

[22] E.F. Podach, Nietzsches Zusammenbruch (Heidelberg, Ger.: N. Kampmann, 1930), p. 94.

[23] William Barrett, Irrational Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), p. 180.

[24] Nietzsche, Zarathustra, pp. 69—70.

[25] Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Joyful Wisdom," trans. Thomas Common, in Blackham, Reality, pp. 66—67.

[26] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, trans. Francis Golffing (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956), p. 151.

[27] George Santayana, The German Mind:A Philosophical Diagnosis (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), p. 143.

[28] Crane Brinton, Nietzsche (New York: Harper and Row, 1965 [1st ed., 1941]), p. 231.

[29] Nietsche, Zarathustra, p. 292.

[30] Jacques Maritain, True Humanism, trans. M.R. Adamson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 52, "Ibid., pp. 52-53.

Ayn Rand

Yes, this is an age of moral crisis. .. . Your moral code has reached its climax, the blind alley and the end of its course. And if you wish to go on living, what you now need is not to return to morality . .. but to discover it.[1]

Thus spake, not Zarathustra, but Ayn Rand's philosophical mouthpiece, John Galt, the protagonist of her principal novel, Atlas Shrugged. The "moral crisis" to which he refers is the conflict between altruism, which is radically immoral, and individualism,which provides the only form of true morality possible. Altruism, for Galt and Rand, leads to death; individualism furnishes the only path that leads to life. Thus, in order to go on living with any degree of authenticity, we must abandon the immoral code of altruism and embrace the vivifying practice of individualism.

Throughout the course of history, according to Ayn Rand, there have been three general views of morality. The first two are mystical,which, for Rand, means fictitious, or non-objective. The third is objective,something that can be verified by the senses. Initially, a mystical view reigned in which the source of morality was believed to be God's will. This is not compatible with either Rand's atheism or her objectivism. In due course, a neomystical view held sway in which the "good of society" replaced the "will of God." The essential defect of this view, like the first, is that it does not correlate with an objective reality. "There is no such entity as 'society'", she avers. And since only individuals really exist, the so-called good of society degenerates into a state where "some men are ethically entitled to pursue any whims (or any atrocities) they desire to pursue, while other men are ethically obliged to spend their lives in the service of that gang's desires."[2]

Only the third view of morality is realistic and worthwhile. This is Rand's objectivism, a philosophy that is centered exclusively on the individual. It is the individual alone who is real, objective, and the true foundation for ethics. Therefore, Rand can postulate the basic premise of her philosophy: "The source of man's rights is not divine law or congressional law, but the law of identity. A is A—and Man is Man."[3] She credits the United States for being "the first moral society in history"[4] because it is the first society based on the recognition of individual rights.

An individual belongs to himself as an individual. He does not belong, in any measure, to God or to society. A corollary of Rand's basic premise is that "altruism," or the sacrifice of one's only reality—one's individuality—for a

reality other than the self, is necessarily self-destructive and therefore immoral. This is why she can say that “altruism holds death as its ultimate goal and standard of value.”[5] In contrast, individualism, cultivated through the “virtue of selfishness,” is the only path to life. “Life,” she insists, “can be kept in5existence only by a constant process of self-sustaining action.”[6] Man’s destiny is to be a “self-made soul.”[7]

Man, therefore, has a “right to life.” But Rand does not mean by this statement that he has a “right to life” that others have a duty to defend and support. Such a concept of “right to life” implies a form of “altruism” and consequently is contrary to the good of the individual. In fact, for Rand, it constitutes a form of slavery. “No man,” she emphasizes, “can have a right to impose an unchosen obligation, an unrewarded duty or an involuntary servitude on another man. There can be no such thing as ‘the right to enslave.”[8] Moreover, there are no rights of special groups, since a group is not an individual reality. As a result, she firmly denies that groups such as the “unborn,” “farmers,” “businessmen,” and so forth have any rights whatsoever.[9]

Rand’s notion of “right to life” begins and ends with the individual. In this sense, “right to life” means the right of the individual to pursue, through the rational use of his power of choice, whatever he needs in order to sustain and cultivate his existence. “An organism’s life is its standard of value: that which furthers its life is the good, that which threatens it is evil.”[10] As Rand has John Gait tell her readers, “There is only one fundamental alternative in the universe: existence or nonexistence.”[11] Man’s existence must stay in existence. This is the mandate of the individual and the utility of the virtue of selfishness. Nonexistence is the result of altruism and careens toward death. Making sacrifices for one’s bornor unborn children, one’s elderly parents, or other family members becomes anathema for Rand. She wants a Culture of Life to emerge, but she envisions that culture solely in terms of individuals selfishly choosing the private goods of their own existence. If ever the anthem for a pro-choice philosophy has been recorded, it comes from the pen of Ayn Rand:

> Man has to be man—by choice; he has to hold his life as a value—by choice; he has to learn to sustain it—by choice; he has to discover the values it requires and practice his virtues—by choice. A code of values accepted by choice is a code of morality.[12]

No philosopher ever proposed a more simple and straightforward view of life than the one Rand urges upon us. Man = Man; Existence = Existence; only individuals are real; all forms of altruism are inherently evil. There are no

nuances or paradoxes. There is no wisdom. There is no depth. Complex issues divide reality into simple dichotomies. There are individualism and altruism, and nothing in between.[13]She was once asked if she could present the essence of her philosophy while standing on one foot. She complied: “Metaphysics: Objective Reality; Epistemology: Reason; Ethics: Self-interest; Politics:Capitalism.” Despite the apparent superficiality of her philosophy, Rand considered herself history’s greatest philosopher after Aristotle.

In The Virtue of Selfishness, she compares an ethics of helping others with the dissatisfaction that results when there is “an exchange of unwanted, unchosen Christmas presents”[14]The most endearing of O. Henry’s cornucopia of short stories, The Gift of the Magi, offers an interesting contrast to Rand’s view. In the narrative, a poor but loving married couple exchange Christmas gifts. The husband sells his watch to buy his wife a set of combs to adorn her beautiful tresses. The wife sells her hair to buy her husband a fob chain for his watch. The gifts are exquisitely impractical, at least for the moment, but at the same time reveal something infinitely more precious—the spouses’ generous love for one another. “Let it be said,” the author advises his readers as an epilogue to the story, “that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. .. . They are the magi.”[15]

Rand, of course, is a dedicated enemy of Christianity. But her peculiar brand of selfishness, which presupposes that everyone in society is a Nietzschean Superman, makes her an enemy of love. Her writing represents an unrelenting high-mindedness that is far too Olympian for any mere mortal to live by. Author and literary critic Whittaker Chambers once remarked, concerning Rand’s Atlas Shrugged, “Out of a lifetime of reading, I can recall no other book in which a tone of overriding arrogance was so implacably sustained. Its shrillness is without reprieve. Its dogmatism is without appeal.”[16]

Rand’s dogmatism, however, does have appeal. Her thirteen books have sold more than twenty million copies. According to U.S. News and World Report, her books sell upward of three hundred thousand copies a year.[17] The Ayn Rand Society nourishes, as does the Objectivist Newsletter she founded. Her following is extensive and committed, and many of her disciples are fanatically devoted to her thought. There is a special breed of Randians called “Randroids” who believe in the truth according to Ayn Rand, and only Ayn Rand.

Since 1997, the Ayn Rand Institute has been steadfastly opposing volunteerism. Through its Anti-Servitude Internship Program, students have the opportunity to fulfill their school’s volunteer requirement, ironically, by working to abolish volunteerism. “It is dangerous for a government to promote any

morality," says the director of communications for the Ayn Rand Institute, "especially the anti-American ideology of sacrifice and service in volunteerism."[18]

There is a made-for-television movie based on Ayn Rand's life, and a U.S. postage stamp has been issued in her honor. On the Internet, one can find the expected advocacy for abortion ("The embryo is clearly pre-human; only the mystical notions of religious dogma treat this clump of cells as constituting a person."), propaganda for assisted suicide ("rational self-interest"), and diatribes against the Pope (nothing is "more dangerous" than "faith" as a "guide to life").

Who is this woman, so influential in shaping the Culture of Death? Ayn Rand was born Alice Rosenbaum in Petro-grad, Russia, in 1905. She left her native country at twenty-one, having been thoroughly horrified by the anti-individualistic mindset of the Bolshevik collective. After arriving in New York City, alone, with about fifty dollars in her pocket, she stayed with relatives in Chicago for a while before moving to Hollywood, where she worked at odd jobs —stuffing envelopes, waitressing in a diner, and running a studio wardrobe department—until she could make a financial success of her writing.

In 1938, she wrote Anthem, a science fiction novelette depicting a collectivist world where the word "I" is forbidden. Her real success, however, did not come until the publication in 1943, after rejections from twelve publishers, of The Fountainhead. This sprawling 754-page work, later made into a movie starring Gary Cooper, is the glorification of an architectural genius who refuses to bend to bureaucratic pressure. Despite its grand intentions, "it is," writes screenwriter Nora Ephron, rather tersely, "a ridiculous book."

In 1957, Rand produced her magnum opus, Atlas Shrugged, in which she canonizes her code of self-interest. She uses her main character, John Gait, to articulate her own philosophy: "I swear—by my life and my love of it—that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine."

Atlas Shrugged inspired a cult following, particularly among college students in the sixties, though critics seldom had a kind word for it. Many found it too simplistic and didactic, a naive indulgence in black-and-white polarities. Ruth Chapin Blackman saw it as a "polemic inadequately disguised as a novel." Writing for the New York Times Book Review, Granville Hicks found it utterly unconvincing: "Yet, loudly as Miss Rand proclaims her love of life, it seems that the book is written out of hate."

The book was bound to infuriate conscientious Christians. In one passage, John Gait states that it is wrong to "help a man who has no virtues, to help him on the ground of his suffering as such, to accept his faults, his need, as a claim."

Reviewer John Chamberlain advised that Miss Rand should not have tried “to rewrite the Sermon on the Mount.” Another reviewer found Atlas Shrugged excruciatingly awful, while yet another, in less dramatic terms, said, “I find it a remarkably silly book.”

While negotiating with Random House for the publication of Atlas Shrugged, Bennett Cerf tried to persuade the author to cut John Gait’s bombastic thirty-eight-page speech. Her retort was paralyzing: “Would you cut the Bible?” Cerf capitulated.[19]

But again, other eminent thinkers and critics were far less enthused than Rand about her “sacred” texts. Sociologist Peter Berger has said, “It is difficult to accord an important place to Ayn Rand either as a novelist or as a thinker.” Gore Vidal wrote, “Ayn Rand is a rhetorician who writes novels I have never been able to read.” George Gilder lamented the fact that Rand avoided the problem of the family—an institution that cannot possibly survive on the principle of isolated self-interest—by simply ignoring it altogether.

Yet her books remain influential. In his best-seller, The Closing of the American Mind, Allan Bloom remarks, with university students in mind, “There is always a girl who mentions Ayn Rand’s The Fountainhead, a book, although hardly literature, which, with its sub-Nietzschean assertiveness, excites somewhat eccentric youngsters to a new way of life.”[20] An English professor at the University of California at Berkeley who regularly surveys his students’ reading habits found, to his dismay, that The Fountainheadwas their single most popular book.

Barbara Branden’s biography of Ayn Rand, The Passion of Ayn Rand, makes the phenomenal success of her subject even more puzzling. Rand, from a moral viewpoint, was a singularly unattractive individual. Branden informs her readers of how Rand and Barbara’s husband, Nathaniel, rationally explained to their shocked spouses how their moral superiority and rational individualism justified the affair they were carrying on with each other. This four-sided arrangement did not sit well with the injured spouses. Rand’s husband tried to find comfort in the bottle. Barbara suffered severe panic attacks. During one of these attacks, she called her “friend” of nineteen years for help. Rand’s response was one of reptilian coldness: “How dare you think about yourself instead of me!”

Yet when her lover, Nathaniel Branden, took a younger woman for his mistress, Rand flew into a rage. Branden apologized sheepishly for rejecting her for a “lesser value.”[21] “How dare you speak to me of ‘lesser value’?” Rand retorted. “It’s not an issue of that! It’s far worse—that girl is nothing!” Infuriated that Branden could reject her, she vowed to destroy him:

It’s finished, your whole act! I’ll tear down your façade as I built it up! I’ll denounce you publicly. I’ll destroy you as I created you, or the name or the wealth or the prestige. You’ll have nothing—just as you started, just as you came to me, just as you would have remained without me. You would have accomplished nothing if I hadn’t handed you my life. I did it all... . You dared to reject me.[22]

Not content with whatever efforts she could make to bring about Branden’s public ruin, and certainly not willing to allow him to express his own individuality, Rand then pronounced a curse upon him, which she punctuated by striking him three times across the face before ordering him out of the house. “If you have an ounce of morality left in you, an ounce of psychological health,” she railed, “you’ll be impotent for the next twenty years! And if you achieve any potency, you’ll know it’s a sign of still worse moral degradation.”[23]

This ugly episode was not an isolated one. Barbara Branden tells us of how Rand managed to make the lives of everyone around her miserable, and when her life was over, she had barely a friend in the world. She was contemptuous even of her followers. When Rand was laid to rest in 1982 at the age of seventy-seven, her coffin bore a six-foot replica of the dollar sign. Her philosophy, which she adopted from an early age, helped to ensure her solitude: “Nothing existential gave me any great pleasure. And progressively, as my idea developed, I had more and more a sense of loneliness.”[24] It was inevitable, however, that a philosophy that centered on the self to the exclusion of all others would leave its practitioner in isolation and intensely lonely.

Rand’s philosophy is unlivable, by either her or anyone else. A philosophy that is unlivable can hardly be instrumental in building a Culture of Life. It is unlivable because it is based on a false anthropology. The human being is not a mere individual, but a person. As such, he is a synthesis of individual uniqueness and communal participation. Man is a transcendent being. He is more than his individuality.

Rand once wrote that “man cannot escape from the need for philosophy; his only alternative is whether the philosophy guiding him is to be chosen by his mind or by chance.” As far as this statement is concerned, it is very similar to what G. K. Chesterton once said: “Philosophy is merely thought that has been thought out . . . man has no alternative, except between being influenced by thought that has been thought out and thought that has not been thought out.”[25] What distinguishes these radically different thinkers involves truth. Rand was concerned with nothing more than herself. As a consequence, truth

dissolved into private convenience. Pride was the foundational disposition for developing her philosophy. For Chesterton, “pride is the falsification of fact by the introduction of self.”[26] Thinking that man is only what she saw herself to be, namely, an individual, Rand did not see the larger truth in man. Chesterton saw something beyond himself and felt honored to stand with the common man, who is also a child of God. The truth of man, for Chesterton, is that man is all three: individual, member of society, and child of God.

The Greeks had two words for “life”: biosand zoe. Bios represents the biological and individual sense of life, the life that pulsates within any one organism. This is the only notion of life that is to be found in the philosophy of Ayn Rand. Zoe, in contrast, is shared life, life that transcends the individual and allows participation in a broader, higher, and richer life. This “participation,” as Karol Wojtyla states in The Acting Person, “consists in sharing the humanness of every human.”[27] It is precisely through participation in the humanness of others that a person is rescued from individuality and discovers his true identity.

In Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis remarks that mere Bios is always tending to run down and decay. It needs incessant subsidies from nature in the form of air, water, and food, in order to continue. As Bios and nothing more, man can never achieve his destiny. Zoe, he goes on to explain, is an enriching spiritual life which is in God from all eternity. Man needs Zoe in order to become truly himself. Man is not simply man; he is a composite of Bios and Zoe:

> Bios has, to be sure, a certain shadowy or symbolic resemblance to Zoe: but only the sort of resemblance there is between a photo and a place, or a statue and a man. A man who changed from having Bios to having Zoe would have gone through as big a change as a statue which changed from being a carved stone to being a real man.[28]

The transition, then, from bios to zoe (individual life to personal, spiritualized life; selfishness to love of neighbor) is also the transition from a Culture of Death to a Culture of Life.

—D. D. M.

[1] Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged (New York: Random House, 1957). Rand cites this passage in The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 13.

[2] Rand, Virtue of Selfishness, p. 15.

[3] Ibid., p. 94.
[4] Ibid., p. 93.
[5] Ibid., p. 34.
[6] Ibid., p. 16.
[7] Ibid., p. 27.
[8] Ibid., p. 96.
[9] Ibid., p. 97.
[10] Ibid., p. 17.
[11] Ibid., p. 15.
[12] Ibid., p. 23.
[13] Herbert Schlossberg, Idols for Destruction (Nashville, Term.: Thomas Nelson, 1983), p. 267. “One of the chief errors in Ayn Rand’s philosophy is her idea that the altruism of social democracy is the opposite of individual egoism. ... But collectivism and egoism are both derived from immanence, both can live only when the limitations of transcendent law are overthrown, both are systems of the same disease.”
[14] Rand, Virtue of Selfishness, p. viii.
[15] O. Henry, “The Gift of the Magi,” American Poetry and Prose, ed. R.M. Lovett (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947), p. 1204.
[16] Quoted in William F. Buckley, Jr., “Ayn Rand, R.I.P,” Right Reason (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), p. 410.
[17] U.S. News and World Report, Mar. 9, 2000.
[18] http://www.aynrand.org/media/linked/
[19] Time, Aug. 22, 1977, p. 53.
[20] Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 62.
[21] Barbara Branden, The Passion of Ayn Rand (Garden City, N.Y.: Double-day, 1986), p. 342.
[22] Ibid., pp. 345-46.
[23] Ibid., p. 347.
[24] Ibid., p. 34.
[25] G. K. Chesterton, The Common Man (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950), p. 176.
[26] Quoted in Maisie Ward, Gilbert Keith Chesterton (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1943), p. 203.
[27] Karol Wojtyla, The Acting Person, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht, Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1979), p. 294.
[28] C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (London: Collins, 1967), p. 135.

PART TWO

THE EUGENIC EVOLUTIONISTS

Charles Darwin

Charles Robert Darwin was born on February 12, 1809, the son of Robert and Susannah Darwin. He was born into wealth and all its privileges, and this wealth, which he later increased considerably by his painstaking thrift, would allow him the leisure to become one of the most influential thinkers in history, the man credited with formulating the theory of evolution.

Robert Darwin, his father, was a freethinker, the son of the renowned poet, doctor, freethinker, dissenter, and libertine Erasmus Darwin. His mother, Susannah, was the daughter of the famous and prosperous Josiah Wedgwood, a maker of fine pottery and a Unitarian dissenter. In the shadow of the French Revolution, which had begun exactly two decades earlier, freethinkers, dissenters from the Church of England, and those of more democratic leanings had become suspect in England, so Robert and Susannah thought it best to have Charles baptized at St. Chad's Anglican Church on the seventeenth of November. Yet Susannah remained true to her Wedgwood Unitarianism and brought Charles to the Unitarian chapels on Sundays. She died when he was only eight. Charles' sisters took the place of his mother in caring for him.

From early on, young Charles was an avid collector of every kind of specimen and would rather spend hours in his makeshift chemistry lab in the shed than study the Greek and Latin classics prescribed for the education of children of his social class. He also loved to hunt. Not surprisingly, his performance at school was less than stellar. "You care for nothing but shooting, dogs, and rat-catching," his censorious father thundered at him, "and you will be a disgrace to yourself and all your family!"[1] The cure devised by his physician father was to make Charles into a third-generation physician, and at sixteen, Charles found himself making the rounds with his father, Robert.

Robert Darwin decided to send Charles to Edinburgh for his medical education, there to be joined by Charles' older brother Erasmus. Edinburgh provided medical education to the wealthy dissenters who could not get into the more illustrious Oxford and Cambridge because they would not subscribe to the Church of England's Thirty-nine Articles. Charles and Erasmus arrived in October of 1825. At Edinburgh, Charles received a deeper immersion into the cherished Whig political causes, including religious liberty (vs. the state church), the extension of suffrage, open competition among all so that the best may rise (rather than allowing societal privileges only to the aristocrats), and the abolition of slavery.

But Charles was unfit for medical education. What did not bore him, horrified him. Dissections mortified him, but it was the quick-and-dirty, anesthetic-free operation theater which filled him with dread, and after witnessing a botched operation on a child, Charles would never again enter an operating room. He dragged through his first year of medical school, enlivened only by the theatrics of a chemistry class and by learning taxidermy on the side from a freed slave.

By the second year of medical school, Darwin was almost completely detached from his intended training. Instead of following the prescribed courses, he followed his interests and soon found himself being mentored by Robert Grant, a brilliant iconoclast, expert on sponges, and staunch believer in evolution (or transmutation, as it was then called). Grant, a Francophile, had imbibed the theory of transmutation from Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and Étienne Geoffrey St. Hilaire, and soon enough, Darwin was reading Lamarck (although his French was rather weak); studying every manner of bird, animal, and sea creature he could lay hands upon; and taking up geology as well.

During that academic year, Darwin was proposed for the Plinian Society, an intellectual society that met regularly and discussed every manner of topic. The man who proposed Darwin, William Browne, was a radical materialist, and on the very night of Darwin's first presentation to the Society, he followed Darwin's talk on sea invertebrates with an argument that the mind, rather than being an aspect of the immortal soul, was reducible to the activity of the material brain. The soul, of course, did not exist. Needless to say, Browne's talk was denounced publicly, but undoubtedly left a strong impression on Charles, for he would argue much the same in his Descent of Man almost a half century later.

Darwin would not finish medical school, deciding to leave it for good in the spring of 1827. But during his short stay, he had been immersed in all the fundamentals of evolutionary theory and the materialist account of nature that underlay it.

As could be expected, Robert Darwin was not amused with his son's lack of success and decided that, if he had to shoot and play the amateur naturalist, he was suited only for the life of a country parson, a position of privilege in the Church of England for rich sons who proved lackluster in their abilities and hence could not make a living elsewhere. Darwin himself rather liked the idea of having a country parsonage, which asked the minimum of doctrinal rigor and allowed the maximum time and opportunities for a budding naturalist. In early 1828 he arrived at Cambridge, a new undergraduate at Christ's College, the son of a freethinker who had reconciled himself to the necessity of playing according to the current rules of Anglican-dominated society.

At Cambridge, while some passion for theology was aroused, a latent passion for collecting beetles burst into flames, and such collecting immersed Darwin in the stunning varieties of the beetle species. At Cambridge he also studied William Paley's Evidences of Christianity and was quite impressed with Paley's famous arguments that the intricate order of nature necessarily implied a Designer. Yet, in little more than a decade, the stunning varieties of various species, including the beetle, would lead Darwin to reject Paley's arguments for design, for (so he would later reason) certainly God would not have created every slight gradation of beetle variety.

But even though Darwin could not muster much of an interest in theology, he was able to squeak out his B.A. degree in 1831. His zeal for science, however, was by this time nearly boundless, and he threw himself into botany and especially geology. This zeal would lead rather quickly to his being offered a position as naturalist on the HMS Beagle, accompanying Captain Robert Fitzroy on a survey of the South American coast. After much delay, the Beagle set off on December 27, 1831.

On the trip, Darwin found giant fossils of extinct animals; met savage peoples whom he found barely distinguishable from beasts; read and accepted Charles Lyell's geological arguments that the world was not, as current Christianity claimed, a mere 6,000 years old, but millions of years old; and had, for the most part, accepted his one-time teacher Robert Grant's evolutionary account of the rise of new species, even of the rise of man. In October of 1836, almost five years after he had cast off, Darwin arrived home, quite a different man.

Darwin was greeted as a young scientific hero. He had sent boxes upon boxes of specimens back to England, including a wondrous collection of monstrous fossils, and was almost immediately elevated into the aristocratic domain of the respected naturalist. The only difficulty was that respected naturalists did not, at the time, countenance evolution (nor, for that matter, Whig political causes). Evolution was the theory championed by atheists, democrats, and radical dissenters from Anglican orthodoxy. Darwin was caught in an interesting trap. His real views were radical, but his prestige depended on the rejection of such radicalism.

To deal with the dilemma, Darwin lived a double intellectual life, moving in aristocratic, anti-evolutionary circles even while, privately, he was working feverishly on the details of his account of evolution. He was convinced that the human mind was entirely material, that human beings had indeed evolved from some apelike ancestor, and that morality itself was one more evolutionary artifact. Very soon, the anxiety of this double life began to take its toll on his

health, so much so that often Darwin was unable to do any work and instead lay like an invalid in bed.

All of this, before Darwin reached his thirtieth birthday. All of this, a full twenty years before the publication of his Origin of Species in 1859, when he first made his evolutionary views public. All of this, over thirty years before he would draw out, for all to see, the ramifications of evolution for human beings in his Descent of Man, published in 1871.

Darwin's double life would have a parallel in his own home. In November 1838 he proposed to his cousin Emma Wedgwood. She accepted, and they married the following January. From the first, Darwin confided in Emma about his materialism, his belief in transmutation, and his doubts about Christianity (even in the weakened form of Emma's Unitarianism). From the first, Emma was mortified. She was not a radical Unitarian, but what might be called a transitional Unitarian, a kind of intermediate species dangling just over the edge of the Anglican Church, still holding onto the doctrines of heaven and hell. As a result, she did not fear that Darwin's opinions would cut him off from accepted scientific society; she feared that his heretical opinions would cut him off from spending eternity with her. Yet, despite this great disagreement and Darwin's continual sickness, the Darwins had a happy and fruitful marriage. They had ten children together, only seven of whom lived. Interestingly enough, in light of his arguments regarding the survival of the fittest, all of Darwin's own children were quite sickly.

This rather lengthy biographical introduction has shown us several very important things about Darwin and hence Darwinism. First, in contrast to the scientific hagiographies of Darwin, and hence the popular accounts which depend upon them, Darwin was not an intellectual pioneer. The theory of evolution was not discovered by Darwin on the Galapagos Islands; the theory of evolution was already alive and well and quite well known in England before Darwin ever set foot on the HMS Beagle.[2] Darwin helped to hone it, but he did not "discover" it. Second, Darwin very early on had seen the radical implications of evolutionary theory for human beings; however, he avoided saying anything about these implications in his most famous book, the Origin of Species. Why? He knew that if he did spell things out, his theory would be cast into the fire, and he himself would be persecuted along with the other evolutionists such as Robert Grant.

This second point is especially important. In assessing Darwin and Darwinism, historians have characteristically distinguished between Darwin's evolutionary arguments as set out in his famous Origin of Species and the misapplicationof these theories to the realm of human morality by self-

proclaimed followers of Darwin in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. We are assured that Darwin's focus was only upon a revolutionary scientific account of how new species emerged from the old in nature. Those who applied the cruelties of the survival of the fittest, the engine of evolution in nature, to the realm of human affairs were not followers of Darwin, so we are told, but his distorters. According to this standard account, then, the growth of the eugenics movement all over Europe and America after Darwin, a movement that flowered in a particularly infamous way in Nazi Germany, represents an aberration from the purity of Darwin's scientific account—a clear case of the misuse of science twisted into pseudoscience.

But this explanation, so common among historians, is simply false. Darwin both knew and approved of the implications of evolutionary theory as applied to human beings but waited, as we said above, to publish them until his Descent of Man appeared in 1871. And such was prudent on his part, for we shall find, upon reading Darwin's own application of his theory of evolution to human nature, that the results were rather shocking. Not only was Darwin a eugenicist, but also a racist and a moral relativist. To understand the full ramifications of Darwinism for the current Culture of Death, then, we must turn to his Descent of Man.

We repeat, the arguments of the Origin provided the theoretical foundations for Darwin's evolutionary account of morality in the Descent. In the Descent,Darwin assumed evolution to be true and sought to explain (among other things) how the existing moral varieties could have evolved via natural selection, in the same way that in the Origin Darwin explained how natural selection could bring about the great variety of existing species of animals and plants. In doing so, Darwin was displacing the Christian natural law account of morality that had formed the basis of Christian culture for over a millennium and a half, with a new moral relativism founded on evolution.

For Darwin, in contrast to the natural law account, the "moral faculties of man" were not original and inherent, but evolved from "social qualities", and these "social qualities" were likewise not original but acquired "through natural selection, aided by inherited habit."[3] Just as life came from the nonliving, so also the moral came from the nonmoral. Right from the beginning, then, Darwin rejected the natural lawargument, found in Stoicism and Christianity, that human beings were moral by nature. Instead, he assumed that human beings were naturally asocial and amoral, and only became social and moral historically.

To be more exact, for Darwin, we first had to become social before we could become moral. How, then, did we become social? "In order that primeval men, or the ape-like progenitors of man, should have become social," Darwin reasoned, "they must have acquired the same instinctive feelings which impel

other animals to live in a body."[4] These instincts were not peculiar to human beings or to their "progenitors", nor were these instincts natural in the sense of being built in from the beginning. The "social instincts" of man (as of other social animals) were the result of variations in the individual bringing some benefit for survival. Those born with stronger social instincts were bound together into stronger, more coherent, and more effective tribes. Those born with little or no social instinct were eliminated in the struggle for survival. "Selfish and contentious people will not cohere, and without coherence nothing can be effected." Above and beyond the social instincts, particular "moral" instincts (such as fidelity and courage) were selected because they benefited the tribe as a whole, causing it to "spread and be victorious over other tribes" in the "never-ceasing wars of savages." As with the other animals, there is no rest from such struggle. In the course of time each tribe "would, judging from all past history, be in its turn overcome by some other and still more highly endowed tribe." Through this natural battle of tribe against tribe, "the social and moral qualities would tend slowly to advance and be diffused throughout the world."[5] Significantly, the evolutionary development of the moral qualities that human beings happen to have depended essentially upon a long history of incessant conflict among different tribes for inadequate resources; thus, the evolutionary "progress" of morality could not have occurred "had not the rate of increase [of the populations in tribes] been rapid, and the consequent struggle for existence [been] severe to an extreme degree."[6]

What we call "conscience" was also the result of natural selection. Darwin described it as a "feeling of dissatisfaction which invariably results . . . from any unsatisfied instinct."[7]Since the "ever-enduring social instincts" were more primitive and hence stronger than instincts developed later, the social instincts were the sources of our feelings of unease, when some action of ours violated them.[8] Rather than being a kind of divine light guiding our choices, conscience was merely an evolutionary reminder of a more deeply rooted, earlier instinct.

Darwin's evolutionary account of morality provided a seemingly scientific foundation for moral relativism. Since the human conscience arose as an accident of natural selection, it need not have arisen in any particular form. As with the coloration of butterflies or the mating habits of particular birds, many variations were possible, and since evolution continues, many new variations of conscience shall continue to occur. Consequently, no particular variety of conscience can be judged any better or worse than any other. Indeed, natural selection does the judging for us, because the conscienceof any particular surviving group has already been judged worthy by the only standard of evolution—survival.

Since conscience, as we experience it, could have been far differently formed by evolution according to quite different necessities pressing upon the survival of our ancestors, it would still be conscience even if it “told” us to do as good what we now happen to despise as evil. As Darwin himself informed the reader, “I do not wish to maintain that any strictly social animal, if its intellectual faculties were to become as active and highly developed as in man, would acquire exactly the same moral sense as ours.”[9]

If, for instance, to take an extreme case, men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters; and no one would think of interfering. Nevertheless the bee, or any other social animal, would in our supposed case gain, as it appears to me, some feeling of right and wrong, or a conscience. For each individual would have an inward sense of possessing certain stronger or more enduring instincts, and others less strong and enduring; so that there would often be a struggle which impulse should be followed; and satisfaction or dissatisfaction would be felt.... In this case an inward monitor would tell the animal that it would have been better to have followed one impulse rather than the other. The one course ought to have been followed: the one would have been right and the other wrong. . . .[10]

But we need not look only to such fictional examples. As Darwin made clear in his survey of the many “species” of human morality, such variability is indeed expressed within the natural history of human moralities as they actually evolved. This explained why, for example, infanticide has been widely condoned in so many societies, even while it is condemned in others.[11] The difference resides not in conformation to or deviation from an independent moral standard, but from various conditions for survival impinging on different human populations.

Of course, since morality has been reduced to what proves helpful under particular conditions for social survival, then as conditions change, what proves beneficial for survival may change as well. To take an example, Darwin informed his readers that monogamous matrimony was a fairly recent evolutionary phenomenon,[12] and as we shall see, he strongly suspected that under present conditions, monogamy had lived out its evolutionary merits and was now detrimental to the survival of the fittest.

Given the acknowledged brutalities of survival of the fittest and its essential goallessness, it might seem odd that Darwin also believed that, in one respect,

evolution was morally progressive. It had provided humanity (at least the higher forms of humanity) with a “disinterested love for all living creatures”, extending “beyond the confines of man ... to the lower animals.” Darwin considered such sympathy “the most noble attribute of man.”[13]

However inviting it might sound, this ranking of evolved moral qualities had pernicious results. To begin with, it allowed Darwin as a naturalist to be a racist. If we measure by sympathy (and intellectual ability), Darwin argued, the “west ern nations of Europe .. . immeasurably surpass their former savage progenitors and stand at the summit of civilization.”[14] Ironically, this evolutionary superiority (including sympathy) was gained only by the brutal struggle of survival between races, a struggle that was far from completed. Thus, moral progress entailed the extermination of the “less fit” races by the more favored, or advanced, races.

The inevitability of racial extermination was derived directly from Darwin’s evolutionary arguments in the Origin (the full title of which was The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life). The different races or varieties of anything created by natural selection were necessarily and beneficiallylocked in the severest struggle for survival precisely because of their very similarity. As Darwin argued in the Origin, the forms which stand in closest competition with those undergoing modification and improvement will naturally suffer most. And ... it is the most closely-allied forms,—varieties of the same species, and species of the same genus or of related genera,—which, from having nearly the same structure, constitution, and habits, generally come into the severest competition with each other; consequently, each new variety of species, during the progress of its formation, will generally press hardest on its nearest kindred, and tend to exterminate them.[15]

This argument translated directly to his assessment of the evolutionary history of human races and the necessary and beneficial extinction of the least “Favoured Races”:

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes [that is, the ones which look most like the savages in structure] . . . will no doubt be exterminated. The break will then be rendered wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope ... the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as at present between the negro or

Australian and the gorilla.[16]

Whatever antagonism Darwin had against slavery—which was indeed considerable, given his dissenter upbringing— these too are his words. Whatever grandiose statements he made on behalf of the beauty of moral sympathy, these too are his words. And these words could not be more clear. According to the laws of natural selection, the European race will emerge as the distinct species homo sapiens, and all the transitional forms—the gorilla, the chimpanzee, the Negro, and the Australian Aborigine—will be extinguished in the struggle.

Of course, natural selection works not only between races, but also among individuals within races. Issuing a complaint that would become standard among later eugenicists, Darwin maintained that savage man has an advantage over civilized man. In savage man, the intellectual and moral qualities are not as developed, but that also means that savages enjoy the direct "benefits" of natural selection without softening by sympathy. "With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health."[17] Not so, lamented Darwin, in regard to his fellow European. Civilized men "check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment." Indeed, the very progress of medicine brings about evolutionary regress, for "there is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to smallpox." The unfortunate result is that "the weak members of civilized societies propagate their kind." Such interference against the severity of natural selection is manifestly foolish, as "no one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man." Such injury demands that we redefine the meaning and goal of charity. "It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed," lamented Darwin, "leads to the degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed."[18]

Yet, oddly enough, Darwin was better than his principles, asserting reluctantly that western Europeans could not "check our sympathy, if urged by hard reason, without deterioration in the noblest part of our nature. . . . Hence we must bear without complaining the undoubtedly bad effects of the weak surviving and propagating their kind."[19] This from a man whose frailty of health almost completely disabled him and who, again, sired ten equally frail children.

But Darwin's fear of evolutionary backsliding was deep. If we "do not

prevent the reckless, the vicious and otherwise inferior members of society from increasing at a quicker rate than the better class of men, the nation will retrograde, as has occurred too often in the history of the world." "We must remember", Darwin warned the reader, "that progress is no invariable rule. . . . We can only say that it depends on an increase in the actual number of the population, on the number of men endowed with high intellectual and moral faculties, as well as on their standard of excellence."[20]

At the very end of the Descent, then, Darwin issued a eugenic warning. "Man scans with scrupulous care the character and pedigree of his horses, cattle, and dogs before he matches them; but when he comes to his own marriage he rarely, or never, takes such care." To avoid further degeneration of the race, "both sexes ought to refrain from marriage if in any marked degree inferior in body or mind."[21] Apparently Darwin did not mean this to apply to himself.

Yet such soft eugenics, as we might call it, was not as soft as it might first appear. True to his evolutionary argument, Darwin asserted that the amelioration of the struggle for survival among human beings would result only in losing, in a few generations, the high ground evolution had gained over the millennia. Our present "high condition" is the result of "a struggle for existence consequent on [man's] rapid multiplication." If we want to avoid evolutionary backsliding, at the very least, or better, "advance still higher", human beings "must remain subject to a severe struggle." This led Darwin to suggest that monogamy has outlived its usefulness and that "there should be open competition for all men; and the most able should not be prevented by laws or customs from succeeding best and rearing the largest number of offspring."[22] We have no record of what his wife, Emma, thought of his veiled proposal for a new form of polygamy.

After the release of his Descent, Darwin would live just over a decade, both honored and vilified, promoting his views among disciples and defending them against critics. Darwin, never in good health, began to suffer more and more the degradations of old age. "I cannot forget my discomfort for an hour", Darwin wrote to a friend, and "must look forward to Down graveyard [i.e., Down, Kent, his longtime home] as the sweetest place on earth."[23] To the end, he was plagued by the same dilemma. His views led to atheism and the unsettling of the social order, yet he was surrounded by those who clung to Christianity and defended the moral and social order that Christianity upheld. As a consequence, Darwin refused to declare that he was an atheist, but instead insisted on the less aggressive term "agnostic." In order for Darwinism to become accepted fully, it had to remain du-plicitous. Yet this duplicity wore away at Darwin, and his health, especially his heart, deteriorated quickly in 1881 and early 1882. It seems Darwin's doctrine of survival produced within the man a struggle that made him

ever less fit. At the bottom of an old letter written by his wife and kept by Darwin all these years, a letter imploring him not to turn away from the saving doctrines of Christ for fear of the couple's eternal separation, Darwin tearfully scrawled during Easter of 1881, "When I am dead, know that many times, I have kissed & cryed [sic] over this." Charles Darwin died in the arms of his wife on April 19, 1882. Emma would not have her consolation.

It should be quite clear from the above that however proper and staid Darwin may have appeared in his personal life and however reticent he was to attack religion directly, the effect of his theory was to offer "scientific" support for racism, eugenics, and the undermining of the Judeo-Christian natural law. Such was not alien to his scientific account of evolution, but was derived by Darwin himself' from his theory as applied to human nature. And where Darwin himself may have been too reticent to attack directly the theological and moral edifice constructed by Christianity during the previous eighteen centuries, his followers grew bolder and more impatient by the year. On Darwin's foundation, as we shall see, men like Francis Galton, Ernst Haeckel, and many others, running down to the present day with Peter Singer, have built the Culture of Death.

—B. D. W.

[1] Quoted in Adrian Desmond and James Moore, Darwin (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), p. 20.

[2] In fact, evolutionary theory was always part of the larger materialist view of Epicureanism and was reintroduced into the West through the rediscovery of Epicurean texts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For the full account, see Benjamin Wiker, Moral Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 2002).

[3] Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), pt. I, chap. 5, p. 162.

[4] Ibid., pp. 161-62.

[5] Ibid., pp. 162-63.

[6] Ibid., p. 180.

[7] Ibid., pt. 1, chap. 3, p. 72.

[8] Ibid., p. 91.

[9] Ibid., p. 73.

[10] Ibid., pp. 73-74.

[11] Ibid., pp. 246-47.

[12] Ibid., pt. I, chap. 5, p. 182.

[13] Ibid., pt. I, chap. 3, p. 101.

[14] Ibid., pt. 1, chap. 5, p. 178.

[15] Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species (New York: Mentor, 1958). chap. 4, “Extinction Caused ...”, p. 112.

[16] Darwin, Descent of Man, pt. I, chap. 6, p. 201. 17Ibid., pt. 1, chap. 5, p. 168.

[17]

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., pp. 168-69.

[20] Ibid., p. 177.

[21] Ibid., pt. 2, chap. 21, pp. 402-3.

[22] Ibid., p. 403.

[23] Quoted in Desmond and Moore, Darwin,p. 652.

Francis Galton

Francis Galton was born on February 16, 1822, almost the very same day as his cousin Charles Darwin thirteen years earlier. Although he is not today as well known as his cousin, Galton's influence has been no less substantial. While his name may have faded, his contributions to the Culture of Death have not, for Galton was responsible, in great part, for applying Darwin's evolutionary arguments concerning natural selection to the improved breeding of human beings. This new science of breeding Galton dubbed "eugenics." In coining the term, Galton was looking for

> a brief word to express the science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognizance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise 'would have had.'[1]

Galton himself was what the English call "well bred" (the almost exact English equivalent of the term "eugenics", coinedby Galton from the Greek eugenês, "well born"). His ancestors included eminent physicians, scientists, and merchants, and the fortune of his father, Samuel Galton, allowed him an aristocratic way of life, freed from any toil but that which he would voluntarily undertake.

"Little Frank", as he was called by his affectionate family, showed early signs of his future brilliance. By two and a half Francis could read a simple book; at five he could recite poetry by Sir Walter Scott; and at six he knew Homer's Iliad and Odyssey quite thoroughly, if not by heart. When he was much older, Galton would regard such intellectual precocity in himself, and others as well, as a certain mark of hereditary genius. Interestingly enough, he was somehow disinclined to factor in the many hours of private tutoring lovingly provided by his doting older sister, Adèle (or "Delly").

As promising as these beginnings were, however, Galton's education, once it was administered from outside the home, showed less stunning results. He soon blended in with so many other English prep boys from the other classes who drudgingly learned their classics only under the shadow of the schoolmaster's threats.

In parallel to his cousin Charles, Galton was also shuffled into the study of

medicine. While Darwin utterly detested it and literally ran away from it after witnessing a botched operation, Galton persevered for a few years, but soon drifted away, preferring travel to the rigors of medical training. He continued to drift, first through Cambridge (1840-1844) and then, in 1845, down the Nile and through the Holy Land, returning home two years later to a life of leisure without direction. To say the least, the years up to 1849 gave no indication that his distinguished heredity would yield much more than a life devoted to travel, shooting game, and dancing.

Reports from the famous missionary-explorer David Livingstone (of “Dr. Livingstone, I presume” fame) sparked a strong interest in Galton to make an expedition to Africa, which he did under the aegis of the Royal Geographical Society. The expedition to Namibia in southern Africa was, for Galton, a success in every respect. The rigors of the expedition, the exercise of authority, and Galton’s newfound penchant for detailed analysis changed him from a mere drifter to one of the leading lights of his age.

The Royal Geographical Society, which had become fed up with the unscientific chitchat of mere travel diaries, was ecstatic to receive Galton’s very precise and thorough geographical measurements of a previously unmapped land and bestowed upon him its prestigious Founder’s Medal. This was the first of many honors Galton would receive, and his fame was now secure.

Before his interest in questions of heredity emerged, Galton would gain even more scientific notoriety. He not only published a successful guidebook for explorers, but continued as a leading member of the Royal Geographical Society. In addition, his interest in weather patterns, which arose during his experiences in Namibia, led him to the discovery of the anticyclone, and he was soon one of the founding figures in meteorology, helping to forge the science of weather prediction.

Had Galton kept with geography and meteorology, his life would not have issued in his helping to found the dark science of eugenics. But Galton read his cousin Charles Darwin’s Origin of Species soon after its publication in 1859, and it was this book that would change the direction of his life and, consequently, the direction of the West as well.

Ironically, Galton would apply Darwin’s analysis to human beings a half decade before Darwin himself would do so publicly. Darwin studiously avoided applying his evolutionary arguments in the Originto human beings, fearing the social and intellectual ostracism visited upon earlier proponents of evolution. Galton showed no such restraint, publishing a two-part article in Macmillan’s Magazine in 1865 called “Hereditary Talent and Character” and then the more famous book Hereditary Genius in 1869.

Precisely because so many have tried to distance Darwin's evolutionary arguments from the eugenics movement, we must be very clear about the relationship of Darwin's work to that of Galton. Darwin rested his evolutionary argument in the Origin of Species on a great inference. The Origin begins with a chapter entitled "Variation under Domestication", laying out the obvious effects that human beings have had on plants and animals under their care. Such selective breeding to improve the stock—whether of wheat, roses, sheep, or cattle—is an example of artificial selection, where "nature gives successive variations; [and] man adds them up in certain directions useful to him."[2]

"The great power of this principle of selection", Darwin argued, "is not hypothetical. It is certain that several of our eminent breeders have, even within a single lifetime, modified to a large extent their breeds of cattle and sheep."[3] Furthermore, Darwin pointed out, breeders use artificial selection to eliminate the "rogues", the substandard plants or animals, "for hardly any one is so careless as to breed from his worst animals [or plants]."[4]

On the basis of the "great power" of artificial selection, Darwin then argued for his great principle of natural selection, wherein "variations, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if they be in any degree profitable to the individuals of a species . . . will tend to the preservation of such individuals, and will generally be inherited by the offspring."[5] Ifartificial selection can effect such great changes in so short a time, Darwin reasoned, then natural selection could bring about any degree of change, given a sufficiently long time. The rest of the Origin is dedicated to the task of arguing for the validity of that great inference.

Whereas Darwin began with artificial selection in order to make his case for natural selection, Galton's concern was to remove human breeding from the realm of natural selection and subject it to the beneficent hand of artificial selection. In this, he reasoned in the reverse of Darwin in the Origin: if the evolution of human beings has occurred largely by natural selection, but natural selection is both slow and undirected, then human beings should take evolution out of the hands of nature and apply the breeder's art to themselves in order to improve the human stock. And so Galton's Hereditary Genius begins:

I propose to show in this book that a man's natural abilities are derived by inheritance, under exactly the same limitations as are the form and physical features of the whole organic world. Consequently, as it is easy ... to obtain by careful selection a permanent breed of dogs or horses gifted with peculiar powers of running, or of doing anything else, so it would be quite practicable to produce a highly-gifted race of men by judicious marriages during several

consecutive generations.[6]

"I conclude", continued Galton, "that each generation has enormous power over the natural gifts of those that follow, and maintain that it is a duty we owe to humanity to investigate the range of that power, and to exercise it in a way that, without being unwise towards ourselves, shall be most advantageous to future inhabitants of the earth."[7]

Not long after the publication of Hereditary Genius, Darwin wrote to his cousin expressing his admiration for the work, exclaiming that, after only fifty pages, he had to stop and "exhale myself [sic], else something will go wrong with my inside. I do not think I ever in all my life read anything more interesting and original—and how well and clearly you put every point!"[8] Oddly, Darwin then exclaimed that Galton had "made a convert of an opponent in one sense, for I have always maintained that, excepting fools, men did not differ much in intellect, only in zeal and hard work; and I still think this is an eminently important difference."[9]

However important that difference may have seemed, Darwin published his Descent of Man within two years of Gal-ton's Hereditary Genius and in it attempted to demonstrate how human intelligence and moral characteristics are both the results of natural selection and, further, that it was now time to consider artificial selection of these beneficial human traits. Remarking that "excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed", Darwin suggested that "the weaker and inferior members of society" should not be allowed to marryso freely as the sound." Such a policy would check the degradation of the race.[10]

Whether or not Darwin had seen clearly the eugenic connection to his own theory prior to reading Galton is a matter of controversy. There is no doubt, however, given the argument and the number of times Galton is cited, that Darwin fully embraced the eugenic connection by the time he published his Descent of Man."The advancement of the welfare of mankind is a most intricate problem," Darwin mused, "as Mr. Galton has remarked, if the prudent avoid marriage, whilst the reckless marry, the inferior members will tend to supplant the better members of society." Yet man "might by selection do something not only for the bodily constitution and frame of his offspring, but for their intellectual and moral qualities as well." Those "in any marked degree inferior in body or mind" should "refrain from marriage", while "the most able should not be prevented by laws or customs from succeeding best and rearing the largest number of offspring." By such artificial selection, or eugenics, as it would come to be called, the caliber of the human species could be raised. "All do good

service", maintained Darwin, "who aid towards this end."[11]

Obviously Darwin considered Hereditary Genius to have done "good service . . . towards this end", and that makes it well worth analyzing in more detail. In it, Galton applied his penchant for detailed analysis honed on his African expedition to questions of hereditary greatness. Lacking other means of proving his point, he relied on the assumption that "reputation is a pretty accurate test of high ability."[12] He then proceeded to analyze the family lines of eminent Englishmen, as classed according to areas of recognized greatness, from judges, statesmen, and commanders to men of science, poets, and musicians.

The point of the nearly endless analysis of English Who's Who catalogues in each area was "to prove that genius is hereditary" by "showing how large is the number of instances in which men who are more or less illustrious have eminent kinsfolk" and further that "the near relations of very eminent men are more frequently eminent than those who are more remote."[13]

As scientific as this may sound, Galton himself provided readers with the clearest statement of his own bias, declaring that

> I have no patience with the hypothesis occasionally expressed, and often implied, especially in tales written to teach children to be good, that babies are born pretty much alike, and that the sole agencies in creating differences between boy and boy, and man and man, are steady application and moral effort. It is in the most unqualified manner that I object to pretensions of natural equality.[14]

This impatience led Galton to place the entire burden of intellectual and moral achievement on heredity.[15] One notes, with some irony, that Galton's proof of hereditary superiority was "achievement", the effect alleged to be from heredity alone, but that in measuring only achievement, there was no way to disentangle the effects of circumstance and opportunity—something reviewers of his book were quick to point out.[16]

Yet if Galton were trying to demonstrate only the truism that, generally speaking, "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree", he would have merely given some rough scientific substance to an ordinary insight. But as we have seen, the claim that natural ability is hereditary was part of a larger eugenic vision.

For Galton, the "laws of heredity" apply to both the "mental and bodily faculties of individuals", and therefore both can be improved by judicious breeding. But this "vast ... power . . . vested in each generation over the very natures of their successors" has remained, sadly, "unused." Even though Darwin

brought to public attention how much beneficial change could be wrought by careful breeding of plants and animals, the “great problem of the future betterment of the human race is confessedly, at the present time, hardly advanced beyond the stage of academic interest.” Galton then added,

> but thought and action move swiftly nowadays, and it is by no means impossible that a generation which has witnessed the exclusion of the Chinese race from the customary privileges of settlers in two continents, and the deportation of a Hebrew population from a large portion of a third, may live to see other analogous acts performed under sudden socialistic pressure.[17]

These ominous words were written by Galton for the 1892 edition of Hereditary Genius. By this time, twenty-three years after its first edition, the eugenic movement spawned by Galton’s efforts had already gathered international support and was ready to “move swiftly” into the twentieth century, far “beyond the stage of academic interest.” In Galton’s prophetic words, the “questions about to be considered [in Hereditary Genius] may unexpectedly acquire importance as falling within the sphere of practical politics.”[18]

As is evident in these words, Galton believed that improving the human race really meant not only improvement among individuals of a race, but also, more importantly, the biological triumph of the superior races over the inferior. The capacities characteristic of each race, Galton reminded the reader, are derived from “the conditions under which it has lived, owing to the sure operation of Darwin’s law of natural selection.”[19] Each race can then be ranked by how high it has climbed up the evolutionary slope.

Resting on his experiences in Africa, Galton began “comparing the worth of different races” by contrasting “the Negro race with the Anglo-Saxon, with respect to those qualities alone which are capable of producing judges, statesmen, commanders, men of literature and science, poets, artists, and divines.”[20]To sum up, “the Negro race” does not fare very well in this comparison. While they are capable of some positions of moderate eminence in trade, “the number among the Negroes of those whom we should call half-witted men is very large.” Indeed, the “mistakes the Negroes made in their matters”, which Galton witnessed in Africa, “were so childish, stupid, and simpleton-like, as frequently to make me ashamed of my own species.” “The Australian type”, added Galton, “is at least one grade below the African negro.”[21]

That is not to say the Anglo-Saxon race has been the greatest; rather, the “ablest race of whom history bears record is unquestionably the ancient Greek”, a race that fell from its heights from laxity in its breeding. Had they been able to

attend to the advice of Galton in this regard and displaced other populations by fervent but well-directed breeding, the Greek race “would assuredly have accomplished results advantageous to human civilization, to a degree that transcends our powers of imagination.”[22]

Such nights of imagination brought Galton to exclaim, “If we could raise the average standard of our race only one grade [an increment devised by Galton to measure levels of genius], what vast changes would be produced!”[23] This was not a vague wish for Galton, but an issue of pressing, practical immediacy. It was “most essential to the well-being of future generations, that the average standard of ability of the present time should be raised”, because evolution was lagging behind the demands of modern civilization, even among the English. “The needs of centralization, communication, and culture, call for more brains and mental stamina than the average of our race possess.... Our race is overweighted [sic], and appears likely to be drudged into degeneracy by demands that exceed its powers.”[24]

Especially at odds with the demands of modern civilization are the “Bohemian habits” of our evolutionary ancestors, which, unfortunately, still mark too many characters in the West. Happily, “as the Bohemianism in the nature of our race is destined to perish, the sooner it goes the happier for mankind.”[25] Foreshadowing Hitler, Galton remarked in his original eugenic essay in Macmillan’s Magazine that, as a singularly unpleasant example of the disruption caused by “men who are born with wild and irregular dispositions .. . alien to the spirit of a civilized country”, one should note the “numerous instances in England where the restless nature of gipsy half-blood asserts itself with irresistible force.”[26]

“Much more alien to the genius of an enlightened civilization than the nomadic habit” of the Bohemian, however, “is the impulsive and uncontrolled nature of the savage.” More than any other race, the savage races have “not kept pace with the development of our moral civilization.” Yet even the races most developed “under Darwin’s law of natural selection” are still lagging behind.[27]

Given this situation, Galton recommended, exactly as had Darwin, that “an enormous effect upon the average natural ability of a race may be produced” by means of regulation of breeding. “I shall argue that the wisest policy is that which results in retarding the average age of marriage among the weak, and in hastening it among the vigorous classes.”[28] Simply put, the well-born should breed far more; the ill-born should breed far less, if at all.

The “improvement of the natural gifts of future generations of the human race is largely, though indirectly, under our control.” The “processes of evolution”, left to themselves, are ambiguous, “some pushing towards the bad,

some towards the good. Our part is to watch for opportunities to intervene by checking the former and giving free play to thelatter." With this in mind, Galton hoped that future scientific inquiries could be directed "with the view of estimating the possible effects of reasonable political action in the future, in gradually raising the present miserably low standard of the human race to one in which the Utopias in the dreamland of philanthropists may become practical possibilities."[29]

Galton laid out a clear eugenic program in his 1873 essay for Frazer's Magazine entitled "Hereditary Improvement." He imagined a pedigree data bank being set up which would soon bring to light the most "hereditarily remarkable." After a couple of generations of artificial selection, "the number of families of really good breed" would emerge to "become a power." As the well-bred multiplied, "the non-gifted would begin to decay out of the land, whenever they were brought face to face in competition with them [i.e., the well-bred], just in the same way as inferior races always disappear before superior ones." The inferiors would be treated "with all kindness" as long as they complied with their enforced celibacy; however, if in the future they began to breed, "such persons would be considered as enemies to the State, and to have forfeited all claims to kindness."[30]

While Galton would not live long enough to see the full flower of practical eugenics in the twentieth century, from forced sterilization and attempts at racial extermination to genetic screening and abortion, his forceful and persistent advocacy of eugenics sowed a broad field of eugenic societies all over Europe and America. He himself established the Francis Galton Laboratory for the Study of Eugenics, staffed by a Francis Galton Fellow in National Eugenics and a Francis Galton Scholar, and he endowed the Galton Professorship for eugenics at the University of London. Like-minded eugenics societies and honorific chairs sprang up all over Europe and America by the turn of the twentieth century.

To the end of his life, Galton maintained that eugenics was both more kind and more effective than natural selection. "Natural selection rests upon excessive production and wholesale destruction," wrote Galton in his autobiography, Memories of My Life, but "eugenics on bringing no more individuals into the world than can be properly cared for, and only those of the best stock."[31]

For Galton and his followers, eugenics became a kind of religious cause, a way to save the world through the practical application of the principles Darwin had announced to the world. Galton was determined that eugenics "be introduced into the national conscience, like a new religion", so that "humanity shall be represented by the fittest races. What nature does blindly, slowly, and ruthlessly, man may do providentially, quickly, and kindly."[32] As the twentieth

century would soon show, those impassioned by zeal for the new religion of eugenics were to be far more ruthless than nature.

Near the end of Hereditary Genius, Galton sketched his version of a eugenic Utopia. It is impossible not to see in outline what the Nazis would soon enough try to impose.

> The time may hereafter arrive, in far distant years, when the population of the earth shall be kept as strictly within the bounds of number and suitability of race, as the sheep on a well-ordered moor or the plants in an orchard-house; in the meantime, let us do what we can to encourage the multiplication of the races best fitted to invent and conform to a high and generous civilization, and not, out of a mistaken instinct of giving support to the weak, prevent the incoming of strong and hearty individuals.[33]

Yet it would be a complete misrepresentation of history to think that eugenics passed from Galton solely into the hands of the Nazis. Again, Galton's work was widely disseminated, widely read, and widely admired, not only in Britain, but also in America, France, and Germany.

As Galton approached the close of his life, his honors only increased. In 1902 he received the Darwin Medal of the Royal Society and was also elected an Honorary Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. In November of 1909, he was knighted, an honor that signified the widespread support for eugenics, both popularly and scientifically. Late in 1910, he received the Copley Medal of the Royal Society, but was too feeble to accept. Bringing eugenics full circle, it was Sir George Darwin, son of Charles Darwin, who accepted the medal on Galton's behalf about a month and a half before Galton's death.

Galton's last work was a fanciful eugenic novel entitled Kantsaywhere, which incorporated every desired eugenic element, from rigorous examinations to determine eugenic fitness and eugenic certificates to labor camps for the unfit, secondary breeding status for the average, and punishment of those who would not comply. The novel was never published, but the inspiration for the novel would soon find fulfillment.

The First International Congress of Eugenics, organized by Galton's Eugenics Education Society, opened on July 24, 1912, a year and a half after Galton's death. Galton was honored posthumously, and Major Leonard Darwin, another son of Charles Darwin, was named president of the Congress.

In his presidential address to the Congress, Major Darwin echoed the words both of Galton and of his father. The stock of civilization was declining because of bad breeding. "The unfit amongst men are now no longer necessarily killed

off by hunger and disease, but are cherished with care, thus being enabled to reproduce their kind, however bad that kind may be.” While Darwin did not advocate a return “to the crude methods of natural selection”, he was clear that “the effects likely to be produced by our charity on future generations is, to say the least, but weakness and folly.” Striking hard the bell of alarm, Darwin reminded his hearers that “certainly, Sir Francis Galton, whose name we hope will ever in future be associated with the science [of eugenics], a science to which he devoted the best years of his long life, declared with no uncertain voice that something should be attempted without further delay.”[34] Darwin’s speech was greeted with loud and appreciative cheering.

Again, that cheering spread all over the globe, not just to Germany. We must never forget that in the United States, involuntary sterilization laws were passed in state after state, beginning with Indiana in 1907. The Immigration Act of 1924 set up a quota in an attempt to dry up immigration of racial undesirables. In 1927 the Supreme Court voted eight to one in favor in support of the constitutionality of such eugenic sterilization. Further, Margaret Sanger’s eugenic vision dedicated to the eugenic elimination of the unfit through birth control, a vision that gave rise to Planned Parenthood, had its birth in the United States as well. Planned Parenthood carries Galton’s eugenic vision into the twenty-first century, with its push for genetic screening to locate the undesirables and abortion to eliminate them. The shadow cast by Galton is indeed long, as we in the twenty-first century fervently seek every new method of taking evolution into our own hands.

To end on a note of irony, Francis Galton was married to Louisa Butler on August 1, 1853. As they were soon to find out, they were biologically unable to have any children. Thus, the great advocate of hereditary genius, for whom the increased breeding of the most fit was the most urgent of tasks, died childless.

—B.D.W

[1] Francis Galton, Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1907, 1928), p. 17, n. 1.

[2] Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species (New York: Mentor, 1958), p. 48.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 49.

[5] Ibid., p. 75.

[6] Francis Galton, Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into Its Laws and

Consequences (London: Macmillan, 1925), p. 1.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Letter of Charles Darwin to Francis Galton, Dec. 3, 1869. Quoted in Nicholas Wright Gillham, A Life of Sir Francis Galton: From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 169.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 168-69.

[11] Ibid., p. 403.

[12] Gillham, Sir Francis Galton, p. 2.

[13] Ibid., pp. 5, 73.

[14] Ibid., p. 72.

[15] Trying, so it seemed, to account for the late blossoming of his own he reditary genius after years of meandering, Galton noted that “a gifted man is often capricious and fickle before he selects his occupation, but when it has been chosen, he devotes himself to it with a truly passionate ardour.” Galton, Hereditary Genius, p. 21.

[16] See Gillham, Sir Francis Galton, pp. 170—71.

[17] Galton, Hereditary Genius, pp. xix—xx.

[18] Ibid., p. xx.

[19] Ibid., p. 325.

[20] Ibid., p. 326.

[21] Ibid., p. 328.

[22] Ibid., p. 331.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 333.

[25] Ibid., pp. 334-35.

[26] Francis Galton, “Hereditary Talent and Character”, Macmillan’s Magazine, 12 (1865): 325-26.

[27] Galton, Hereditary Genius, pp. 336—37.

[28] Ibid., p. 339.

[29] Ibid., p. xxvii.

[30] Quoted in Gillham, Sir Francis Galton, pp. 196-97.

[31] Quoted in ibid., p. 335.

[32] Quoted in ibid., p. 328.

[33] Galton, Hereditary Genius, p. 343.

[34] Quoted in Gillham, Sir Francis Galton, pp. 347-48.

Ernst Haeckel

Ernst Heinrich Haeckel was born on February 16, 1834, in the city of Potsdam, Germany. Not long after his birth, the Haeckel family moved to Merseburg, where his father worked for the government as a lawyer. As a child, Ernst was quite interested in botany and, foreshadowing his later fascination with Darwinism, kept a collection of plants—or rather, two collections. One was arranged according to the standard, distinct classification of plant species. The other, which Haeckel kept private, was a collection of all the various plants that did not fit the neat categories provided by the botanists. It was the latter collection that fascinated young Haeckel. To his satisfaction, these specimens "illustrated the direct transition from one good species to another. They were the officially forbidden fruit of knowledge in which I took a secret boyish delight in my leisure hours."[1]

As with Darwin, Haeckel's parents wanted him to become a physician. Unlike Darwin, Haeckel actually completed his medical degree and received his license in 1858. But Haeckel had little desire to practice medicine and soon took himself to the University of Jena to study zoology. The year after finishing his doctorate in 1861, Haeckel became professor of zoology and comparative anatomy at the University of Jena, a position that he retained the rest of his life. That same year he married Anna Sethe. Haeckel would become one of the most brilliant and influential zoologists of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the man who, more than any other, provided the bridge from Darwin's racial and eugenic arguments to the racial and eugenic policies of Hitler's Third Reich.

Darwin's Origin of Species was first translated into German in 1860, the year following its publication in England. Haeckel read it that summer while working on his doctorate, and, according to him, the "scales fell from my eyes", for he "found in Darwin's great unified conception of nature and in his overwhelming foundation for the doctrine of evolution the solution of all the doubts which had bothered me since the beginning of my biological studies."[2] Six years later, Haeckel published his two-volume Generelle Morphologie, his great effort at subsuming all science under Darwinian principles. In part, his achievement was the result of him throwing himself into the task with a fervor born of grief. Haeckel's beloved wife, Anna, suddenly became ill in February of 1864, dying on the fourteenth, Haeckel's thirtieth birthday. (Haeckel would marry again, in 1867, to Agnes Huschke, the daughter of an anatomy professor at Jena.)

Haeckel's admiration for Darwin was unbounded. Before meeting Darwin, he sent a continual stream of letters to him, detailing the success of Darwinismus in Germany and informing him that he had turned Jena into a "citadel of Darwinism."[3] As professor of zoology at the University of Jena, he was a tireless promoter of Darwinism and informed Darwin that he had built up his classes to enormous sizes, 150 students per class. As a grieving young husband, he had even sent Darwin a photo of his beloved wife and also made sure that Darwin had the first proof sheet of Generelle Morphologie in 1866. (Darwin's German was terrible. After sweating over Haeckel's work for several weeks, making amazingly little headway, he declared to Thomas Huxley that "I am sure I should like the book much, if I could read it straight off instead of groaning and swearing at each sentence."[4])

In the same year, the dashing young Haeckel made a pilgrimage to Downe, England, to see the aging Darwin and was well received (and this was by no means the last visit of Haeckel, although Darwin's wife, Emma, who was less than amused by his roaring and bombast, no doubt wished that it were). Indeed, Darwin would write to a friend in Bonn that the popularity of Darwinism in Germany, not England, was the "chief ground for hoping that our views will ultimately prevail."[5] Late in life, after Darwin published his Descent of Man (1871), he would write to Haeckel, telling him that "I doubt whether my strength will last for much more serious work", yet "it does not much signify when I stop, as there are so many good men fully as capable, perhaps more capable than myself, of carrying on our work; and of these you rank as the first."[6]

Of course, Haeckel was an adherent of the entire Darwinian system, offering not only the descriptive biological theory, but also the proscriptive eugenic agenda that would be set forth in Darwin's Descent (and doing so with a vigor and anticlerical candor that made the far more cautious Darwin nervous). In fact, it would be fair to say that Haeckel's importance did not reside in him offering anything new, but precisely in drawing out the full implications of Darwinism, proclaiming the new truth with intensity, frequency, and brutal consistency, something Darwin himself was loath to do. Thus, we find in Haeckel unwavering, candid support not only for eugenics and racial extermination, but for abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia as well.

A great part of Haeckel's influence, both in Germany and elsewhere, was a result of his willingness to ascend the popular platform and preach Darwinism, loud and clear, in a way that would appeal to the masses. Repeating the experience of so many influential thinkers, Haeckel found that his magnum opus, the Generelle Morphologie, was too intellectually thick and cumbersome to have sufficient effect, so he soon wrote two popularizations, Naturliche

Schopfungsgeschichte(1868) and Anthropogenie (1874), which became immediate best sellers, thereby making him one of the most influential scientists of his day—and not just in Germany. Haeckel's views were quite influential far beyond his own country's borders. His books not only sold in the hundreds of thousands in Germany, but on the international level were translated into twenty-five languages.

If we look more closely at his mode of presentation, we may see why he was such a persuasive disciple. Haeckel was not content to offer Darwinism as a mere scientific account of the origin and the development of species. He understood, and rightly so, that it was part of the entire materialist cosmology that had slowly infiltrated Western thought since the Renaissance.[7] This new cosmology needed a religion to go with it, and Haeckel made of Darwinism a kind of religious natural philosophy, which he named "Monism", a term meant to contrast with the "Dualism" of spirit and matter. For Haeckel, the perversion of European life and thought occurred when humanity became detached from nature by the belief that human beings were qualitatively different from other natural things through having an immortal soul. The chief bearer of this "dualist" view was Christianity (although he viewed Platonism as a culprit as well). Haeckel saw Christianity and materialist science locked in a cultur-kampf. He dedicated Monism, the religion of scientific materialism, to the extirpation of not only this erroneous dualism, but even more of its bearer, Christianity.

As an antidote to Christianity, Monism was a strange mixture of pure materialism and quasi-pantheistic nature worship. "Alles ist Natur, Natur ist Alles." For Haeckel, "The monistic idea of God, which alone is compatible with our present knowledge of nature, recognizes the divine spirit in all things." By this he meant that we were to consider the "animation" of brute matter by energy and the lawlike aspects of nature to be our new deity, such that "we might, therefore, represent God as the sum of all natural forces, the sum of all atomic forces and all ether-vibrations."[8]

Being a devout pantheist, Haeckel believed that Christianity had deflected the German people from their proper, pre-Christian pagan worship of nature and that a return must be made to these pre-Christian roots. (He even advocatedworship of the sun!) Haeckel thereby gave voice to the infamous German Volkist movement, later used with such great effect by Hitler, in which Germans were admonished to return to their racial roots, their historical, natural "folk" (Volk) origins, and shed the perverted accretions and perversions of the Christian faith.

For Haeckel, Darwinism was the science that allowed for the undermining of every aspect of dualist Christianity. In his Wonders of Life, Haeckel ridiculed

the Apostles' Creed. Against the belief that "God the Father Almighty" was "Creator of heaven and earth", Haeckel claimed that the "modern science of evolution has shown that there never was any such creation, but that the universe is eternal and the law of substance all-ruling." Jesus Christ fared no better. "The myth of the conception and birth of Jesus Christ is mere fiction, and is at the same stage of superstition as a hundred other myths of other religions. ... The curious adventures of Christ after his death, the descent into hell, resurrection, and ascension, are also fantastic myths due to the narrow geocentric ideas of an uneducated people."[9] Of course, the Resurrection, for Haeckel, was fictional as well, for "atha-natism [the belief in the immortality of the soul] became quite untenable when Darwin shattered the dogma of anthro-pocentricism" by establishing human beings as just one more animal on the ever-changing evolutionary spectrum.9The belief that human beings were the pinnacle of creation upon earth was a "boundless presumption of conceited man [and] has misled him into making himself 'the image of God,' claiming an 'eternal life' for his ephemeral personality."[10] For Haeckel, it was "utterly senseless now to speak of the immortality of the human person, when we know that this person, with all its individual qualities of body and mind, has arisen from the act of fertilization."[11] Thus, man's "whole psychic life differs from that of the nearest related mammals only in degree, and not in kind."[12]

Darwinism was the cure for our illusions, making clear that we were not the pinnacle of nature as intentionally created by some divine being outside of nature, but just one more product of evolution from within nature. As a consequence, we must turn away from the illusory, unscientific belief in human beings as created in the image of God and embrace the laws of evolution as our own. Darwinian natural selection must become, then, the foundation for human society and morality and sweep away the Christian-based laws and moral code, which inhibit the natural struggle and consequent survival of the fittest.

For Haeckel and the Monists, Christianity's superstitious belief that each individual of the human species had an immaterial soul caused the weak to be protected from the rigors of natural selection. This foolish charity "practiced in our civilized states sufficiently explains the sad fact that, in reality, weakness of the body and character are on the perpetual increase among civilized nations, and that, together with strong, healthy bodies, free and independent spirits are becoming more and more scarce."[13] "What good does it do to humanity to maintain artificially and rear the thousands of cripples, deaf-mutes, idiots, etc., who are born every year with an hereditary burden of incurable disease?" asked Haeckel. "It is no use to reply that Christianity forbids [their destruction]." Such opposition "is only due to sentiment and the power of conventional morality—

that is to say, to the hereditary bias which is clothed in early youth with the mantle of religion, however irrational and superstitious be its foundation. Pious morality of this sort is often really the deepest immorality." According to the new religion of Monism, based as it was on the harsh facts of nature, "Sentiment should never be allowed to usurp the place of reason in these weighty ethical questions."[14]

True to his word, Haeckel followed the dictates of his cool reason, and according to its calculations, society had no place for the biologically unfit. Haeckel was incensed that "hundreds and thousands of incurables—lunatics, lepers, people with cancer, etc.—are artificially kept alive .. . without the slightest profit to themselves or the general body [of society]." The problem was caused by not only misguided charity, but also the wrongful application of medical science itself, for "the progress of medical science, although still little able to cure diseases, yet possesses and practices more than it used to do the art of prolonging life during lingering, chronic diseases of many years."[15] The new science demanded a new medicine, one in accord with the Darwinian account of nature that, instead of inhibiting natural selection, would speed up the extermination of the unfit. Monism needed a medicine that would both cure and kill.

This new medicine would also promote not only the killing of others but also the killing of oneself. Christianity forbade suicide, arguing that since all human beings were made in the image of God, murder, even self-murder, was forbidden. Of course, this prohibition was understood in light of the existence of the human immortal soul, the ultimate destiny of which was not of this world. Monism rejected the immortal soul and the prohibition against suicide as well. Foreshadowing the Culture of Death's strategy of dressing acts once considered immoral with compassionate words, Haeckel called suicide a "redemptive" act. Life was not a gift, but the result of an accident of passion. Thus,

> if.. . the circumstances of life come to press too hard on the poor being who has thus developed, without any fault of his, from the fertilized ovum—if, instead of the hoped-for good, there come only care and need, sickness and misery of every kind—he has the unquestionable right [emphasis added] to put an end to his sufferings by death.. .. The voluntary death by which a man puts an end to intolerable suffering is really an act of redemption.... No feeling man who has any real "Christian love for his neighbor" will grudge his suffering brother the eternal rest and the freedom from pain which he has obtained by his self-redemption.[16]

As with suicide, also with abortion. Haeckel well understood that the prohibition of abortion was rooted in Christianity, “that it was the first to extend legal protection to the human embryo, and punished abortion with death as a mortal sin.”[17] But Monist materialism in general and Darwinism in particular had made such views untenable, for human beings were not made in the image of God, endowed with immortal souls at conception, but were merely biological growths within their mothers who had full authority over their lives and deaths. Sounding exactlylike today’s proponents of abortion, Haeckel argued that “the ovum is part of the mother’s body over which she has full right of control [emphasis added] and that the embryo that develops from it, as well as the new-born child, is quite unconscious, or is a purely ‘reflex machine,’ like any other vertebrate.”[18]

Haeckel therefore enunciated a new code of ethics, one that would provide abortion proponents with an endless supply of self-justification and that has now become popular with such “cutting-edge” philosophers as Michael Tooley and Peter Singer as a justification for infanticide. Since we have no immortal soul, then we must consider human beings merely in terms of biological development. Human beings do not start out as persons, but slowly become persons (provided they are not in any way deformed). We become persons, Haeckel reasoned, only insofar as we have minds, but since the distinguishing moral characteristic, mind, “only develops, slowly and gradually, long after birth”, human beings are indistinguishable from the mother in the womb and from other animals for some time outside the womb. We become distinct as human beings only when “rational consciousness” reveals itself “for the first time (after the first year) at the moment when the child speaks of itself, not in the third person, but as ‘I’.”[19] Of course, if development does not occur, or occurs too slowly, then it is quite easy to consign such “creatures” to the deserved fate of the biologically unfit.

This same kind of reasoning applied to Haeckel’s assessment of the different human races as well. As with Darwin, Haeckel believed that the different races were evolutionary developments, and as developments, some were more advanced than others. Unlike Darwin, Haeckel believed that the pinnacle of evolution had been reached in Germany, not England. But the core reasoning was the same. Since human beings, as the product of materialist evolution, do not share a common rational soul, then the different races (as distinct developing branches on the evolutionary tree) manifest distinct intellectual and moral abilities. Indeed, Haeckel thought the differences between races were far more pronounced than did Darwin, for “the morphological differences between two generally recognized species—for instance, sheep . . .

and goats—are much less important than those between a Papuan and Esquimaux [i.e., Eskimo], or between a Hottentot and a man of the Teutonic race."[20] This had direct moral consequences. Since "the great differences in the mental life and the civilization of the higher and lower races of men are . . . undervalued, . . . the value of life at different levels is falsely estimated." Different evolutionary gradations entail different estimations of the worth of members of each race. According to Haeckel, the "lower races (such as the Veddahs or Australian Negroes) are psychologically nearer to the mammals (apes and dogs) than to civilized Europeans", and consequently, "we must... assign a totally different value to their lives." This reevaluation of the worth of the different races was necessary precisely because the "gulf between [the] thoughtful mind of civilized man and the thoughtless animal soul of the savage is enormous—greater than the gulf that separates the latter from the soul of the dog."[21] He could hardly have been more blunt.

Again, Haeckel believed that he was a member of the most favored race, for it was the Germans who had "deviated furthest from the common primary form of ape-like men", and so it was the Germans who, having climbed the highest rung of the evolutionary ladder, are "laying the foundation for a new period of higher mental development."[22] German racial superiority and purity, then, became important, because interbreeding, especially with those races on the lower end of the evolutionary spectrum, would degrade the Teutonic "species." For Haeckel and the Monists, the nation-state represented the unifying organic power by which the race was naturally organized, for (they argued) the nation-state simply was the result of racially defined breeding. Consequently, the volkist unification and isolation of Germanic people as the highest "species" of humanity became paramount both scientifically and politically, and the good of the individual was subsumed under the good of the race as directed by the racially defined state. Only with such unification and isolation could the rigors of natural selection purify and elevate the Teutonic race.

Contrary to assertions of all too many historians, it is no stretch at all to go from Darwin to Haeckel's Darwinist Monism and on to Hitler's Nazism, as the words of Hitler himself make quite clear: "Providence [i.e., the laws of nature] has endowed living creatures with a limitless fecundity; but she has not put in their reach, without the need for effort on their part, all the food they need. All that is very right and proper, for it is the struggle for existence that produces the selection of the fittest."[23] Natural selection is the engine of purification, and as with all other species of nature, this purification demands the isolation of particular breeds or races. For this reason, Hitler asserted, "the folkish [volkish] philosophy finds the importance of mankind in its basic racial elements." The

end of the state, as he made clear in Mein Kampf, is

> the preservation of the racial existence of man. Thus, it by no means believes in the equality of the races, but along with their differences it [i.e., the volkish philosophy] recognizes their higher or lesser value and feels itself obligated, through this knowledge, to promote the victory of the better and stronger, and demand the subordination of the inferior and weaker in accordance with the eternal will that dominates this universe.[24]

It is no surprise, then, to find that Haeckel's evolutionary eugenic arguments undergirded the Nazi eugenic program. Wilhelm Bolsche, a disciple and biographer of Haeckel, provided Hitler himself with "direct access to major ideas of Haeckelian social Darwinism"[25] along with his own popularized account of Haeckel's arguments. Further, as Robert Lifton has pointed out, "Haeckel was a constantly cited authority for the Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie (Archive of Racial and Social Biology), which was published from 1904 until 1944, and became a chief organ for the dissemination of eugenics ideas and Nazi pseudo science."[26]

While the public call for euthanasia arose prior to the turn of the century, it was Haeckel's Monist League journal Das monistische Jahrhundert that, in 1913, published the first sustained arguments supporting euthanasia. From these arguments came the even more influential euthanasia tract writtenby Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche entitled "Permission for the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life" (1920).[27] This tract, in turn, facilitated the easy acceptance of the Nazi euthanasia program Aktion T-4, which at five locations in Germany dispatched between 120,000 and 275,000 mental patients, physically disabled persons, incurables, and other "undesirables."[28]

To repeat, euthanasia was understood as a biological imperative, one inherent in the Darwinian reinterpretation of human life. The Monists, and later the Nazis, believed that Germany was on the brink of complete biological degradation and hence imminent collapse. Only the fittest should be allowed to breed. As for the unfit, Haeckel advocated a return to the practices of ancient Sparta, practices that, for him, were in direct imitation of the rigors of natural selection. The "destruction of new-born infants" who were either unfit or inferior should be considered, not as a species of murder, but as a "practice of advantage both to the infants destroyed and to the community."[29]

Haeckel died on August 9, 1919, having witnessed the humiliating defeat of his beloved Germany in World War I. "Finis Germaniae!!" he declared in a letter to a friend. For Haeckel, the peace achieved by the signing of the Armistice

would bring only the degradation of Germany and hence the degradation of the highest human type. The Weimar Republic, for him, would only make it worse. But Haeckel's ideas did not die with him; indeed, they would barely slumber, for they were taken up by Hitler and made an essential part of his entire ideology.

It might be tempting, having seen such lurid connections between Darwin, Haeckel, and the Nazis, to assume that such ideas were played out only in Germany. But such is not the case. The gospel of Darwinist eugenics was preached fervently all over Europe, and in America as well, and some of the most active and vociferous eugenic societies in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries were found in England and the United States. One need only to read the accounts of Englishman Sir Francis Galton and the Americans Margaret Sanger and Peter Singer to see how cross-cultural is the Culture of Death.

—B.D.W

[1] Quoted in Daniel Gasman's excellent The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League (London: MacDonald, 1971), p. xv.

[2] Quoted in Gasman, Scientific Origins, p. 6.

[3] Quoted in Adrian Desmond and James Moore, Darwin (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), pp. 538-39.

[4] Ibid., p. 542.

[5] Ibid., p. 539.

[6] Ibid., p. 591.

[7] See Benjamin Wiker, Moral Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), especially chaps. 3 to 5.

[8] Ernst Haeckel, The Confession of Faith of a Man of Science, trans. J. Gilchrist (London: Ada and Charles Black, 1895), p. 78.

[9] Ernst Haeckel, The Wonders of Life:A Popular Study of Biological Philosophy, trans. Joseph McCabe (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1905), pp. 63-64.

[10] Quoted in Gasman, Scientific Origins, p. 33.

[11] Ernst Haeckel, The History of Creation, trans. E. Ray Lankester (New York: D. Appleton, 1901), 1:341—42.

[12] Quoted in Gasman, Scientific Origins, p. 32.

[13] Ibid., p. 36.

[14] Haeckel, Wonders of Life, pp. 119-20.

[15] Quoted in Hugh Gallagher, By Trust Betrayed: Patients, Physicians,

and the License to Kill in the Third Reich, rev. ed. (Arlington, Va.: Vandamere Press, 1995), p. 56.

[16] Haeckel, Wonders of Life, pp. 112-14.

[17] Ibid., p. 325.

[18] Ibid., p. 326.

[19] Ibid., pp. 323-26.

[20] Quoted in Gasman, Scientific Origins, p. 40.

[21] Haeckel, Wonders of Life, pp. 390-91.

[22] Quoted in Gasman, Scientific Origins, p. 41.

[23] Quoted in Mike Hawkins, Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-194) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 274

[24] Quoted in Hawkins, Social Darwinism,p. 275.

[25] Gasman, Scientific Origins, p. 160.

[26] Robert Jay Lifton, The Nazi Doctors (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p. 441, footnote.

[27] Michael Burleigh, Death and Deliverance: “Euthanasia” in Germany c. 1900-1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 12ff.

[28] Gallagher, By Trust Betrayed, p. 86.

[29] Quoted in Gasman, Scientific Origins, p. 91.

PART THREE

THE SECULAR UTOPIANISTS

Karl Marx

When Karl Marx (1818-1883)was a young man, the thought of one day writing a critique on political economy was far from his mind. His literary enthusiasm at that time in his life was devoted to writing an epic poem about Prometheus. Marx saw the great hero of Greek mythology as the embodiment of humanism. Prometheus showed his love for his fellow men by giving them the fire he had stolen from the gods and then enduring, without complaint, the most excruciating suffering imaginable. According to the myth, the infuriated gods nailed Prometheus to a cliff and sent a vulture each day to claw out his liver, which would daily regrow only to be clawed out again. In the end, after untold years of unrelieved suffering, the gods were moved by his implacable endurance and set him free.

One of Marx's youthful poems illustrates his Promethean propensities as well as his aspirations to divinity:

Then I will wander godlike and victorious Through the world And, giving my words an active force, I will feel equal to the creator.[1]

Prometheus is a breathtaking figure of immensely heroic proportions. As such, he completely captivated the imagination of the young Marx. "I hate all the gods", he exclaimed. "I would much rather be bound to a rock, than to be the docile valet of Zeus the Father."[2] "Prometheus", Marx declared in his doctoral thesis, "is the first saint, the first martyr on the calendar of philosophy."[3] Marx hated the gods because the very idea that there might be a divinity outside of man necessarily meant oppression of the individual. He hated the concept of God because it prevented human beings from achieving their rightful human fulfillment, and so he went beyond his role model, Prometheus, by not just defying the gods, but denying their very existence. In this way, the gods could never again oppress man or torture his liberators. "Atheism is a negation of God and seeks to assert by this negation the existence of man."[4] Atheism, therefore, is a denial of an unreality that has been a logjam blocking the path of human progress. The sine qua non condition for man's authenticity, for Marx, is the nonexistence of God.

Marx was an atheist from his earliest days, by training and temperament more than by rational conviction. He found the "reasons" he needed to establish a convincing case for atheism in Ludwig Feuerbach's book The Essence of Christianity. According to Feuerbach, man creates God by projecting the better

part of himself onto a fictitious being. The more man is alienated from himself, the more he depends on God. If man ever became whole and complete, his need for God would disappear. “To enrich God,” Feuerbach wrote, “man must become poor; that God may be all, man must be nothing.”[5]

Marx regarded Feuerbach’s thesis as the only possible basis for an authentic humanism. He hailed Feuerbach as a second Luther in the history of human emancipation and boldly declared that man would achieve his greatness only after he had dethroned the gods.[6] Freed from the illusion of God, man would be free to possess himself fully. Feuerbach had articulated a program that Marx could embrace unreservedly, one that called for the conversion of “the friends of God into the friends of man, believers into thinkers, worshippers into workers, candidates for the other world into students of this world, Christians, who are on their own confession half-animal and half-angel, into men—whole men.”[7]

This notion of alienation, which Feuerbach derived from Georg Hegel, provided Marx with additional uses. Marx observed the dehumanizing role alienation also played in the workplace. He noted that in a system of capitalism, products as well as money are alienated forms of something that belongs to the worker as part of his essence. Moreover, just as the fictitious gods keep man suppressed, products and money assume ascendancy or dominance over man, like Frankenstein’s monster.[8] In Marx’s words:

> As in religion, man is governed by the products of his own brain, so in capitalistic production, he is governed by the products of his own hand. . .. Money is the alienated essence of man’s labor and life, and this alien essence dominates him as he worships it.[9]

Marx’s humanism, Communism, was taking shape. In order for man to come into his own, he had to stop believing in a fictitious God and not allow himself to be exploited in the workplace. Man was oppressed and consequently alienated from himself. This was the predicament. The solution called for bold measures—nothing less than a full-scale revolution that would liberate man from oppression and restore him to wholeness. The revolution would be complete when class conflict resolved into a classless society of equals who happily and freely cooperated with each other on equal terms. Marx himself was to act out the role of a Promethean liberator. He would be candid, bold, and terrifying:

> The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling class tremble at the Communist

revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries unite![10]

History has shown that untold millions of people lost their lives, not their chains, in the revolution that promised themfreedom from bondage. This is a tragic fact of history. But it is no less a fact that Marxism has broad and powerful appeal. And this, too, is tragic. Marx could not be more limpid in his call for violence. He advocated hanging capitalists from the nearest lampposts. In the newspaper he edited, Neue Rhe-nische Zeitung, he declared, " When our turn comes, we shall not disguise our terrorism."[11]The question naturally arises as to how a doctrine can be appealing in thought (as it was to Marxist sympathizers) and yet yield such appalling results in practice. How can people possibly accept a philosophy whose internal dynamic is set for certain violence and death? How could Marx and his colleagues be so frighteningly effective in pulling the wool over the eyes of the proletariat? The answer has to do with the messianic appeal that Marx had, which was sufficiently spellbinding as to allow Marx, a man who vehemently opposed exploitation, to be a greater exploiter than anyone he ever denounced—for it was the religious impulse of his followers that Marx unmercifully and systematically exploited.

Marx was an opportunist who took advantage of the void created by the decline of religion in nineteenth-century Europe. He offered his program as a substitute religion. Therefore, it had to parallel the Christian theology it was replacing. He needed to play the role of a messiah who was bringing to his people a light that illuminated the whole of man's epic drama.

As he was offering a substitute for Christianity, with Marx himself as the messiah, we find both parallels and distortions of Christian doctrine in Marx's teaching. Christianity teaches that Original Sin is an affront against God and a sin that has had dire effects on the integrity of all Adam's descendants. Secondly, as Cain slew Abel, man sins personally against his neighbor. Man's fallen state and penchant for moral transgression cry out for redemption, which exacts a price in the form of penance and suffering. Finally, redeemed man finds his beatitude in paradise with God.

Marx took the notions of Original Sin, personal sin, and redemption and purged them of what he believed to be their negative and unattractive associations. Since, for Marx, God did not exist, Original Sin could not be a transgression against him. Instead of freeing us from Original Sin, the messianic Marx proclaimed the necessity of the freedom of the proletariat from being exploited by the ruling class. By absorbing individual persons into classes, he absolved them of any capacity for sin as well as any grounds for guilt. Further,

since each person is a material product of his class, no conversion is possible. There could be no personal redemption, only a violent revolution that would purge humanity of the capitalist exploiting class. Finally, he relocated paradise to make it an earthly kingdom. He was a messiah for his time who was bringing to his people a new religion that was free of personal sin, guilt, the need for penance and suffering, and a Divine Redeemer. He was preaching religion without worship, paradise without God. In other words, he was preaching a parody of religion, offering the husk without the nourishing fruit. And this is why his program could not succeed, even though it could attract.

Marx has been called a "smuggler of ideas."[12] He derived his materialism from the Greek atomists, whom he researched for his Ph.D. dissertation. He took his "rational" atheism from Feuerbach. From Hegel he took the notion of a dialectical history, the idea that ultimate reality is unfolding according to its own inner laws of necessity from thesis to antithesis to synthesis. From Friedrich Engels he learned about the ruling class' exploitation of the working class. And he took his rage for justice and his conception of the logic and drama of history from his own Talmudic tradition.

Because he did not impose guilt on the proletarians and held them innocent, Marx presented himself as more humane than any God ever was. Yet this messiah, who was more humanistic than any God, was denying his subjects their own personal identities. In Das Kapital, he writes, "I speak of individuals insofar as they are personifications of special classes of relations and interests." One of his more celebrated axioms reads, "Men's social existence determines their consciousness." Men are not free; they are all socially conditioned. The individual person is swallowed up into the collective. He did not sin or experience guilt because he did not really exist as a person. Marx's arbitrary postulates that govern pseudoinnocence and dissolution of personal identity are evident in the opening section of the Communist Manifesto:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Free man and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word oppressor and oppressed, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in revolutionary reconstitution at large or in the common man of the contending classes.[13]

By absorbing the person into a class, Marx was doing something that parallels Hitler, who absorbed the person into a race. Marxism and Nazism had similarly dire outcomes, one leading to Auschwitz, the other to the Gulag Archipelago. They offered mere existence without life, which, as history has

shown, is a precise formula for death.

Marx and Engels, the joint authors of the Communist Manifesto, were by no means innocent in their own private lives. Francis Wheen's book Karl Marx:A Life is unsparing in pointing out his subject's personal failings.[14] Three months after Marx's wife gave birth to their fourth child, his housekeeper bore him a son. His first thought was how to protect his reputation. In what Wheen refers to as "one of the greatest cover-ups for the greater good of the Communist cause", Marx managed to get Engels, his close friend at the time, to take the blame and the woman to give up her five-week-old infant for adoption. It was important for Marx to create an image of himself as an innocent member of the working class who was oppressed by the ruling class (even though, in fact, he was never really a member of the working class).

Indeed, Marx was more interested in getting his material published than he was with alleviating or avoiding suffering even within his own family. To this end, he threatened to blackmail his mother, angered friends, and left his infant children to suffer malnutrition. Four of his six children predeceased him, and his two surviving daughters committed suicide. Marx, ever the spendthrift, was sued several times for nonpayment of debts. He was hated by his associates and former friends. At his funeral, an event that transpired with little notice in the press, only eleven people were present. Even then, Engels' words at the graveside were ideological and shallow: "Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law ofdevelopment of human history."[15] Marx, of course, merely parroted Hegel's theory of history, one that has been thoroughly discredited.

We also note that Engels himself was a shameless womanizer. He reported to Marx in 1846 of his "delicious" encounters with grisettes: "If I had an income of 5,000 fr. I would do nothing but work and amuse myself with women until I went to pieces. If there were no Frenchwomen, life wouldn't be worth living." [16]

It would not be an overstatement, then, to say that Marx and Engels may have been history's most successful con-artist team. They took a valid insight that was hardly original and packaged it with an array of egregious errors, radical misunderstandings of history, human nature, social causes, ethnic groups, nationalism, labor management, and religion. Then they sold it to the world, and the world bought it and paid for it with its own blood.

Their one valid insight was the recognition that there was gross, intolerable injustice in the workplace, that in far too many instances the capitalists were exploiting their workers. It was an insight that cried out for a correction. Marx and Engels saw the problem perhaps as clearly as anyone ever did, but their

bromide concealed a poison of its own. It suppressed the individual, encouraged classism (prejudice on the basis of class), and promoted violence. But its most deadly poison was its intolerance of religion that was bound up with its hatred of God.

Marx's atheistic humanism (or anthropocentric humanism) is unworkable and unlivable because it denies man's spiritual dimension, without which he cannot be whole. And, in denying God, it presents to man finite goods that cannot be adequate substitutes for the infinite good he seeks from the depths of his soul. Jacques Maritain, in True Humanism, states, "Atheism, if it could be lived down to its ultimate roots in the will, would disorganize and kill the will metaphysically."[17]

The human will aspires to pure goodness, which is God. Every will, by nature, seeks God, even if the individual who wills is not aware of the essential dynamism of his own volition. Atheism, if conscientiously and rigorously followed, would, in attempting to find infinite satisfaction in a finite object, experience a frustration and dissatisfaction that would be crippling.

Exclusive humanism, therefore, is inhuman humanism. Marxist atheism, particularly because of its absolute intolerance of religion, can bring about only a Culture of Death.

The reason that Pope John Paul II includes Marx among his three "Masters of Suspicion" is precisely because his thought represents the heart at war with itself. Indeed, there could be no greater war within the self than finite man trying to become infinite God. The Holy Father, borrowing the notion of "Masters of Suspicion" from philosopher Paul Ricoeur,[18] also includes Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche among the triumvirate. The latter two also manifest the same metaphysical frustration of trying to be God, rather than serving him. And for this reason, their essential contributions are also doomed to fail.[19]

When Marx dismissed religion, by his celebrated phrases, as "the opium of the people", the "halo of woe", and "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world",[20]he was criticizing not the authentic practice of religion, but its shell. Marx reacted, to employ Maritain's distinction, to the "christian world" and not to "Christianity."[21] That is to say, he mistook the caricature for the archetype, the mockery for the model. It would have been generous for Marx to say, "It is most unfortunate that people sometimes misuse religion by using it as a drug that dulls their moral and intellectual sensibilities." Therein, he would have reflected an understanding of the difference between fraudulent and authentic practices of religion. But he dismissed all religion because he judged the orthodox by its heterodox counterfeit. As a result, he did everything he could to prevent authentic religion from flowering.

Marx claimed, “It is easy to be a saint if you have no wish to be human.” He would see religion in nothing other than a negative light. Religion meant little to his own parents. His father, in order to be successful as a practicing attorney, traded his Judaism for Lutheranism. Tel père, tel fils. His family lived as liberal Protestants without any profound religious beliefs.[22]

No human, needless to say, would be eligible for sanctity without being thoroughly human. Marx used his own faulty ideology as a measuring stick by which to gauge religion. Christianity itself has a better indictment of the attempt to become holy without first becoming human. It stigmatizes such a practice as “Pharisaism.” Marx was in a hurry to change the world and had little concern for some of the more essential points of critical thinking. “ The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.”[23]

Given his shallow and precipitous dismissal of religion, it is not surprising that Marx was as naive about how easy it would be for his followers to become saints without God as he was misguided in judging how easy it would be for his adversaries to become saints without being human. Karl Stern remarks that the logic of Marxism produces neither a saint nor an authentic human being, but “a most fiendish form of dehumanization, something like a preternatural spectacle in which the human form can no longer be discerned.”[24] Marx asked people to believe what no sensible person could possibly believe. He asked them to believe that history was a kind of all-encompassing womb that would somehow cut time in two and deliver man “from the kingdom of necessity to that of liberty.”[25] “Marx denied the existence of God,” Allan Bloom comments, “but turned over all His functions to History, which is inevitably directed to a goal fulfilling of man and which takes the place of Providence.”[26]

Man deprived of God is a truncated man. In the strict sense, this is the very definition of hell. For all Marx’s messianic fury against alienation, he never understood that the deepest form of alienation is the one that separates self from neighbor. Marx focused on modes of production and the relationship between the worker and what he produces. In The Acting Person, Wojtyla points out that unless the alienation between human beings is overcome, everything else is in vain:

It is man who creates the systems of production, forms of technical civilization, Utopias of future progress, programs of social organization of human life, etc. Thus it is up to him to prevent such forms of civilization from developing that would cause a dehumanizing influence and ensuing alienation of the individual. Consequently, that alienation of human beings from their

fellowmen for which man himself is responsible, is the prime cause of any subsequent alienation resulting from the reference system of the material arrangements of goods and their distribution in social life. The essence of this alienation appears to be revealed by the commandment “Thou shalt love.” Man’s alienation from other men stems from a disregard for, or a neglect of, that depth of participation which is indicated by the term “neighbor” and by the neglect of the interrelations and inter-subordinations of men in their humanness expressed by this term, which indicates the most fundamental principle of any real community.[27]

Marx offers the world a surrogate religion that has many of the earmarks of Christianity, though in distorted forms. There is the promise of justice, redemption, joy, equality, community, and even a Utopian paradise. But the one missing element—love—renders it empty and useless. Without love, Marxism, as well as any other program that lacks the most fundamental and positive cohesive that unites human beings, must lead to a Culture of Death. In the case of Marxism, the chronicle of evidence is particularly clear. And if there is one thing that the historical experience of Marxism has taught us with seemingly irresistible clarity and force, amidst the thousand illusions it has propagated, it is this: there can be no justice without love, and there can be no Culture of Life without justice.

—D.D.M.

[1]Quoted in David McLellan, Karl Marx: His Life and Thought (New York: Harper Colophon, T973), p. 22.

[2]Karl Marx, Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von K. Marx, F. Engels, und F. Lassalle (Stuttgart, Ger.:Dietz, 1902), I:68.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Karl Marx, “Third Manuscript: Private Property and Communism”, in Classics in Political Philosophy, ed. Jene M. Porter (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice Hall Canada, 1997), p. 567.

[5]Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

[6]Henri de Lubac, The Drama of Atheist Humanism, trans. Edith M. Riley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), p. 38.

[7]Feuerbach, Essence of Christianity, p. xi.

[8]Thomas Sowell, Marxism: Philosophy and Economics (New York:

William Morrow, 1985), p. 26.

[9]Karl Marx, Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, ed. and trans. L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 680-81, 246.

[10]Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party”, in Classic Philosophical Questions, ed. James A. Gould (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1995), p. 555.

[11]Quoted in Robert Payne, Marx (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), p. 192.

[12]Jean-Claude Barreau, The Religious Impulse, trans. John Lynch (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 4.

[13]Marx and Engels, “Manifesto”, p. 579.

[14]Francis Wheen, Karl Marx: A Life (New York: WW. Norton, 2001).

[15]Friedrich Engels, “Speaking at the Graveside of Karl Marx”, in Classics, p. 555.

[16]Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1982), 153:115.

[17]Jacques Maritain, True Humanism, trans. M. R. Adamson (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1954), p. 53.

[18]Paul Ricoeur, Le conflit des interpretations (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 149-50.

[19]John Paul II, Blessed Are the Poor of Heart (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1983), p. 169.

[20]Karl Marx, “Toward the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, in Marx and Engels: Basic Writings, ed. L. W. Feuer (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), pp. 262-63.

[21]Maritain, True Humanism, p. 34.

[22]Vincent P. Miceli, The Gods of Atheism (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1975), p. 94.

[23]Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach, Thesis 11”, The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1972).

[24]Karl Stern, The Third Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1954), pp. 131-32.

[25]Maritain, True Humanism, p. 44.

[26]Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 196.

[27]Karol Wojtyla, The Acting Person, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht, Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1979), p. 297.

Auguste Comte

In the year 1842, Ludwig Feuerbach published The Essence of Christianity (Das Wesen des Christentums). That same year, Auguste Comte produced the massive six-volume classic he had been working on for many years, The Course of Positive Philosophy (Cours de philosophie positive). The first volume had appeared in 1830. In producing their opera, both authors presented to the world a new religion in which God no longer reigned and man was authorized to take his place. As one critic noted, “Herr Feuerbach in Berlin, like Monsieur Comte in Paris, offers Christian Europe a new god to worship—the human race.”[1]

Feuerbach exalted the species of man as an object of worship. Comte was more temperate. His new God— Humanity—consisted only in those human beings who made a positive contribution to their society. Feuerbach’s new God replaced the fictitious Divinity that caused men to become alienated from the better part of themselves. Comte’s new deity replaced the God of Christianity, which was a necessary historical stepping-stone to the new supreme being—”Le Grand Être” (“The Great Being”, or Humanity). Feuerbach was a revolutionist; Comte, an evolutionist. They were both Utopianists. Feuerbach modestly consigned his paradise to posterity. Comte’s evolutionism culminated in a Utopia of his own design. He was, as John Stuart Mill referred to him, “The High Priest of the Religion of Humanity.” He presided over a religion that, in his view, was substantially preferable to Christianity. Most critics, however, have come to the conclusion that he was duped by an illusion of his own making.

Comte’s parents named their son Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte (1798-1857). This invocation of a litany of patron saints would suggest that his Catholic parents were eager to place him under reliable spiritual protection. But in the sixth year of the French Republic, all churches were closed, and baptism of children was strictly forbidden and punished by the state after 1793. The parents were deeply distressed. Their desire to provide their son with religion, together with the law’s refusal to allow him to receive sacramental nourishment, created a strange antinomy that characterized Comte’s lifelong attitude toward religious practice. He was fervently religious, but his intense disbelief in God led him to organize an atheistic form of religion in which Humanity became the object of worship. At fourteen he claimed he was already an atheist. “I do not believe in God”, he would repeat incessantly. It was Humanity that captured his heart and soul and became the object of his religious passion.

Comte was troubled by the social disorder that followed in the wake of the French Revolution. Just as Roman officials had blamed the fall of the “eternal city” in 410 on Christianity, so too, Comte held that same theocentric aggregation responsible for the failure of the French Revolution. “Humanity”, he proclaimed, “is not made to dwell in ruins.” Comte took it as his mission to replace disorder with order, to replace Christianity with a new and vastly superior religion that centered its attention exclusively on man’s earthly, social good. “I publicly seized the pontificate which had naturally fallen to me”, he declared.[2]

Christianity, in Comte’s view, was flawed beyond restitution because it was inherently antisocial. Both in its conception of man and in its conception of salvation, it was exclusively a religion of the individual. Each man, being created in the image of God, is of infinite value. In addition, the only thing that is important to each soul is not the welfare of Humanity at large, according to Comte, but the soul’s own personal sanctity and salvation. Consequently, Christianity is radically immoral. It is structured so that the “Christian egoism” of the individual is modeled after the “absolute egoism” of God. Christians are not creatures of compassion who reach out to others in society, but are “pilgrims” who are moving through this world on their way to what they imagine to be a better one. They are contemptible anarchists and the cause of much of the mayhem in the world, including the calamity that befell France after the Revolution.

It is scarcely necessary to point out that Comte knew virtually nothing of either Christianity or the Gospels. Suffice it to say that Christianity could not be more emphatic concerning the continuity between this world and the next. It teaches that personal holiness is inseparable from love of neighbor, which is one of God’s two Great Commandments, and that one’s joy in heaven is commensurate with the love he had for other people in this world. At any rate, Comte wanted a better world than the one that surrounded him. His disenchantment with Christianity (and all other religions) was combined with an unbridled enthusiasm for the empirical sciences. The future belonged to science;the past belonged to theology and metaphysics. These are the three stages mankind had to pass through, as does the individual from childhood to youth and then to manhood. Theology is entirely fictitious, and metaphysics deals with mere abstractions. Only the empirical sciences can provide positive knowledge, the kind of clear and trustworthy knowledge that is needed to organize social life. Comte saw a progression of sciences leading to the ultimate science, social physics, or, using the term he coined, “sociology.” The Christian faith, in contrast, in Comte’s words, “consecrated the personality of an existence

which, binding each one directly to an infinite power, profoundly isolated him from Humanity."[3] Comte wanted to reorganize society so that "our young disciples will be accustomed, from childhood, to look on the triumph of sociability over personality as the grand object of man."[4]

Comte was not an iconoclast. He did not want to destroy the legacies of the past. Rather, he wanted to bring them up to date, incorporate them within his positivist scheme of things. Although he detested Catholicism and ranked it as the most immoral of all religions, he greatly admired its structure. His goal, then, was to strip Catholicism of its supernatural beliefs while retaining all of its tangible features. He sought, therefore, and with messianic fury, the complete secularization of Catholicism, detaching it entirely from God, Christ, and Holy Scripture, but preserving its institutions and authoritative structure on a wider and stronger basis that only positivism could provide. The "government of souls",as he envisioned, would pass into the hands of the positivist clergy. Worship of Humanity would take place in the old Catholic churches. Paris would replace Rome as the center of religion. There would be eighty-four religious festivals a year and at least one each week devoted to the progressive glorification of Humanity. In harmony with the number of planets in the solar system, there would be nine, rather than seven, sacraments. They would be solemnly performed by the priests of Humanity. The last sacrament, "Incorporation", would be equivalent to canonization. It would take place seven years after a person's death and indicate, in the judgment of the priesthood of Humanity, that he is deemed worthy of being venerated. The cult of the Virgin Mary would be retained to provide an image of ideal womanhood. In a letter to his colleague in England, John Stuart Mill, Comte reiterated his conviction that his religion of Humanity superseded, but incorporated, Catholicism. " The more I scrutinize this immense subject, the more I am confirmed in the feeling which I already had twenty years ago, at the time of my work on the spiritual power, that we systematic positivists are the true successors of the great medieval men, taking over the social work from where Catholicism had brought it."[5] Comte borrowed from the Catholicism of the Middle Ages virtually everything except its dogma.

Comte's new religion replaced the "slaves of God" with the "servants of Humanity." He considered the former to be "genuine slaves, subject to the whims of an inscrutable power", and the latter, through the beneficence of positivism, to be rendered "systematically free."[6]

The notion of 'worshipping an abstract Humanity seems to be an improbable and unsatisfactory activity for any corporeal human being. Auguste

Comte, of course, was a flesh-and-blood human being endowed with human needs and human sensibilities. He was married to Caroline Massin for seventeen years. It was a tempestuous alliance marred by three separations and countless altercations. She was devoted to him in her own way, however, and nursed him back to health when he had a severe nervous breakdown in 1826. When the couple were financially handicapped, she offered to contribute to their income by earnings derived from relations with other men. To this, Comte refused. Two years after their final separation in 1842 (the very day when he submitted the last volume of his magnum opus to the printer), he met Clotilde de Vaux, the young and beautiful wife of an embezzler who had disappeared from France to escape criminal persecution. They became friends, but not lovers. Marriage was out of the question. Their friendship did not last long, for Madame de Vaux died of consumption about a year after their meeting.

Comte's idealization and virtual deification of Clotilde after her death present us with perhaps the most bizarre ritual ever carried out by an important philosopher in the interest of sustaining his philosophy. Comte set up the armchair that Madame de Vaux used when she made her "holy Wednesday visits" to him as an altar in his home and regaled it with flowers. Three times a day for thirteen and a half years, Comte meticulously performed pious exercises of the cult he created and rendered to his beloved Clotilde. Kneeling before the armchair, he would evoke Clotilde's image, recite verses in her honor, and relive in thought the year of happiness that marked his friendship with her. He would repeat three times to her a phrase from the pen of Thomas à Kempis: "Amem te plus quam me, nec me nisi propter te!"[7] (I love you more than myself, nay, I love myself only on account of you.) This sentiment, among the many prayers he expressed in her honor, well expressed the essence of his social philosophy inasmuch as it represents a complete suppression of personal egoism and the total surrender of the self in the interest of the beloved. It captures the spirit of a perfect form of worshipping Humanity to the exclusion of love for self.

For Comte, Clotilde was the glorified image of the Humanity that, as an abstraction, he must have found rather dry and unappealing. His extravagantly romantic projection onto the deceased Madame de Vaux at least gave him an imaginative object to which he could relate in a personal way. Jacques Maritain viewed the practice as the "idealization of a frustrated eroticism" and rather "pitiable."[8] Vincent Miceli had this response:

The spectacle of the Pontiff of Positivism on his knees before the armchair and bouquet of flowers—a relic of the happy Wednesday visits of Clotilde—

reviving with intense concentration her radiant figure and then rekindling his emotions to exalted stages of elation, is one of the most tragic examples in all history of a genius's loss of mental health, clearly traceable to his rejection of the God of reason and revelation.[9]

Was Comte worshipping Humanity using Clotilde as his intercessor? Or was he obsessed with Madame de Vaux, who took the place of Humanity? Henri de Lubac remarks, "Exactly what ceremonies were organized in Comte's day around the armchair of Clotilde de Vaux is a matter of minor importance. ... [P]ositivism has its faithful followers and its worship because it has its idol. God's place has been well and truly taken."[10]

Two important questions come to mind. Subjectively, did Comte achieve an entirely unselfish, egoless immolation into his religion of Humanity? Objectively, was his worship of Humanity nothing more than an act of idolatry?

From all accounts, Comte was a man of prodigious egoism. Maritain says that Comte took himself "infinitely and absolutelyseriously."[11] George Dumas observed that his head was filled with "dreams of social glory" in which he saw "the banner of humanity waving over his tomb, Clotilde representing humanity on the pavilion of the West, the Pantheon resounding with the sound of the organs and the singing of the faithful and the women, worthy daughters of humanity, lauding the faithful Founder."[12] Miceli states that he was "egotistical in the extreme, violently self-willed and insanely jealous."[13] According to de Lubac, he "sank deeper, every day, into a monstrous egocentricity."[14] Encyclopedia Britannica records that "Comte was a rather somber, ungrateful, self-centered and egocentric personality."[15]

It seems that Auguste Comte was a most unlikely candidate to spearhead a religion whose first commandment required the suppression of the ego. Rather than Comte andhis disciples worshipping Humanity, it seemed closer to the truth that Comte wanted his disciples and Humanity to worship him. He was, in fact, a dictator who did not tolerate anything in his new religion that he did not approve. He set tight controls on the materials his subjects could read by limiting them to one hundred volumes of science, philosophy, poetry, history, and general knowledge that he himself had selected. This was enough to satisfy the positivist mind. All other reading material would be consigned to the flames. He referred to this highly restrictive form of reading as "hygiene cerebrate." Intellectual criticism would be forbidden, heresies would be mercilessly purged, "sinners" would be publicly humiliated, and absolute obedience to Comte would be required. So thorough was he in deciding what was good for his disciples of Humanity that he began to detail which species in the animal and vegetable

kingdoms were of no use to man and therefore should be slated for annihilation. Reflecting on Comte's unprecedented self-importance, John Stuart Mill observed, "Mankind have not yet been under the rule of one who assumes that he knows all there is to be known, and that when he has put himself at the head of humanity, the book of human knowledge may be closed. . . . He does not imagine that he possesses all knowledge, but only that he is an infallible judge of what knowledge is worth possessing."[16]

Comte's sociology is really a sociolatry in which his followers submit blindly to Comte as their supreme dictator. That Comte was a towering egotist can hardly be disputed. But the objective side of his religion, so to speak, the "Great Being", is really nothing more or less than an idol. Comte's Trinity—which consists of the "Great Milieu" (space), the "Great Fetish" (earth), and the "Great Being" (Humanity) and which Comte proposed for adoration—is nothing but a colossal fiction. Comte, according to Maritain, "was an idolater of the most authentic and the most pathologically prostrated sort."[17]

Because Comte is a ruthless egotist who proposes idol worship to his followers, there can be little that is positive about his "positivism", for it inevitably leads to tyranny and dictatorship. Comte's new religion seems clearly to be the brainchild of a madman writing in an age of madness. Maritain states, "The spectacle of the high priest of humanity warming up his sympathetic instincts, and those of his disciples, at the fire of his own laboriously invented fables, is a remarkable indication of the degradation to which the intellect could be exposed in the nineteenth century."[18] Yet, there is a certain logic to it, given its genesis in an outlook that is simultaneously atheistic and benevolent. If there is no God to come to the rescue in an hour of social turmoil, man must do it himself. But if the religions of the past focused too much on individual salvation, the new, purely immanentized religion must be utterly selfless. Humanity itself, not God, must be worshipped by selfless souls who have no personal rights, but only undismissable duties to serve Humanity, duties that must be enforced by a dictator working in cooperation with his executive officers, his corps of obedient priests.

A society without rights, needless to say, is a society without justice. An atheistic society does not have any provision for justice, since society is regarded as an uncriticizable god in itself. Comte's "Great Being" inevitably requires an incarnate form. Thus, it makes a rapid transition to Big Brother. Prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination become the norm. "Let there be no dissembling the fact that today the servants of Humanity are ousting the servants of God," Comte writes, "root and branch, from all control of public affairs, as incapable of really concerning themselves with such affairs and understanding them

properly."[19]

Comte completely lost sight of the integral person. He reduced him to an obedient, selfless, dutiful altruist and then, after stripping him of a sizable amount of his humanity, bade him to love Humanity. Henri de Lubac remarks, "Comte was able to put his religion into practice only because, in his last years, he had partly lost his sense of reality."[20] Comte lost a sense not only of reality, but also of the reality of the person and of the nature of society as well. He ignored the fact that even "altruistic love", if it is not combined with justice, is not beneficent, but oppressive. In fact, it tends to ruin the human character it seeks to ennoble. His new religion consists of severely truncated individuals engaged in worshipping an illusion. The net effect of this is death, both to the individual as well as to society.

Unlike Marx, Comte does not advocate the use of violence. His construction of a Culture of Death, at least according to his plan, is achieved largely through persuasion. "In the Comtian revolution there are no atrocities", writes Karl Stern. "There are no martyrs. Man, the image of God, is led to a painless death."[21] Again, in contradistinction to Marx, Comte advocates love. Marxist atheism demands from man a total immolation of the self carried along in the dialectical transformation of the world. Comtian love, in contrast, proclaims to be the self's principle, but invites only an illusion of the gift of self. Comte is a sentimentalist who attempts to exploit people's feelings about love. In directing these feelings—not to other persons in the form of I-Thou relationships, but to an abstraction, Humanity—he is deceiving his followers. "Love is my principle, Order is my basis, Progress is my aim", he proclaims.[22] But tyranny is his outcome. Comte's philosophy as a whole is indefensible. No one accepts it in its entirety. There are no Comtian followers in the strict sense. The future will not venerate Comte, as he vainly predicted it would. There will be no banners unfurling in his honor. Nonetheless, the various bricks that went into the edifice of the Culture of Death he was assembling have had their own specific impact. Maritain laments the influence that Comte's secularized Christianity has had through its "slow and imperceptible dechristianization of a large number of Catholic souls."[23] De Lubac finds Comte's positivism, with its promise to liberate man from the "unbearable yoke" of the transcendent, less the antagonist than the ally of the Marxist and Nietzschean currents that operate in the spiritual climate of today[24] Comte has also had a significant influence in the areas of scientism, where the empirical sciences crowd out metaphysics; relativism, where truth becomes a casualty; and feminism, where women are considered more moral than men. He has had a marked influence in advancing the cause of secular humanism, which, owing nothing to God, does not hesitate

to promote contraception, sterilization, abortion, and euthanasia throughout the world.

There are no idols that are friendly to man. Comte's idol of Humanity, which rejects conscience, criticism, Christianity, and true compassion, devours and extinguishes the minds and hearts of its worshippers. In so doing, it takes a major step in establishing a Culture of Death. There is no true life of the spirit without a morality that is freely expressed. Comte's messianic positivism either absorbs morality into his atheistic religion, which worships an abstraction, or it absorbs morality into science as a mythical substitute for wisdom. In either case, it means the death of the authentic person, who is the indispensable agent and inhabitant of a Culture of Life. Comte did not understand how the human person could be at the same time both a unique individual and a contributing member of society. And so he decided to suppress the former in order to secure the latter. But in denying man his natural claim to personal freedom and conscience, he, in effect, opposed his participation in a Culture of Life.

—D.D.M.

[1] Emile Saisset, quoted in Henri de Lubac, The Drama of Atheist Humanism, trans. Edith M. Riley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), p. 135.

[2] Auguste Comte, Lettres inédites à C. de Blignières (Paris: Vrin, 1932), p. 136.

[3] Auguste Comte, Catéchisme positive (Paris: Garnier, 1890), p. 166.

[4] Ibid., p. 263.

[5] Auguste Comte, Lettres d'Auguste Comte à John Stuart Mill (Paris: 1877), p. 359.

[6] Auguste Comte, in a letter to Henry Dix Hutton, cited in de Lubac, Drama of Atheist Humanism, p. 173.

[7] George Dumas, Psychologic des deux messies positives, Saint-Simon et Auguste Comte (Paris: Alcan, 1905), pp. 214-16.

[8] Jacques Maritain, Moral Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 324.

[9] Vincent P. Miceli, The Gods of Atheism (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1975), p. 169. Miceli adds that "his passion for her [Saint Clotilde] seduced him into a system of speculation and conduct that delivered him up to lunacy", p. 160.

[10] De Lubac, Drama of Atheist Humanism,p. 179.

[11] Maritain, Moral Philosophy, p. 272.

[12] Dumas, Psychologie des deux messies positives, pp. 248-49.

[13] Miceli, Gods of Atheism, p. 158.

[14] De Lubac, Drama of Atheist Humanism,p. 229.

[15] “Comte”, Encyclopedia Britannica, 6:188.

[16] John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte and Positivism (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1961), pp. 180-81. See also John Stuart Mill, Autobiography of John Stuart Mill (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 180-81, where Comte’s atheist colleague and one-time admirer wrote that Système de politique positive is “the completest system of spiritual and temporal despotism which ever yet emanated from a human brain.... The book stands as a warning to thinkers on society and politics, of what happens once men lose sight in their speculations of the value of Liberty and of Individuality.”

[17] Maritain, Moral Philosophy, p. 324.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Comte, Lettres inédites, pp. 35-36.

[20] De Lubac, Drama of Atheist Humanism,p. 225.

[21] Karl Stern, The Third Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1954), p. 148.

[22] Comte, Catéchisme positive, p. 59.

[23] Maritain, Moral Philosophy, p. 317.

[24] De Lubac, Drama of Atheist Humanism,p. 136.

Judith Jarvis Thomson

In 1971, Princeton University Press published, in its maiden issue of Philosophy and Public Affairs, an article by Judith Jarvis Thomson entitled “A Defense of Abortion.” Dr. Thomson (b. 1929), a professor of philosophy at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has written highly acclaimed books (Acts and Other Events [1977] and Rights, Restitution, and Risk [1986]) and articles on a variety of subjects. With her “defense of abortion”, however, she hit, so to speak, the philosophical jackpot. Her article has become the most widely reprinted essay not only on the subject of abortion, which is a remarkable phenomenon in itself, but in all of contemporary philosophy Because her article has been reprinted, anthologized, amplified, circulated, read, and discussed as often and as much as it has, it seems reasonably safe to assume that it has had a significant influence, particularly as an apologia for abortion. The article’s broad popularity among abortion advocates suggests that it is the best argument that has been put forth as a defense of and argument for abortion. Recently, a philosopher from Tulane University wrote a book-length defense of it.

Before she gets to the meat of her article, Thomson offers a brief discussion about whether a human being is a person from the time of conception. She dismisses rather curtly and crudely the efforts of all those who marshal the case that human life does indeed begin at conception (and at no other time) as “not well argued.”[1] She does not mention any other writer on this point. In fact, she mentions no other philosopher throughout her entire essay, a scholarly foray that contains but seven footnotes. It is difficult at this point not to draw the impression that she is unfamiliar with the important work in this area that was available to her in 1971 by Albert Liley; Jerôme Lejeune; Germain Grisez; Paul Ramsey; Geraldine Lux Flanagan; John T. Noonan, Jr.; Norman St. John-Stevas; John Finnis; David Granfield; and many others who are able thinkers as well as competent apologists.

Without providing argumentation herself to buttress her point, she simply makes this assertion: “A newly fertilized ovum, a newly implanted clump of cells, is no more a person than an acorn is an oak tree.”[2] The fact of the matter is that the newly fertilized ovum, called a “zygote”, consists of a single cell. To refer to it as a “clump” is an attempt to poison the well. At the very least, it is an unscientific assertion. The zygote and subsequent stages in the development of the embryo are highly organized. Her recourse to so coarse and inapplicable a term hardly justifies her conceit as a qualified critic of her opponents. No one

refers to an acorn as a “clump of cells.”

Thomson’s contention that an “acorn” is not an “oak tree” confuses the accidental with the substantial. Different terms are used to describe the same person at different stages of his life, as Shakespeare has so marvelously illustrated in As You Like It. The “mewling infant” is not the “whining schoolboy”, nor is the “lover” with his “woeful ballad” the same as the “soldier” who is “full of strange oaths.”[3] Yet everyone in Shakespeare’s audience understood that his variety of appellations applied to the same developing and then declining being. The names designate stages of the same being and not a series of distinct ones. The names allude to an accidental order. The substantial order, the man who lives and undergoes changes, is the stable entity that perdures. An acorn is not an oak tree, but a Quercus alba (white oak) is certainly a Quercus alba. Acorn and oak tree both belong to the same biologically classifiable being. They both have the same DNA. Throughout their ontogeny, like every other organism that grows and changes, they will receive different names. But their substance is that of Quercus alba.

Thomson is wary of “slippery slope arguments.” But even here, she misuses the term. The “slippery slope” does not slide from one being to the same being one stage earlier. We do not say, “Well, if you call a two-year-old a human being, the next thing you know is that you will be calling a one-year-old a human being.” The slippery slope slides from one distinct issue to another, such as from abortion to euthanasia, or from passive to active euthanasia.

But these points, though Thomson makes them rather crudely, are preliminary. What she wants to impress upon her reader at this juncture is that even if we assume that the unborn is a human being from the moment of conception, that does not necessarily mean that abortion is still impermissible. And so, feeling confident that she can defend abortion, even if she concedes (although she really does not believe it) the humanity of the unborn, she states, “I propose, then, that the fetus is a person from the moment of conception.”[4]Now the ethical dilemma is this: If both mother and uterine child are both human and both have rights to life, can abortion be ethically permitted where the woman does not want to continue her pregnancy?

In order to solve this dilemma, Thomson provides a most imaginative analogy, perhaps the best known one of its kind in all of abortion literature:

You wake up in the morning and find yourself back to back in bed with an unconscious violinist [who] has been found to have a fatal kidney ailment. .. . [T]he Society of Music Lovers . .. kidnapped you, and last night the violinist’s circulatory system was plugged into yours, so your kidneys can be used to

extract poisons from his blood as well as your own.... To unplug would be to kill him. But never mind, it’s only for nine months.[5]

Thomson believes that she has constructed a similitude that perfectly parallels the case in which a pregnant woman is yoked to her unwanted child for the same length of time. Her argument rests or collapses on this presumption.

There are parallels, to be sure. But are these scenarios, from a moral point of view, in perfect parallel with each other? In both cases there are two human beings who have rights to life. In both cases the continued life of one depends on the willingness of the other to make extraordinary sacrifices. But the parallel she needs in order to make her analogy viable is contestable. Is it true that unplugging yourself from the violinist and directly aborting an unwanted child are morally equivalent acts?

Thomson is confident that virtually everyone would argue that unplugging yourself from the musician is morally permissible. Here, she seems to be on reasonably firm ground. But her firm ground is established by the fact that this image is not controversial. Abortion is controversial because it involves factors that are not present in the violinist image. Let us examine three of these factors.

1. The Nature of the Act: The act of unplugging yourself from the violinist is justified on the basis of self-defense. It is a legitimate response to assault and battery (and in the example Thomson uses, to kidnapping and unlawful confinement as well). The development of the child in the womb is not an example of assault and battery or anything close to it. Assault and battery presuppose willfulness and malice aforethought and have always been regarded as criminal acts. It has never been regarded as a criminal act for an unborn child to develop in its mother’s womb.

The act of unplugging is not the direct cause of the violinist’s death. He dies as a direct result of his kidney ailment. In contrast, direct abortion does, in fact, directly kill the child in the womb. The two acts are distinct and have entirely different moral implications. Self-defense against an unjust aggressor is a different act than directly killing an innocent child in the womb.

2. The Intention of the Act: The intention present in unplugging yourself from the violinist is to be set free and not that the violinist die. It would, indeed, be immoral to intend the death of your host. This situation, where two ends follow from a single act, is handled, classically, according to the principle of double effect. It is never permissible to intend an evil. Therefore, it would be morally impermissible to intend the death of the violinist. But this unfortunate consequence of freeing yourself is permitted to happen because you have a right to free yourself from an unjust aggressor. In a parallel example, doctors may

licitly remove an ectopic pregnancy from a woman.[6] The intention corresponds to good medicine, removing a pathology (the tube, for example, in which the ectopic pregnancy occurs) and not intending the death of the fetus, although that consequence does transpire.

The intention of abortion is graphically clear. It is to kill the unborn child. This intention is made all the more salient by the expression “tragic complication”, which is used to describe the rare event of a child surviving a late-term abortion. The aborting woman intends to free herself from her unwanted child, but she and her doctor directly intend the death of that child. Another and more precise term for induced abortion is “feticide”, which literally means “killing the fetus.”

3. The Nature of the Relationship Involved: Thomson supposes that the violinist and the victim are unrelated. She adds no moral factors to their relationship that would mitigate the victim’s aversion to being yoked for nine months. The two are presumed to be total strangers. Such is not the case with the relationship between the mother and her child. The victim, by virtue of being yoked to the violinist, does not inherit or attain any specific kind of positive relationship. The victim does not become the violinist’s brother, for example. When a woman conceives a child, she is no longer merely a woman. Nor is the child merely a child. Conception confers maternity on the woman, and her child is her son or daughter. There is a relationship between the two that is primordial, interpersonal, and universally recognized. A mother is expected to do things for her children that strangers are not expected to do for each other.

The relationship of a mother to her child is not something conferred upon her from the outside. It is something that proceeds from her being. It is a manifestation of the transcendent dimension of her personhood. The same cannot be said about meeting a stranger. The responsibilities that are inseparably bound up with motherhood are radically different from those that characterize the relationship between two strangers. In addition, motherhood and motherly responsibilities are unitary. The distinction between a mother and her motherly responsibilities is largely nominal. Motherly responsibilities flow from a mother the way light flows from the sun. The moment a mother alienates herself from her responsibilities to her child, she begins to undo her own motherhood. Motherhood, in essence, is not an isolated identity. Thomson does not grasp the moral truth that motherhood subsumes responsibility. Without this radical sense of responsibility, the relationship between mother and child is reduced to one between strangers. Even then, the moral question is not so much about the child’s “right” to occupy the woman’s uterus, but, since the child is already there, whether the woman has the right to expel the child.

Thomson has not succeeded in drawing a perfect moral parallel (between the victim yoked to the violinist and the mother umbilically connected with her child) that illuminates a justification for abortion. Nor does she come close. Perhaps she senses this, because she gives us a second analogy, in case we are less than convinced by the first:

Suppose you find yourself trapped in a tiny house with a growing child.. .. [Y]ou are already up against the wall of the house and in a few minutes you'll be crushed to death. The child on the other hand won't be crushed to death.[7]

Here, Thomson produces an image that is entirely fanciful, one that directs our thought closer to the world of Alice in Wonderland than to the one we inhabit. She is appealing to a fantasy in order to enlighten us about a reality. Her use of such a far-fetched image, however, suggests that she herself is confused about the very reality she takes to be her subject of expertise. She then goes on to talk about "people-seeds" drifting into our homes, like pollen. You take precautions against these invading seeds, which can root in your living room carpet and flower as real people. You do not want them in your house or in your life and therefore take measures to keep them out by fixing up "your windows with fine mesh screens, the very best you can buy." And yet, "as can happen, however, and on very, very rare occasions does happen, one of the screens is defective; and a seed drifts in and takes root. Does the person-plant who now develops have a right to the use of your house? Surely not."[8]

Professor John T. Noonan, Jr., is a man of scholarly temperament. He is not known for hyperbole or even mild exaggeration. In reviewing Thomson's "Defense of Abortion", he writes, "It is difficult to think of another age or society in which a caricature of this sort could be seriously put forward as a paradigm illustrating the moral choice to be made by a mother."[9] For Peter Singer, in contrast, Thomson's article represents "a new standard of rigor for those bringing philosophy to bear on practical problems."[10]

Thomson's approach to philosophy is curious. She abandons existential realities and takes flight into the realm of the phantasmagoric. There, ensconced in that self-created world, she makes pronouncements about how people should live and act in our real world. Her view of things proceeds independently from any recognition of an order of either reality or Providence. People-seeds blow into our houses, take root in our carpets, and ask us to be their caretakers. This is science fiction, not the real world. The greatest danger in her thinking, however, is not her approval of abortion, but her portrayal of a world that is so frightening in its arbitrariness and utter inhospitality that the only refuge we can take is

within our own isolated will. Thomson's defense of abortion is also, perhaps unwittingly, a defense of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Freud. "This body is my body", she exclaims, indicating that what she wants to safeguard is not motherhood or children or the family, but her body. It is not so much that this moral view is selfish as the fact that it is born of fear, fear that the normal processes in life might turn against us with savage fury and utter irrationality. This is not philosophy, but hysteria.

At any rate, Thomson's series of analogies brings her to the conclusion that the right to life does not include the right to occupy another person's body[11] Again, she has a point, but it is an irrelevant one. It is irrelevant because her concept of "right" does not capture what is primary in the sphere of morality.One might consider the following scenario to test the practicality and even degree of humanity of her position.

The Carpathia arrives at a specific location off the coast of Newfoundland, where it finds the survivors of the Titanic. Through his bullhorn, the captain announces to the sick, anxious, and grieving survivors that he fully respects their right to live, but regrettably, since they do not have tickets, they have no right to board and occupy his ship. There really is not sufficient room, he goes on to explain, and adds that it would be unfair to the paid passengers to deprive them of the pleasant sea voyage they had in mind when they purchased their tickets. How would history remember such a captain? As a pro-rights, pro-choice naval officer? As a clear-eyed, rigorous moral philosopher? Or as a sociopath who is entirely devoid of human sympathy?

Now consider an example from law. On a cold January night in Minnesota shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, Orland Dupue asked the Flateaus, with whom he had dined, if he could stay overnight at their home. Dupue was sick and had fainted. Nonetheless, the Flateaus refused. As a result of his exposure to the cold, Dupue suffered the loss of his frostbitten fingers. The case came to court, and the judge ruled that even though the defenders were not contractually obliged to minister to the plaintiff, "The law as well as humanity required that he not be exposed in his helpless condition to the merciless elements." The judge understood that a moral relationship exists between human beings that is more fundamental than one that is contractual.[12]

The above analogy, however imperfect, is far closer to the situation of a mother with an unwanted pregnancy than is the violinist case. A world of individual rights where each person imagines himself to be a kind of Robinson Crusoe is not livable in any human sense. We can respect individual "rights" and still be inhumane. A world of "rights only" is stunted, inhuman, and tragic.

Morality begins when people are generous and loving, when they exercise

their duties to be decent, rather than their rights not to be inconvenienced. Thomson asserts that “we are not morally required to be Good Samaritans or anyway Very Good Samaritans to one another.”[13] Her mindset is always legalistic. She completely misses the point that personal love and generosity are primary and that law, rights, and obligations are secondary.

John Finnis is correct when he encapsulates the radical weakness of Thomson’s argument by saying that she is trying to reduce the mother-child relationship to a “sort of social contractarianism.”[14] It is essentially unjust to try to settle a matter of life and death, which is what abortion involves, by ignoring the ethical primacy of love and generosity, while looking to legalistic terms for guidance. Law without love is another way of defining the path to the Culture of Death.

In his fine study of abortion as a human rights issue, James F. Bohan makes the following response to Thomson’s article:

> Thomson, by contrast, views the right to life as something conferred by other human beings: The unborn have no right to life because the pregnant woman “has not given the unborn the right to use her body for food and shelter,” and because the woman never says, “I invite you in.” Human beings do not have a right to life simply by virtue of being humans, in Thomson’s eyes; they must in addition be wanted.[15]

The “right to life” that Thomson accords the unborn presupposes someone else’s power. In the case of the mother, it is the power she exercises when she approves the unborn’s continued existence. The unborn and their “right to life”, for her, are passive to her power. When the captain of the Carpathia permitted the Titanic survivors to come aboard, he was not conferring rights upon his guests or empowering them with a “right to life.” He had recognizedtheir right to live and was responding dutifully and graciously in accordance with that right.

The right to life of unborn human beings is not dependent on someone else’s power or permission or approval. It is anchored in their humanity. Just as something is loved because it is good (and not good because it is loved), a right exists prior to its being recognized (and is not dependent on recognition). One might expect that Thomson, as a “feminist”, would understand this: a woman is worthwhile not because a man approves her or pays attention to her; when a man responds positively to her, it is because she is good.

The greater torment that Lucrece experiences, in Shakespeare’s poetic narrative The Rape of Lucrece, is that she knows how society will blame her, rather than her assailant, for what took place. It is this knowledge of the disgrace

that society will unfairly heap upon her that leads her to commit suicide. She cannot go on living, knowing that her own worth remains unrecognized and that she will be stigmatized by another's evil action.

No man inveigh against the withered flower, But chide rough winter that the flower hath killed: Not that devour'd, but that which doth devour, Is worthy blame.[16]

Socrates tried patiently and exhaustingly to explain to Euthyphro, an arrogant theologian, that it is not the case that something is good because the gods love it; rather, the gods love it because it is good.[17] It is not, we might say in our own day, that it is the good grade that makes the student good, but rather it is the good student who makes the good grade. Being precedes approval; goodness precedes love.

Thomson's defense of abortion is, in itself, a significant contribution to the Culture of Death. What is even more pernicious, however, is her facile deconstruction of motherhood and reduction of all human beings to islands of self-serving individuality. In order to rationalize the death of the unborn, she feels compelled to rationalize the death of the person as a locus of love and generosity. It is as if she is saying that we need the death of the authentic person in order to justify the death of the unborn. One form of killing necessitates a prior form of killing: if our souls are dead, we will surely be dead to the iniquity of abortion.

—D. D.M.

[1] Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion", in The Rights and Wrongs of Abortion, eds. M. Cohen et al. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 3.

[2] Ibid., p. 2.

[3] William Shakespeare, As You Like It,II, vii.

[4] Thomson, "Defense of Abortion", p. 4.

[5] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[6] Germain Grisez, Abortion: The Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments (New York: Corpus Books, 1970), pp. 73, 340. "In most cases ectopic pregnancy presents no ethical problem."

[7] Thomson, "Defense of Abortion", p. 8.

[8] Ibid., p. 15.

[9] John T. Noonan, Jr., How to Argue about Abortion (New York: AHC Handbook, 1974), p. 2.

[10] Peter Singer, ed., Applied Ethics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 3. Singer includes Thomson's essay in his volume.

[11] Thomson, "Defense of Abortion", p. 12.

[12] Noonan, How to Argue about Abortion,pp. 2-3.

[13] Thomson, "Defense of Abortion", p. 20.

[14] John Finnis, "The Rights and Wrongs of Abortion", in Cohen et al., Rights and Wrongs of Abortion, p. 92.

[15] James F. Bohan, The House of Atreus: Abortion as a Human Rights Issue (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999), p. 80.

[16] William Shakespeare, The Rape of Lucrece, 11. 1254-57.

[17] Plato, Euthyphro, 10a.

PART FOUR

THE ATHEISTIC EXISTENTIALISTS

Jean-Paul Sartre

Shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century, a French country doctor married the daughter of a landowner. The day after the wedding, he discovered, to his rude surprise, that his father-in-law was penniless. Disgusted, he did not speak to his wife for the next forty years. At meals, he communicated to her by signs. She came to refer to him as “my lodger.”[1] Nonetheless, they had three children together. One of these children of silence, Jean-Baptiste, married a woman whose mother had warned her against married life, which she considered an unhappy arrangement marked by “an endless chain of sacrificing, broken by nights of coarseness.”[2] Jean-Baptiste and his bride soon had a child, but shortly thereafter, the new father became gravely ill. His wife looked after him, but, as that child would one day inform us, “she did not carry indecency so far as to love him.”[3] Nights of care and concern for her dying husband caused her milk to dry up. The infant was dispatched to a wet nurse, where he almost died of enteritis and “perhaps from resentment.”[4]

This child, who emerged from such less than auspicious circumstances, is known to the world as Jean-Paul Sartre. Concerning the early separation he experienced from both his parents, Sartre looked at how he “benefited from the situation.”[5] With regard to his mother, he would not be exposed to the “difficulties of a late weaning.”[6] But he expressed far greater gratitude for the early demise of his father. “Jean-Baptiste’s death was the great event in my life: it returned my mother to her chains and it gave me my freedom.”[7]

According to Sartre, since all fathers necessarily interfere with the freedom of their developing children, it is not possible for there to be such a creature as a good father. “The rule is that there are no good fathers”, he advises us. “It is not the men who are at fault but the paternal bond which is rotten. There is nothing better than to produce children, but what a sin to have some! If he had lived, my father would have lain down on me and crushed me.”[8] “I was lucky”, he went on to explain, “to belong to a dead man: a dead man had poured out the few drops of sperm which are the normal price for a child.”[9] At any rate, Sartre was happy to agree with the diagnosis of an eminent psychoanalyst, who declared that the world’s most celebrated existentialist did not possess a Superego. It was not surprising, then, that when Sartre was thirty, a friend remarked in astonishment, “You seem as if you never had any parents.”[10]

For Sartre, the rupture between biology and morality (between siring a child and raising him responsibly, for example) formed a prototype for the

irreconcilable rift he would describe philosophically between the world of matter and the world of consciousness. Biology is mere fact, “facticity”, as he called it, something that stood over and against us. But the world of consciousness is one of freedom.

Sartre’s commitment to unfettered freedom was sometimes accompanied by a weak temptation to accept his place in the family. It was a temptation, however, that he found easy to resist. How could he resign himself to his position in the family? As he tells us in his autobiography, he was “made feminine through the fondness of my mother, flavorless through the absence of the severe Moses who had begotten me, and eaten up with conceit through my grandfather’s adoration. I was pure object, doomed above all to masochism, had I been able to believe in the family comedy. But I would not.”[11]

Sartre’s rejection of the father, as a condition for personal liberty, necessarily extends to his rejection of God. His atheism is not philosophically derived as much as it is a logical consequence of his upbringing. “I was led to unbelief not through conflicting dogma but through my grandparents’ indifference.”[12] He saw in his elders a form of hypocrisy that was only too transparent. They displayed virtues as the alibi for vices, preached one thing and practiced another. There was no substance or true religious meaning to their lives. “In our circle, in my family,” he writes, “faith was nothing but an official name for sweet French liberty.”[13]

Clearly, then, atheism is at the core of Sartre’s philosophy. But it is a postulate that he assumes, rather than proves. It springs, as we have just seen, from his personal background more than it does from his powers of reason. Further, such atheism is harmonious with and reinforced by his notion of absolute personal freedom. If there is no God, then there are no rules or commandments and, hence, no restrictions placed on human liberty.

Sartre’s principal philosophical work is Being and Nothingness, which was published in 1943. In the introduction of this massive work, he makes a crucial distinction that functions as the bedrock of his philosophical thinking. There are things, material entities that are simply there, fixed, and determined, “dumb-packed-togetherness”, as he calls them. This is the realm of the “being-in-itself” (être-en-soi). Such things are the object of our consciousness. We, as conscious beings, are not fixed. We are incomplete, dynamic, ever changing. We are in process, capable of choosing what we are to become. We are transitional beings, guiding what we will become by our freedom. Therefore, we are not a “being-in-itself”, but a “being-for-itself” (être-pour-soi).We do not as yet have an essence or a definable or intelligible nature. We really are not human beings at all, but are in the process of choosing what we are to become. In Sartre’s celebrated

phrase,which springs from the heart of his philosophy, “existence precedes essence.”

The contention that we are not human beings or possessors of any particular nature is derived from and buttresses his atheism. According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, God makes us in his image. Therefore, God the Artist endows us with a particular nature or essence the way any artist imbues his work with a formative idea. It is this determinateness of being a creature that Sartre rejects, for if God exists, then he would create us with a particular nature and, as a consequence, deny us the freedom to choose what we are to become. But if God does not exist, then there is no one to saddle us with any particular nature, and, as a result, we are free beings whose existence precedes our essence. Stated simply and directly, Sartre proclaims, “There is no human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it.” In this regard, Sartre’s “being-for-itself” resembles Thornton Wilder’s Julius Caesar. The distinguished American novelist has Caesar exclaim, “How terrifying and glorious the role of man if, indeed, without guidance and without consolation he must create from his own vitals the meaning for his existence and write the rules whereby he lives.”[14]

It is important to note that in the absence of any concept of the “human”, there cannot be any concept of the “inhuman.” This point is of particular significance in the area of morality. If there can be no truly human act, neither can there be any act that is truly inhuman. Sartre fully acknowledges this point and does not shrink from stating its immediate implications. “The most atrocious situations in war,” he writes, “the worst tortures do not create an inhuman state of affairs; an inhuman situation does not exist.”[15] To state the obvious, Sartre’s view removes a most important basis on which crimes against humanity can be denounced. As such, it invites, rather than discourages, acts of brutality—all acts, in fact, that would contribute to a Culture of Death. One internationally distinguished critic of Sartre has remarked, “A society adopting this attitude would be ripe for the rubbish-heap.”[16] The expression “rubbish-heap” is virtually synonymous with what T. S. Eliot was alluding to in The Waste Land. Despite his professed moral agnosticism, Sartre was very much involved in political causes. He favored Communism, though his enthusiasm for a form of government that suppresses freedom contains a number of egregious blind spots. He was reluctant to believe that Communism could not tolerate dissent and wrote labored excuses for the Soviet purges and Siberian concentration camps. “Communist violence”, he wrote, trying to soften its harsh reality, “is no more than the childhood disease of a new era.”[17] He denounced the Soviets for sending tanks to suppress the Hungarian rebellion in 1956, though three months later he defended the party and its aggressive actions as “necessary.” To

understand Sartre historically, it is important to note that Descartes, the Father of Modern Philosophy, had an immense influence on Sartre's philosophical thinking. The great seventeenth-century mathematician had severed mind from matter. Although he believed there was some interconnection and interaction between the two, he could never prove it and consequently left to posterity a view in which mind and matter (as well as consciousness and the body) were wholly alien to each other.

Sartre accepted Cartesian dualism and proceeded to separate consciousness ("being-for-itself") from matter ("being-in-itself"). He went beyond Descartes, however, in describing this separation not as mere alienation, but as antagonism. Being-in-itself, for Sartre, is profoundly and inexorably opposed to being-for-itself; indeed, the former is a metaphysical enemy of the latter. Being-in-itself, matter, is immanent, fixed, absurd, and meaningless. But being-for-itself seeks transcendence, creativity, freedom, and meaning.

This antagonism is given literary form in Sartre's Nausea (De trop),the most philosophical of all his novels. Being and Nothingness, in fact, is an extended elaboration of the intuition into the nature of being-in-itself that Sartre has Roquentin, the main character in Nausea, describe at great length and in tedious detail. Moreover, as Sartre himself admits, Nauseais his most personal novel, inasmuch as he identifies with the protagonist. "I was Roquentin", he tells us. "In him I exposed the web of my life."[18]

A vignette from the novel suffices to reveal its central Sartrean theme. Roquentin was sitting on a park bench one day looking at a chestnut tree when suddenly he had a vision of the very nature of things. "Words vanished as he looked for the first time into the very heart of existence, an experience that filled him with nausea. " This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, all in disorder—naked in a frightful, obscene nakedness."[19]

In this famous scene, Roquentin expresses Sartre's alleged glimpse of "naked" being-in-itself. Rather than seeing the order of nature, of being, as beautiful, for Sartre/Roquentin, being-in-itself is abominable. It is gratuitous, incomprehensible, and frightening. An unvarnished perception of it becomes unbearable and induces sickness. "To translate this into philosophical language," writes psychiatrist Karl Stern, "it is as if Roquentin told Descartes: there is no use trying to hold the res externa [extended thing or matter] at a distance. You are inextricably involved with matter (mother), and moreover it is a sticky, messy, oozing business which makes you vomit."[20] All the more reason for Sartre to escape into a world of transcendence, away from the corrupting touch of things in themselves.

New York University philosophy professor William Barrett points out that

the realm of being-in-itself, for Sartre, is closely associated with images of "softness, stickiness, viscosity, corpulence, flabbiness." "There is too much of it," he writes (the meaning of de trop), "and it is heavy, like a fat lady in the circus."[21]

Sartre's ontology, in which he describes the distinctiveness and opposition between being-in-itself and being-for-itself, serves as the ground for his psychology of the sexes. Being-in-itself, with its softness, corpulence, and embeddedness in matter, has the quality of the feminine. Being-for-itself, intimately associated with freedom, abstraction, and creativity,has the aspect of masculinity. "Behind all Sartre's intellectual dialectic," Barrett remarks,

> we perceive that the In-itself is for him the archetype of nature: excessive, fruitful, blooming nature—the woman, the female. The For-itself, by contrast, is for Sartre, the masculine aspect of human psychology: it is that in virtue of which man chooses himself in his radical liberty, makes projects, and thereby gives his life what strictly human meaning it has.[22]

Sartre's psychology, therefore, is essentially masculine, or, even more accurately, it is misogynist. His misunderstanding and disparagement of woman are evident not only in Nausea, but also in other novels, where he expresses disgust for the pregnant mistress (as in Roads to Liberty) or contempt for the irrationality and inconvenience of women (as in The Age of Reason). It is evident, then, that Sartre took Descartes' dualism and applied it to the sexes, thereby depicting the masculine and the feminine as being essentially antagonistic to each other. The public in general has misinterpreted Sartre's existentialism as a basis for sexual freedom and as a ground for feminism. In truth, it is both Manichaean and antifeminine. It is radically opposed to the incarnate reality of human sexuality as well as to the fruitfulness of the woman.

In addition to degrading women to the level of being-in-itself, mere matter, Sartre's radical dualism creates an unbridgeable gulf between the Self (being-for-itself) and the Other. In a grotesque distortion of Christian doctrine, the Other appears as a species of Original Sin for the Self. As Sartre expresses it in Being and Nothingness, "My original Fall is the existence of the Other."[23] From the viewpoint of consciousness, the Other is not another subject, but an object, tantamount to a being-in-itself. Love, therefore, in the traditional understanding as intersubjectivity becomes impossible. Hence, Sartre argues that love enslaves the Other.[24]Love is not really love at all. It is either sadism or masochism. In wishing to possess the other, the "lover" is really playing the role of the sadist. Conversely, in wishing to be possessed by the Other, the "lover" is really playing

the role of the masochist. Thus, “love is menaced always by a perpetual oscillation between sadism and masochism.”[25]

In an address entitled “Participation or Alienation”, which he delivered in 1975, that most gentle of philosophical critics, Karol Wojtyla, remarked that Sartre’s “analysis of consciousness leads him to conclude that the subject is closed in relation to others.”[26] Gabriel Marcel, a Catholic existentialist, speaks of the need for “ontological humility” as a corrective for Sartre’s loveless consciousness. We are not autonomous, as Sartre concludes. Such an assumption is riveted to pride and is incompatible with the humility we need in order to recognize who we truly are. “Love moves on a ground”, Marcel writes, “which is neither that of the self nor of the other qua other; I call it the Thou.” It is “a reality at my deepest level more truly me than I am myself—love as the breaking of the tension between the self and other, appears to me to be what one might call the essential ontological datum.”[27]

Sartre, in isolating the consciousness of being-in-itself from all else, seeks absolute freedom for himself. Yet this is a goalthat finite human beings cannot possibly achieve. A simple example well illustrates this point. Sartre was a heavy drinker and would often end his evenings by consuming a great deal of alcohol. Finally, his doctor ordered him to quit, and Sartre meekly acquiesced. Neither his body nor his medical advisor was indifferent to the habit.[28] Freely chosen acts do have their repercussions, including those that annul the very freedom that produced them. Nature misused is nature in revolt, making freedom its first casualty.

Nor is absolute freedom easy to bear. Throughout his life, Sartre was haunted by what he referred to as the “Holy Ghost.” At long last, he states, at the end of his autobiography, “I have caught the Holy Ghost in the cellars and flung him out of them. Atheism is a cruel, long-term business: I believe I have gone through it to the end.”[29] In some sense he had, because, as Sartre himself points out, without God, one’s sins cannot be forgiven. Therefore, the atheist lives with the burden of knowing that his sins are “absolutely irreparable.”[30]

To be alone in a Godless universe, without a nature, without guidance, and without hope, can be torturous. “Life is absurd”, Sartre concludes, and “man is a useless passion.” Indeed, life is brutal. But, he insists, we must make something of ourselves, even though that something does not amount to anything. Yet nothingness cannot satisfy our deepest yearnings. We yearn for being, not nonbeing. In this regard, it is not surprising to discover Sartre telling us, “I was intoxicated with death because I did not like life.”[31] Nor is it the least surprising, as Sartre confesses, that sex preoccupied him far more than philosophy.[32]

But what could Sartre, this atheistic existentialist, become? What could he make of himself if any such making were ultimately meaningless? He does not want to be absorbed into the “obscene paste” of matter and become a mere “being-in-itself.” Nor does he want to involve himself in relationships with others, who, according to his own philosophy, would be impelled to turn him into an object for their own individual use. Even less does he want to remain an indeterminate entity, trying to establish meaning, but floating aimlessly throughout the cosmos, awaiting his inevitable extinction. What is left? The answer is the simple utterance we find inscribed in the title of his life’s story—Words.

Sartre concludes that he must write in order “to be forgiven for being alive.”[33] Yet, in finding refuge in abstract words, he must deny the significance of his body, his incarnate reality, as well as the life-affirming relationships he might have cultivated with others. “Chance had made me a man”, he states. “Generosity would make me a book.”[34] Thus, he would escape from the misery of himself by writing about himself in a book, an act of desperate self-creation to counter his self-destructive nihilism. Yet it seems that Sartre himself was aware of the futility of such an act. “The mirror had told me what I had always known: I was horribly ordinary. I have never gotten over it.”[35]

The gap that Sartre creates between his own plane of consciousness and the external world is so wide as to prove un-crossable, leaving him in complete isolation and in complete antagonism to all else. The fundamental mode of all human relationships, for Sartre, therefore becomes conflict. As he states through the character Garcin in his play No Exit, “Hell is other people” (L’Enfer c’est l’Autrui).

In his book The Gods of Atheism, Fr. Vincent Miceli concludes, “Sartre’s philosophy leads logically and directly to despair and suicide. .. . His world of atheism is a kingdom of nothingness plunged into intellectual darkness, convulsed with spiritual hate and peopled by inhabitants who curse God and destroy each other in their vain attempt to seize his vacant throne.”[36] This is not hyperbole, but the inevitable consequence of Sartre’s thinking, which is congruent with the present Culture of Death.

Yet not even the author himself could live with such a bleak philosophy, nor could it give him any peace. On the last page of Words, he leaves us with a conundrum. “I depend only on those who depend only on God, and I do not believe in God.”[37] Sartre’s philosophy is internally contradictory, for it proves to be like a parasite living upon the very view he despised and rejected. The fact that he could sense it, however dimly, offers a flicker of hope.

Whenever one’s philosophy is so alien to life that it proves to be unsatisfactory, unhealthy, and unlivable, we must conclude that it is unrealistic. Sartre’s philosophy, which sets the consciousness of the Self in opposition to the otherness of everything else, is a formula for doom and despair. It is a philosophy that radically misrepresents the Self as essentially parentless and childless in order to make him free. But in the absence of a human nature that perdures through time, there is nothing he can stand upon, no heart to be filled with joy, no love to give to another. Sartre’s “being-for-itself” forms a bubble. And, as is the case with any bubble—having no core and a precarious film that forms its tentative outer texture—its future is not life, but death.

—D. D.M.

[1] Jean-Paul Sartre, Words, trans. Irene Clephone (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964), p. 12.

[2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibidl.

[7] Ibid., p. 15.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., p. 18.

[10] Ibid., p. 162.

[11] Ibid., p. 77.

[12] Ibid., p. 69. Sartre, in a conversation with Simone de Beauvoir, made the following candid revelation: “In Being and Nothingness I set out reasons for my denial of God’s existence that were not actually the real reasons. The real reasons were much more direct and childish—since I was only twelve—than theses on the impossibility of this or that for God’s existence.” Simone de Beauvoir, Adieux.A Farewell to Sartre, trans. Patrick O’Brian (London: Deutsch, Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1984), p. 438.

[13] Ibid., p. 68.

[14] Thornton Wilder, The Ides of March (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 37.

[15] Jean-Paul Sartre, L’Êtreet le néant:Essai d’ontologiephenomenohgique (Paris: Librarie Gallimard, 1943), p. 639. Sartre writes, “Les plus atroces situations de la guerre, les pires tortures ne créent d’etat de chose inhumain; il

n’a pas de situation inhumaine.”

[16] F. H. Heinemann, Existentialism and the Modern Predicament (New York:Harper and Row, 1958), p. 128.

[17] “Inadvertent Guru to an Age—Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1986)”, Time, Apr. 28, 1980, p. 38.

[18] Sartre, Words, p. 171.

[19] Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea (New York: New Directions, 1959), cited in Karl Stern, Flight from Woman (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), p. 128.

[20] Ibid., 133; see also p. 35, above.

[21] William Barrett, Irrational Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), p. 254.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Citadel Press, 1964), p. xxxii.

[24] Ibid., p. 379.

[25] Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 257.

[26] Karol Wojtyla, Person and Community: Selected Essays, trans. Theresa Sandok, O.S.M. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 203.

[27] Gabriel Marcel, Being and Having (New York: Harper, 1965), p. 167.

[28] Simone de Beauvoir, Adieux, p. 432.

[29] Sartre, Words, p. 171.

[30] De Beauvoir, Adieux, p. 440.

[31] Sartre, Words, p. 132.

[32] “Inadvertent Guru to an Age”, p. 38.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., pp. 132-33.

[35] Ibid., p. 75.

[36] Vincent Miceli, The Gods of Atheism (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1975), p. 246.

[37] Sartre, Words, p. 172.

Simone de Beauvoir

The year is 1972. Margaret Simons, a twenty-six-year-old American graduate student in philosophy, is writing her doctoral dissertation on The Second Sex. She has just won a French government grant that entitles her to work with the author of this epoch-making work, Simone de Beauvoir. The excited Ph.D. candidate has sold her secretarial clothes, her car, and her books in order to finance her trip to France, her “pilgrimage”, as she calls it.

After arriving in Paris, she phones her esteemed mentor and arranges a meeting. Initially, she is taken aback by de Beauvoir’s brusque manner and impatience with her caller’s imperfect French. Their meeting will prove to be disillusioning. Simons was “shocked” to find de Beauvoir, now in her mid-sixties and “looking old and wrinkled”, wearing lipstick and bright red nail polish. Were these unbecoming concessions to a bourgeois culture?

During the interview, the chain-smoking de Beauvoir repeatedly blew smoke into her protege’s face while the latter struggled to ask questions in French. Simons, a feminist activist, was strongly committed to feminist theory, but she was also committed to “natural” values. She found de Beauvoir’s smoking disappointing as well as annoying. When she asked her heroine about the influences that might have shaped her book, the author leaned toward her in a dramatic gesture and bade her admirer to remember that “the only important influence on The Second Sex was Being and Nothingness by Jean-Paul Sartre.”[1]

It was a disillusioning and upsetting revelation. How could this allegedly forceful and “independent woman” admit so casually, and to a stranger, not only of an unfeminist passivity, but also one that deferred to the male? “I had hoped”, she later reported, “that as a feminist she would no longer see her philosophical work as merely derivative from Sartre’s. I was unprepared for the forcefulness of her reply. It was impossible to see her in a passive role, as merely a follower of Sartre.”[2]

A certain mythology surrounds Simone de Beauvoir that presents her to the world as an independent thinker, a spokesperson for women, and an advocate of freedom. In truth, she is none of these. The core of her philosophy is Sartrean; she does not, by any means, speak for all women; and the range of freedom she endorses does not include, among other things, the freedom to marry and raise one’s own children. De Beauvoir’s celebrated remark, “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman”, bears a curious parallel with the gap between her life

and her fame. Her fame does not flow logically and consistently from her life and writings. Rather, it is something fabricated, something that has scant affinity with its apparent genesis.

De Beauvoir's debt to Sartre, then, is immense. She herself refers to her intimate companion of fifty years as "my little absolute."[3] She claims that Sartre's existence justified the world for her. One critic, commenting on this high accolade, states, "What Simone de Beauvoir is in fact saying is God is dead; long live Sartre."[4] Another critic has remarked that Sartre was God for de Beauvoir.[5]

Sartre's existential philosophy provides the axial skeleton of The Second Sex. When de Beauvoir announces in her introduction that "our perspective is that of existentialist ethics",[6] she is referring to the philosophy Sartre expresses in Being and Nothingness. Whereas Sartre employs "being-in-itself" (brute matter) and "being-for-itself" (consciousness) as his fundamental philosophical categories, de Beauvoir prefers to use "immanence" and "transcendence." "Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation," she writes, "there is a degradation of existence into the 'en-soi' [being-in-itself]—the brutish life of subjection to given conditions—and of liberty into constraint and contingency."[7]If her treatise on woman had continued in this abstract vein, it would have been a replica of Sartre's Being and Nothingness. What gives The Second Sex its readability and popular appeal is that the author relates "transcendence" (with its freedom, activity, and indefinability) to men and "immanence" (with its constraints, immobility, and objectness) to women.[8]

In full agreement with Sartre, de Beauvoir maintains that human beings are, at their core, nothing. But this "nothing" is synonymous with their freedom and is the basis for their obligation to transcend themselves: Human beings, however, are loath to accept the responsibility (and anguish) that rises from their nothingness. Hence, they attach themselves to some thing or to some role and live inauthentic lives, fearful of being themselves. When they choose this inauthenticity, they are guilty of "bad faith." When such inauthenticity is imposed upon them, they are "oppressed." To break free from inauthenticity, one must act freely and transcend his nothingness. "An existent is nothing other than what he does", states de Beauvoir. "The possible does not extend beyond the real, essence does not precede existence: in pure subjectivity, the human being is not anything. He is measured by his acts.

De Beauvoir contends, with unremitting energy throughout a long and tedious book, that the man is associated with transcendence while the woman is locked into immanence (as housewife, mother, domestic, etc.). "This is the lot of the woman in the patriarchate."[9] Men are at least partly responsible for

women's immanence because they view them specifically as the Other. There is a certain inevitability in men regarding women as the Other (and hence, as the "second sex"), for de Beauvoir. She claims that "no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself."[10]

Here, de Beauvoir simply ignores the fundamental importance of "neighbor" in the Christian tradition. God commands his disciples to "love their neighbor", which presupposes not regarding him in the detached way in which the One views the Other. She is also blithely ignoring the plain fact that, in countless instances, men and women do, in fact, love each other and do not collectivize each other into abstract categories. De Beauvoir, it seems, is more eager to reiterate Sartre's existentialism than to understand the complex and varied drama that actually transpires between the sexes. She seems so bedazzled by Sartrean existentialism that she is blind to social realism.

According to this peculiar viewpoint, men enjoy transcendence, while woman are trapped in immanence. Therefore, man becomes the role model for the "modern" and "independent" woman. Thus, "the 'modern' woman accepts masculine values: she prides herself on thinking, taking action, working, creating, on the same terms as men: instead of seeking to disparage them, she declares herself their equal."[11]One might more logically accuse de Beauvoir of providing a blueprint for "male sexism", rather than a guideline for the liberation of women.

Even more ironically, de Beauvoir invites a kind of feminine self-loathing. Such is the inevitable result of her almost slavish adherence to Sartre's philosophy. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre writes about the "sliminess" of the in-itself and the threat it poses for the for-itself. "Slime is the revenge of the in-itself. A sickly-sweet, feminine revenge ... a soft, yielding action, a moist and feminine sucking."[12] Here, Sartre associates the feminine with anything that threatens to engulf transcendence and degrade it to a mere "sticky" existence. "It is quite obvious", writes Moira Gatens, "in de Beauvoir's writings that for women to become truly human they must aspire to masculine qualitites."[13]

"The Second Sex", as William Barrett contends, "is in reality the protest against being feminine."[14] The protest is both unparalleled and unrelieved. "Maternity dooms woman to a sedentary existence," de Beauvoir tells us, "and so it is natural that she remain at the hearth while man hunts, goes fishing, and makes war."[15] Maternity is "one feminine function that is actually almost impossible to perform in complete liberty."[16] "Her whole body is a source of embarrassment."[17] "It seems to her to be sick; it is sick."[18] She is the victim of her "menstrual slavery."[19] De Beauvoir states, with the emotional detachment of a clinician, "The mammary glands, developing at puberty, play no

role in woman's individual economy: they can be excised at any time of life."[20] Women who enjoy being mothers "are not so much mothers as fertile organisms, like fowls with high egg-production. And they seek eagerly to sacrifice their liberty of action to the functioning of their flesh."[21] The "pregnant woman feels the immanence of her body ... it turns upon itself in nausea and discomfort."[22] She is a degraded human being and a public laughingstock:

> Ensnared by nature, the woman is plant and animal, a stockpile of colloids, an incubator, an egg; she scares children proud of their young, straight bodies and makes young people titter contemptuously because she is a human being, a conscious and free individual, who has become life's passive instrument.[23]

Clearly, the existentialism that de Beauvoir borrows from Sartre makes a mockery of the woman, since it regards her femininity as enslavement to the in-itself. More specifically, it portrays her as being victimized by her own biology and immobilized by the expectations of her bourgeois society. Household items become suffocating: "shining stoves, fresh, clean clothes, bright copper, polished furniture" provide "no escape from immanence and little affirmation of individuality."[24] And domestic chores are comparable to the futility of Sisyphus: "The battle against dust and dirt is never won."25[25]et it is her philosophy that is more horrifying than anything that horrifies her. By her own admission, she is a nothing that fears everything, while aspiring to a masculine ideal, despite her stated belief that men have always cast women as the Other who must be oppressed. Stripped down to the bone, shed of all feminist mythology and mystification, this is her philosophy. Its essential characteristics are emptiness and despair. Is it any wonder that she herself was such an unhappy person? Deirdre Bair, a National Book Award recipient, tells us in her extensive biography of de Beauvoir that de Beauvoir was a heavy drinker, smoked excessively, experimented with drugs, threatened suicide, suffered bouts of depression, and was obsessed with death. Even while working on her "masterpiece", The Second Sex, according to Bair, de Beauvoir "swallowed pills, booze and whatever else would give her the energy for another bout of writing."[26]

Political philosopher Jean Bethke-Elshtain has come to the conclusion that de Beauvoir suffered from the "pretense of one who believes she has found the worm in the apple when, in fact, she has lost the apple for the worm."[27] It was not that she threw the baby out with the bath water, but in confusing the two, decided to embrace the bath water.

We must conclude, then, that de Beauvoir was not the “independent” thinker that her misguided public assumed her to be. Nor did she speak for all women, certainly not those who valued their femininity. Much less was she an advocate of freedom, despite her posturing. Yet, despite the utterly derivative nature of her thought, her Sartrean loathing of maternity made de Beauvoir a tireless advocate of freedom in securing the “right” to abortion. She was the first president of Choisir (To Choose), a pro-abortion organization in France. She frequently allowed illegal abortions to be performed in her apartment when women seemingly had no other choice, and she was instrumental in bringing about the legalization of abortion in her country.[28] Nonetheless, she was not “pro-choice” when it came to more life-connoting arrangements, such as women raising their ownchildren in their own home. As she told Betty Friedan in a published interview, “No woman should be authorized to stay at home to raise her children. Women should not have that choice, precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one.”[29]

As with the statements of many such modern liberators, there is more than a touch of authoritarianism behind this remark. The “champion” of freedom would gladly, if she had the power, remove cherished freedom from the lives of the vast majority of women. “As long as the family and the myth of the family and the myth of maternity and the maternal instinct are not destroyed,” she went on to say, “women will still be oppressed.”[30] Yet de Beauvoir herself allowed Sartre to oppress and exploit her without mercy. Paul Johnson states in his celebrated study Intellectuals, “In all essentials Sartre treated her [de Beauvoir] no better than Rousseau did his Thérèse; worse, because he was notoriously unfaithful. In the annals of literature, there are few worse cases of a man exploiting a woman.”[31]

It also seems strange that one whose philosophy appears to rest on the freedom of the individual should express herself politically by favoring the coercion of the masses. De Beauvoir was editing the Marxist review Les temps modernes while preparing The Second Sex. Her affection for Communist politics was career long. She shared Sartre’s enthusiasm for Mao Tse-tung during the 1970s. De Beauvoir must realize, writes Christina Hoff Sommers, that the society she envisions “would require a legion of Big Sisters endowed by the state with the power to prohibit any woman who wants to marry and stay at home with children from carrying out her plans.”[32]

Sommers’ critique of radical feminism, Who Stole Feminism? bears the instructive subtitle Women Who Have Betrayed Women. De Beauvoir’s “feminism” betrays women. Like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who wanted to “force people to be free”, de Beauvoir wants to do the same for women. But the

freedom she has in mind is not really freedom at all. It is a deprivation of her nature accompanied by an abandonment to her nothingness.

Freud has been vilified for claiming that a woman's anatomy is her destiny. Nonetheless, his epithet contains a nugget of truth. Maleness and femaleness are not accidental qualities of human nature; they are essential aspects of our personhood. If we are to be realistic, we must acknowledge that our sex, male or female, is part of our very being. Thus, a woman's anatomy does play an ineradicable role in shaping her destiny. A woman achieves her rightful freedom through her femininity, not from it, just as a man achieves his rightful freedom through his masculinity, not by fleeing from it. It can be said of us all that "our density is our destiny."

To reduce women to their presumed existential nothingness, as de Beauvoir does, and then bid them to be free is the most insidious and thorough betrayal that has ever been perpetrated against the female sex. The historical fact that de Beauvoir is generally acknowledged as the intellectual matriarch of contemporary feminism says a lot about how wide the gap can be that separates celebrity from common sense, popularity from prudence, and fame from fundamental wisdom. De Beauvoir provides the world with a glittering image of the "modern, independent woman." But it is an image and nothing more than that. And the price of adopting this image is to abandon one's reality.

As important as Sartre's role in shaping de Beauvoir's existential philosophy is, we should not overlook the role her childhood played in disposing her to accept her mentor's dark existentialism. She confesses that her earliest memories were so closely linked with the color black that, throughout her life, whenever spontaneous memories of her childhood came to mind, she often had the sensation of being smothered in black.[33] We know a great deal about the initial twenty years of her life from the first of her series of autobiographical installments, Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter.

De Beauvoir's father was an atheist until the day he died and even then refused to see a priest. Simone greatly admired her father and was overjoyed when he told her that she "thought like a man." At the same time, she complained that he never embraced her or ever sat her on his knee. Her mother was a fervent Catholic. But Simone saw her as tied to an incessant round of domestic chores, obedient to her bourgeois role as wife and mother, and in her soul, utterly unfree. Simone informs us that she loved her mother very much until she was twelve or thirteen, and then began to love her much less. She detested her mother's pious Catholicism and bourgeois obligations. By age fifteen, Simone identified herself as an atheist. She viewed her parents' marriage as a disunity, the father, in effect, representing "transcendence", the mother

“immanence.” Love and marriage, in her eyes, were essentially incompatible.

Simone ascribed philosophical significance to the rupture she observed in her parents’ marriage and concluded, “Sanctity and intelligence belonged to two quite different spheres. . . . So I set God apart from life and the world, and this attitude was to have a profound influence on my future development.”[34]

Ironically, it is not intelligent to presume that sanctity and intelligence are mutually exclusive. Nor is it justifiable empirically. There are innumerable human beings who embody both of these traits. The dichotomy de Beauvoir makes, though something she may have experienced in her parents’ marriage, cannot be extended to the whole human race. Herein, we see that de Beauvoir is really not a very good philosopher, but, paradoxically, allows her surrounding circumstances to shape her thinking. She is, in fact, the very opposite of what she claims to be. Indeed, she exemplifies the very thing she denounces. “Le Deuxième Sexe, despite its theorizing and its air of objectivity, is a deeply personal work”, as one critic declares.[35] But it is “personal” in the sense that it is not philosophical, that is to say, not universal, not valid for all women.

De Beauvoir’s writing continuously reflects her radical dichotomies: sanctity and intelligence, immanence and transcendence, in-itself and for-itself, Self and Other, biology and culture, men and women. Apart from her tendency to see things simplistically in black and white is her proclivity to pit these categories against each other. As we have seen with others in these pages, with regard to the ultimate category of lifeand death, she shows a disturbing inclination to champion the latter over the former. This is evident in her preference for abortion over mothers staying at home to raise their own progeny. It appears time and again throughout her novels. In The Second Sex she speaks of the warrior who enjoys his superior function as a killer, in contrast with the woman who is deprived of such glory:

> The worst curse that was laid upon woman was that she should be excluded from those warlike forays. For it is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal; that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills.[36]

In baldly stating that male killing is superior to female caring, de Beauvoir is prescribing a Culture of Death. “Why give pride of place to killing?” asks one startled feminist.[37]For de Beauvoir, killing represents action and transcendence, which are superior to the modes of passivity and immanence. De Beauvoir, unfortunately, remains trapped in her atheistic existentialism, in her abstract categories that reflect neither reality nor life, but the twin voids of

Godlessness and humanlessness.[38] If God does not exist, and man is essentially nothing, is there any possibility whatsoever that the conscious use of freedom alone, operating in this double vacuum, could produce anything at all, let alone anything of significance? All that could eventuate from such sterile and powerless origins is tantamount to a Culture of Death. De Beauvoir's philosophy inevitably places the Culture of Death on a higher plane than the Culture of Life because she mistakenly believes that love and life are both uncreative and inert.

—D.D.M.

[1] Margaret A. Simons, Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century, Yale French Studies, ed. Helene Vivienne Wenzel, no. 72 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 204.

[2] Ibid.

[3] See Simone de Beauvoir, Letters to Sartre, trans, and ed. Quintin Hoare (New York: Arcade, 1992).

[4] Elaine Marks, Simone de Beauvoir: Encounters with Death (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973), p. 30.

[5] Tori Moi, Simone de Beauvoir (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), p. 224.

[6] Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Bantam, 1968), p. xxviii.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 241.

[9] Ibid., p. 239.

[10] Ibid., p. xvii.

[11] Ibid., p. 676.

[12] Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (London: Methuen, 1977). p. 609. See also Moira Gatens, Feminism and Philosophy (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 56.

[13] Ibid., p. 46.

[14] William Barrett, Irrational Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), p. 260.

[15] De Beauvoir, Second Sex, p. 63.

[16] Ibid., p. 655.

[17] Ibid., p. 311.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 24.

[21] Ibid., p. 467.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 435.

[25] Ibid. A housewife, of course (or anyone else), does not wage war, to use de Beauvoir's melodramatic image, against dust and dirt. She cleans the house, and not for the sake of the house, but for those who live in it. By the same token, bathing is not battling against grime and dirt, but cleaning oneself. Cleaning is not a futile activity that can be compared with the meaningless actions of Sisyphus, who spends eternity rolling a rock up and down a hill. The purpose of cleaning transcends itself and serves life.

[26] Deirdre Bair, Simone de Beauvoir: A Biography(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 392.

[27] Jean Bethke-Elshtain, Real Politics (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 176.

[28] Bair, Simone de Beauvoir, p. 547.

[29] "Sex, Society, and the Female Dilemma", Saturday Review, June 14, 1975, p. 18.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Paul Johnson, Intellectuals (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 235.

[32] Christina HoffSommers, Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), p. 257.

[33] Bair, Simone de Beauvoir, p. 21.

[34] Simone de Beauvoir, Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter, trans. James Kirkup (London: Penguin, 1953), p. 41.

[35] Renee Winegarten, Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical View (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 88.

[36] De Beauvoir, Second Sex, p. 46. De Beauvoir ignores the fact that animals do risk their lives for their group as well as for their young. Human beings enjoy a certain superiority over brute animals because of their spiritual capacities, which include intellection, freedom, and love. Because de Beauvoir is committed to dialectical materialism, she distinguishes not between matter and spirit, but between matter and nothingness. Therefore, she contends, as does Sartre, that freedom is nothing.She does not realize the ways in which human beings are superior to brute animals and offers a specific difference, risking life, that is simply not true.

[37] Nancy Hartock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism", in S. Hardin and M.B. Hin-

tikka, eds., Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science (Dordrecht, Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1983), pp. 383-410.

Elisabeth Badinter

Simone de Beauvoir passed away on April 14, 1986, at 4:00 p.m., eight hours short of the anniversary of Jean-Paul Sartre's death on April 15 six years earlier. She was seventy-eight years of age. At her funeral, the words of Elisabeth Badinter were repeated by many who were present— "Women, you owe everything to her!"[1]J These emotionally charged words entitle the last chapter of Deirdre Bair's biography of de Beauvoir. They symbolize the linking of one generation of secular feminists to the next. Badinter, born in 1944, holds a doctorate in philosophy and teaches at the Ecole Polytechnique. She established herself as a literary force with her book The Myth of Motherhood. Professor Badinter has pledged to carry the torch that de Beauvoir enkindled in The Second Sex.

Like de Beauvoir, Badinter, the wife of France's former minister of justice (under Mitterand), emphasizes the freedom, individualism, and transcendence of the woman. She warns of the suffocating potentialities inherent in marriage and pregnancy, dismisses God as irrelevant, and excoriates the patriarchy. At times, Badinter's writing seems to be a mere extension of that of her esteemed predecessor:

> Reduced to the marginal status of womb and housewife, for a very long time women lost every kind of participation in transcendence. Complementarity became no more than a snare wherever the One was made the reverse of the Other, as if they no longer belonged to the same species.[2]

Badinter's philosophy, as a whole, however, differs significantly from de Beauvoir's on three fundamental points. First, Badinter substitutes "evolutionary optimism" for de Beauvoir's "historical pessimism." Second, she replaces her mentor's notion of the "opposition" between the sexes with that of "resemblance." Finally, Badinter extends de Beauvoir's notion of existential individualism much further by absolutizing the Ego. Taken together, these three points outline a view that has a decisively futuristic quality, not unlike that of Margaret Sanger's, and one that has clear affinities with science fiction. She envisions the unfettered Egos of men and women, no longer hampered by gender distinctions, building a future of liberty and peace. Abortion and contraception are taken for granted, but they initiate a series of reproductive technologies that allow for extracorporeal gestation and male pregnancy.

1. From Historical Pessimism to Evolutionary Optimism: Despite all de

Beauvoir's talk about the importance of "transcendence" and "liberation," a current of pessimism runs through de Beauvoir's thinking. Male dominance that is linked to patriarchy, in her estimation, seems to be both inevitableand irremovable. "Society has always been male," she concedes. "Political power has always been in the hands of men."[3]"Thus the triumph of the patriarchate was neither a matter of chance nor the result of violent revolution. From humanity's beginnings, their biological advantage has enabled the males to affirm their status as sole and sovereign subjects: they have never abdicated this position."[4]

Badinter, by contrast, senses a major upheaval going on in the world. She claims, though in the complete absence of any proof, that "the present evolution of the relationship between the sexes seems to us to be so considerable that we are tempted to see it as the beginning of a genuine mutation, a cultural mutation which does not merely upset the power relationship between men and women, but which obliges us to rethink the 'nature' of them both."[5] She confidently looks to the "Utopia of the future" as a fortification against "the pessimism of history."[6]

Badinter places her faith in time and in science. The Bible, she decrees, cannot help us. During "this great upheaval" of our present moment in history, "the Good Book, for once, does not contain the answers to the new questions!"[7] The Bible has been superseded by a new truth, because modern science has fundamentally altered the way men and women relate to each other sexually. It is science, through contraception and abortion, that has liberated women from reproductive servitude. As a consequence, women are no longer subservient to men. Patriarchy is dead, and the archaic complementarity model of the sexes is now recognized as just that—archaic.[8]

According to Badinter, history has shown that whenever the notion of the "complementarity of the sexes" has been put into practice, the inevitable result was a sexual asymmetry in which men dominated women. Complementarity, therefore, equals inequality, and inequality always leads to domination and oppression. It should be noted that Badinter routinely uses the term "complementarity" as if it means conflict. She never treats the term according to its real meaning. She does not consider, for example, that the concept of marriage as a "two-in-one flesh" unity between man and woman, as recorded in the Book of Genesis, is both non-exploitive as well as mutually fulfilling.

In contrast to some other feminists, Badinter does not see the collapse of patriarchy as signaling the dawn of a new matriarchy. The new model by which we are to understand the relationship between the sexes is no longer one of complementarity and oppression, but one of "resemblance." This "resemblance"

is possible precisely because we are presently transcending nature and severing the link between the “biological” and the “cultural.”

But severing the link between the biological and the natural means, as one might suspect, rejecting the premise that morality is rooted in our nature. Soon enough, what was once considered unnatural (and hence morally repulsive), becomes normalized. For Badinter, such cultural transformation is a welcome sign. For example, as an indication of culture’s growing “emancipation” from the plane of the biological, Badinter refers to an emerging attitude that dares to claim the “right to incest.”[9] She quotes, approvingly, War-dell Pomeroy, co-author of the well-known Kinsey Report, who asserts that “it is time to recognize that incest is not necessarily a perversion or a form of mental illness, but that it may sometimes be beneficial.” She suggests that incest will follow the same cultural history as masturbation. What is in one period a taboo, in a later period becomes acceptable practice. Thus, for Badinter, “the universal taboo against incest may very well become a dead letter.”[10]

2. From Opposition to Resemblance: For Badinter, the broad acceptance of contraception and abortion has allowed women to become emancipated from their biology. Such a freedom, she writes, shatters the “millennarian equation ‘woman = mother’”[11] Now that she has “the right of life and death over the child,”[12] she is no longer subservient to the child or the child’s father. Badinter embraces the new ethic according to which “the woman’s rights come before those of the foetus and before her duties as a mother. The twentieth century has decided that an existent individual takes priority over a potential human being. Motherhood is no longer sacred, and woman has finally become a simple human being.”[13]

One might question the moral authority that an age, “the twentieth century,” might possess that would allow it to decree this new ethic. For Badinter, it comes from the spread and acceptance of atheism. “God,” she contends, “is no longer to be reckoned with in the West.”[14]4 Therefore, the theological foundations supporting the connections between biology and morality have been removed. Once we realize that there is no God to write morality into the natural order, we may feel quite free, Badinter argues, to manipulate nature without constraint. Ironically, this results—for Badinter, the woman’s advocate—in the total negation of womanhood. Contraception and abortion free women from their bodily natures so that they can more closely “resemble” men. In addition, the development of an incubator that would gestate a child for nine months would greatly add to her female liberation. In this way, the incubator would serve as “an artificial mother for an embryo fertilized in vitro.”[15]

Nature is not always so easily overridden. Badinter recognizes that as long as men are not able to procreate, an important inequality between the sexes persists. This inequality, she maintains, can be rectified with the aid of technologies that would allow the transfer of the embryo from the female body to the male body and then back to the female, who would give birth. In so "sharing" pregnancy, men and women would resemble each other more completely and thereby avoid an important dimension of inequality.[16] Here Badinter ignores the important difference between equality of achievement and equality of function. It is theoretically possible for a man to gestate, temporarily, a child. In this case there is a certain equality of achievement with his female counterpart. On the other hand, it is not possible, even theoretically, for a man to gestate a child in the same way that a woman does. Here, equality of function does not apply. One can get a parrot to say "hello," but by no means does this "equality of achievement" mean that, linguistically, human beings and parrots function equally.

Badinter also envisions the development of technologies that would allow men to gestate a child and give birth to it through cesarean section. She cites an article in the magazine Actuel in which a Professor Frydman states, " Today the myth of masculine pregnancy could become a reality."[17] Interestingly, an American gynecologist, Dr. Cecil Jacobsen, who was quoted in the article and endorses the procedure, is now serving time in prison, having been convicted by a federal jury on fifty-three counts of fraud and perjury concerning his medical mistreatment of women.[18]

Concerning those who oppose male pregnancy, Badinter states, "It is hard to grasp the philosophical and moral principles behind the rejection of this hypothesis."[19] Badinter's attachment to equality (which verges on identity) seems to blind her to the obvious fact that such a procedure, being grossly unnatural, would be hazardous in the extreme for both the pregnant male as well as for the developing child. Beyond that, men do not seem nearly as enthralled with the prospect of technologically erasing their maleness and therefore seem to be oblivious to the "mutation" that is going on in society that is urging them to become pregnant.

It is hard to resist the conclusion that Badinter's allegiance to equality is both unnatural and fanatical; in fact, it is precisely because it is so unnatural that it must be so fanatical. She does not recognize the legitimate life-affirming and nature-affirming bases on which male pregnancy is opposed and assumes that all objections will simply melt away merely through the passing of time. Her view is riveted on the future. Time itself, however, is not capable of changing values. "Nevertheless," she writes, averting her thoughts from the obvious, "what is

found disgusting today may perhaps be found desirable tomorrow."[20] It is no less true, of course, that what is found disgusting in one era may continue to be found disgusting in subsequent eras. Badinter does not philosophize about given realities. She looks to the future and imagines that things will somehow, inexplicably, be different then. Thus, her exaggerated commitment to an ideology of equality prevents her from examining the nature of things as they are. She blithely places unswerving confidence in the spontaneous evolution of "a new Mankind."[21]

3. The Absolute Value of the Ego: With the dissolution of nature, gender distinctiveness, and biological relationships, Badinter is well on her way to absolutizing the Ego. After all her deconstructing, the only reality left standing in any substantial way is the Ego. Badinter does not flinch from the end result of her negative methodology. "Self-love has become a code of ethics," she tells us. "The categorical imperative no longer sets out the conditions of the relationship between Ego and Other People, but those of my relationship with myself. It orders me to love myself, 'to develop myself,' 'to enjoy myself The aim of the moral code has shifted away from the Other and on to oneself."[22]

Badinter has a peculiar way of writing about things that have not happened as if they actually have occurred and of ignoring things that actually have taken place. Nowhere in her book, allegedly a philosophical treatise, does she mention any of the great French personalists—Jacques Maritain, Gabriel Marcel, and Emmanuel Mounier. Nor does she mention other important personalists whose philosophy remains both viable and visible—Martin Buber, Nikolai Berdyaev, Paul Til-lich, Karol Wojtyla, and so on. She does not consider the per-sonalism that is inherent in Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body." All these personalists emphasize the fact that none of us is an island, that no one brings about his own birth, performs surgery on himself, gets married to himself, or develops his life as an asocial Ego. We are bound to others and participate in their lives by virtue of a fundamental intersub-jectivity that makes love and friendship real possibilities. We are, at the same time, both unique individuals and communal beings. As persons, we combine the individual with the social. We are not, nor can we function as, absolute Egos. We are mortal, finite, and defectible. We cannot turn ourselves into gods. Exempting herself from having to deal with a formidable array of philosophical opponents, Badinter cavalierly states that when our Ego becomes, as it should, our main preoccupation, "we are obliged to recognize that intersubjective relations are losing their value."[23] The Other fades into neutrality as the Self asserts its absolute significance. This enables a person to divorce with a certain emotional detachment, remaining "good friends" with his former spouse. It means the historical end of other-

related passions such as jealousy and hatred. Badinter portrays this intriguing fiction, the emotionally distant Ego, apparently unmindful of the fact that it has no precedent anywhere in human history and that there is no basis anywhere upon which anyone could reasonably predict that it could ever come to be.

Badinter has a philosophical precursor, although she does not mention him, in the figure of Max Stirner. In The Ego and His Own, Stirner asserts, “The man who belongs to himself alone ... is by origin free, for he acknowledges nothing but himself.”[24] Martin Buber, a Jewish personalist and staunch opponent of National Socialism, has pointed out that the Egoism of Stirner, which closes the self off from the other, is a forerunner to the “Group-I which acknowledges nothing but itself.”[25] The absence of intersubjectivity, historically, has led to forms of group Egoism that affect superiority over other groups. Individual narcissism easily develops into group narcissism.

The closing off of the “I” to the “Thou,” what German psychologists have termed Icheinsamkeit(I-aloneness), is the path to insanity. The essential irrationality of the insane man lies in the fact that he talks past men and is unable to speak or relate to another person as a Thou. The overvaluation of the Ego is relatable to the isolation of the psychotic, the fact that he has no Thou for his I.[26] If Badinter’s absolutization of the Ego does not lead to a Culture of Death, it surely is the road to insanity.

Yet Badinter is undaunted by such prospects, if she even recognizes them. The same dismissal of the arguments of others leads her to repudiate the Christian notion of neighbor as well as the Kantian notion of duty to others. “By dint of proclaiming our duty toward our personal development,” she argues, “the idea of sacrifice now only appears under its negative aspect of self-mutilation.”[27] Altruism, including motherly and fatherly relationships with children, is acceptable only to the extent that the relationships serve the Ego’s aims. A mother’s child, for example, exists to satisfy her narcissism, and such narcissism must draw a small circle. Thus, Badinter remarks, “with more than two children, the parents feel the burden is too heavy, the sacrifice of their Egos too great.”[28]

Pressing ahead in the expansion of the relentless Ego, she claims that “to leave some of our potentialities undeveloped is an unforgivable crime against the new capitalism of the Ego.”[29] As with her various programs to eliminate the natural categories of male and female, Badinter is blithely unaware of any practical restraints. Is it necessary to explain that no one has either time or opportunity to develop all of one’s potentialities? Or is it necessary to point out that there are certain potentialities that we cannot develop without the cooperation of other people? Badinter’s Egoism invites no end of irresolvable

conflict. A world of six billion self-absorbed Egos would be unimaginably chaotic.

Badinter tries to put together a program and a vision that will end discrimination and free every individual to be a complete person. While in some respects her intention sounds attractive and even commendable, unfortunately, she is engaged in a fictitious enterprise that does not have the wherewithal to realize her cherished dream.

She accepts abortion unquestioningly, regarding it as a necessary step in the evolution of human beings. After all, "the life of a complete human being was more important than that of a potential human being,"[30] she states. She forgets, however, that there are no "complete" human beings. Even if there were, it would be unlikely that such "complete" beings would condone the killing of the less complete members of their human family. People, at best, are always improving, but they never reach completion. The essential point that Badinter misses is that we all, including the unborn, possess human natures. Unless we can establish justice on the basis of our shared human nature, we will always be at war with each other.

Although she associates "complementarity" with oppression, she disregards the fact that the word refers to a relationship in which two people help to complete each other. Husband and wife, mother and child, teacher and student, doctor and patient, confessor and penitent—all help to complete each other. On the one hand, she talks about the essential importance of being a complete individual, and on the other hand, she dismisses the indispensable means for bringing about completeness, namely, complementarity, as both archaic and evil.

The Culture of Death is brought about when people, instead of cooperating with each other in ways that are complementary, seek an impossible completeness by dint of their own individual effort. Inevitably, excessive self-interest leads to conflict and contention. Not all individuals, acting precisely as individuals, can be expected to share the same vision. Having unfairly devalued complementarity, Badinter then puts in its place "resemblance." But her notion of resemblance is perfectly negated and contradicted the moment she absolutizes the Ego while radically depreciating all those others whom that same Ego allegedly resembles.

Badinter has some laudatory things to say about the French Revolution. In killing the king, the revolutionists also assaulted the notions of fatherhood and God, to which kingship is intimately united. "All emancipation is first of all emancipation from the father."[31]1 In this way, aristocratic ver-ticality yielded to horizontal democracy. Submission, Hierarchy, and Paternity were replaced by Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Thus, the atheistic philosophers of the

nineteenth century, including Feuerbach, Proudhon, Marx, and Nietzsche, drawing from the implications of the French Revolution, proclaimed that the death of God is the indispensable condition for the liberty of man.

The French Revolution, however, led directly to the Napoleonic Wars. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity did not blossom in the Revolution's aftermath. For them to have blossomed, it would have been necessary for them to have been planted in the soil of a different trilogy, not liberté, égal-ite, and fraternité, but verité, humilité, and paternité.[32] This other trilogy is one that Badinter ignores, particular since they would offend her Ego. Nevertheless, we need truth to make us free, humility to acknowledge our equality, and fatherhoodto teach us all that we are brothers. The latter trilogy provides the foundation for the former in order to ensure a Culture of Life. Without that foundation, a Culture of Death, such as what historically followed from the French Revolution and logically follows from Badinter's misguided philosophy, is inevitable.

—D.D.M.

[1] Deirdre Bair, Simone de Beauvoir: A Biography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 617.

[2] Elisabeth Badinter, Man/Woman:The One Is the Other, trans. Barbara Wright (London: Collins Harvill, 1989), p. 150. The American edition, published by Harper and Row, also in 1989, is titled The Unopposite Sex: The End of the Gender Battle.

[3] Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Bantam, 1968), p. 65.

[4] Ibid., p. 71.

[5] Badinter, Man/Woman, p. xv.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p. xii.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., p. 145.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid, p. 139.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., p. 140.

[14] Ibid., p. 216.

[15] Ibid., p. 218.

[16] See Thomas Molnar, "The Assault on the Family," The Human Life

Review, summer 1987, p. 63.

[17] Badinter, Man/Woman, p. 218.

[18] Drummond Ayres, Jr., “Fertility Doctor Accused of Fraud,” New York Times, Nov. 21, 1991, p. A20; “Infertility Doctor Convicted of Fraud,” Kitchener-Waterloo Record, Mar. 5, 1992, p. A12.

[19] Badinter, Man/Woman, p. 219.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 220.

[22] Ibid., pp. 194-95.

[23] Ibid., p. 195.

[24] Max Stirner, The Ego and His Own, trans. S. C. Byington (London: A. C. Fifield, 1913), p. 299.

[25] Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, trans. R. G. Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 41, 82.

[26] Maurice Friedman, “Healing through Meeting: Martin Buber and Psychotherapy,” Cross Currents 5, no. 4 (fall 1955).

[27] Badinter, Man/Woman, p. 195.

[28] Ibid., p. 196.

[29] Ibid., p. 194.

[30] Ibid., p. 219.

[31] Ibid., p. 117.

[32] See Clara Lejeune, Life Is a Blessing (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), p. 109.

PART FIVE

THE PLEASURE SEEKERS

Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud (1856—1939), at a major crossroad in his life in 1896, wrote a letter to a friend expressing his desire to become a philosopher: “As a young man I longed for nothing else than philosophical knowledge, and I am now on the way to satisfy that longing by passing from medicine to psychology.”[1]

In one sense, his philosophy was simple and can be adequately encapsulated in the maxim “knowledge through science.” But this is not really a philosophy. Rather, it is the reduction of philosophy to scientific materialism. In Freud’s case it was psychologism. In another sense, it was complex. He acknowledged his indebtedness to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche for their contribution to his own vitalism and recognition of the irrational element in man. Freud, however, was never able to harmonize these two disparate elements, reason and the irrational, in his philosophy. He remained ambivalent about whether the knowledge we gain through a purely scientific examination of man can ever be used to curb his fundamental irrationality so that the needs of the individual can harmonize with those of society.

Freud was a scientist. But science alone was not enough to satisfy his personal ambitions. He wanted to be more than a scientist. He wanted to be a revolutionary: “Acheronta movebo” (I will move all hell). So he added to his scientific findings a mythology that would ensure that his larger view of man would secure his historical immortality. But the philosophy he bequeathed to the world, composed as it is of two radically incompatible and antagonistic elements, is, in the last analysis, incoherent. It promises freedom on the one hand, but on the other, it virtually guarantees chaos. It purports to understand man, but, in fact, reduces him to neuro-anatomy

Freud, from the standpoint of the history of the West, is indeed one of its great intellectual revolutionaries. He saw himself as leading the Third Revolution of this type and aimed to “lance the poisonous bubble of pride in man.” Man’s pride (known to the Greeks as hubris) had been severely wounded as a result of two preceding intellectual revolutions. As a consequence of the Copernican Revolution in mathematics and astronomy, man could no longer regard his earthly abode as being the center of the universe. This was a cosmologicalrevolution. After Darwin, man could no longer think of himself as completely unrelated to brute animals. This was a biological revolution. Freud laid bare man’s unconscious and revealed its powerful, irrational drives, thereby

removing the illusion of self-mastery. This was a psychological revolution.

And so, for Freud, as science advanced, man diminished. As science displaced religion, meaning and morality began to dissolve. The process of learning more unpleasant things about himself through science was humbling him. The Third Revolution did not seem to be improving his lot. Man was not enjoying the new status that scientific knowledge had carved out for him. He was becoming increasingly discontent, though he found consolation in the belief that he was losing his illusions.

Freud's philosophy has three basic qualities that warrant serious examination. Each represents a retreat from reality and consequently from an authentic experience of life. Its reductive, irrational, and mythic features cannot be integrated into a coherent whole. As such, they tend to weaken and fractionalize the human being, rendering him more susceptible to the forces of discouragement and death.

1. Reductive: Jacques Maritain states rather bluntly, "The whole of Freudian philosophy rests upon the prejudice of a radical denial of spirituality and freedom."[2] Freud, then, simply followed the pattern of modern materialism, accepting both its reductive premises and reductive conclusions. In this way, he produced a truncated and unrealistic view of human beings. As an example, his gratuitous and unscientific denial of the spiritual dimension of man makes it impossible for him to explain such universal activities as art, morality, and religion. Freud, in effect, reduced the world of man and all his distinctively human operations to mere fodder for scientific materialism. While his explorations into the unconscious and subsequent development of the psychoanalytic method ensured his lasting stature as an eminent doctor of the mind, he saw the unconscious as nothing more than a "seething cauldron," an interior inferno thronged with repressed monsters. By making this simplistic identification, he divorced the unconscious from the life of reason and spirit, thereby reducing it to the level of primitive instinct or, as Maritain states, "into some kind of pure bestiality crouched in the depths of man's being."[3]

Thus, Freud's method of dealing with anything spiritual is reductive; that is, he reduces it to the plane of the material, where it is subject to empirical analysis alone. As a consequence, Freud finds himself in the impossible position of trying to explain the higher by appealing exclusively to the lower. Is it at all reasonable to try to explain Beethoven's motivation for writing his Ninth Symphony solely on the basis of what materialist-defined science can examine empirically? The spiritual cannot be explained by the material, though it may be related to it in some way.

But for Freud, the spiritual could not be real. Therefore, all spiritual beliefs

had to have material causes. As an example, Freud claims that the notion of God is merely a father image projected onto the sky. He theorizes that a child originally looks upon his own father as omnipotent. As the child matures and discovers that his father is not divine, he nonetheless retains the fantasy image of an omnipotent father, that is, God. His belief in God persists, although it is shifted from a real being to one who is imaginary.

Or to take another example, Freud states that Holy Communion is not what it is believed to be on a spiritual level, but is strictly derived from the primitive state of mankind, when cannibalistic ceremonies were practiced. Receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion, therefore, is merely what he terms “oral introjection.” Continuing in this vein, disciples of Freud have taught that the mystical experiences of saints are the result of sexual frustrations, that saying the Rosary is unconscious masturbation, and so on.

Of course, we must point out that Freud was at least consistent. It is quite logical for him, having dismissed the spiritual order, to explain all art, morality, and religion solely in relation to the material order. The great father of modern materialism, Thomas Hobbes, had done it three centuries earlier, and Darwin had offered his own materialist reduc-tionism in the century of Freud’s birth. Materialist premises can yield only materialist conclusions.

Psychiatrist Karl Stern states that the most remarkable of all Freud’s reductive statements is this: “Religion is nothing but an obsessive-compulsive neurosis.”[4] Now, it is undeniable that some obsessive-compulsive people are also religious. This does not mean, logically, that all people who are religious suffer from this abnormality. We would not conclude that all people who are sick must have a fever on the basis that all people who have a fever are sick. The field of discourse for sick people in general is much wider than it is for its subset of those who are fevered. So, too, the range of religious people is much broader than its subset of religious people who happen to be obsessive-compulsive. To equate the two is both prejudicial and reductive. It is also, ironically, unscientific.

Because Freud operated in the arbitrarily cramped quarters of the material, he lacked the vision to be able to see things in their wholeness and thus be able to make a realistic diagnosis. He was not in a position, for example, to say, “People whose religion is tied to their neurosis do not experience the true nature of religion and therefore do not receive its appropriate benefits.” Freud simply reduced religion to a neurosis and remained blind to what he refused to see. His reductive method prevented him from apprehending a healthy religion that is free of neurotic entanglement.

Freud also reduced free will to instinctive drives, thereby reducing real guilt

to mere “guilt feelings.” By such reduc-tionism, Freud lost sight of moral responsibility, and vices, no less than virtues, became merely the result of the interplay of deep, irrational instincts and other psychological determinants. Thus, he could explain violent human aggression, hate, and evil in relation to the body. In this way, as Ernest Becker remarks in his Pulitzer Prize—winning book The Denial of Death, Freud was able to “keep his basic allegiance to physiology, chemistry, and biology and his hopes for a total and simple reductionist science of psychology.”[5] The price of this reduction, however, is the loss of any sense of an integrated moral person. It also brings with it a sense of utter helplessness in preventing the emergence of a Culture of Death. The notion that evil chooses man is far more despairing than that of man being capable of freely choosing evil, since he has some control in the latter instance, whereas he has no control in the former. In freeing man from moral responsibility, Freud did not free man, but left him defenseless against himself. Being radically unfree is a greater handicap than being capable of experiencing true guilt.

2. Irrational: Maritain has criticized Freud for infecting his philosophy with “a deep hatred of the form of reason.”[6] He is by no means alone in this assessment. Psychotherapist Rollo May is equally critical of the overemphasis of the “irrational” in psychoanalysis:

> Has it not been always the function of psychoanalysis, that we—whether we literally are murderers or not—are always pushed by the “irrational,” daimonic, dynamic forces of the “dark” side of life that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, as well as Freud, talked about? Freud dethroned deliberation as the motive for actions. Whatever we do, infinitely more than our “rational” reasons and justification is involved.[7]

Schopenhauer had seen the blind, instinctive rush of Life everywhere. Nietzsche felt its irresistible urge in his Will to Power. Freud reduced it further and situated it in the primordial instinctive center of the human being. He called it not Life or Will, but Id. As such, the Id is a source of motivation, a drive for pleasure. It is inherently irrational, a thoroughly blind instinct. Freud tells us in Beyond the Pleasure Principle that, as an instinct, it is “an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things.”[8] In other words, it is a tendency in animate things to return to the inanimate. Therefore, the “aim of all life is death.”[9] Freud defined pleasure (including sexual pleasure) after the manner of Schopenhauer as a negative phenomenon, the struggle to release oneself from unpleasure, or tension. “I must insist,” Freud writes, in reference to sexual tension, “that a feeling of tension necessarily involves unpleasure.”[10]

But rather than liberating the Id, Freud asserts that the primordial, irrationally impulsive Id must be held in check. Civilization cannot exist unless restrictions are placed upon the Id so that it does not bring society to ruin. The Superego, formerly understood as conscience, is the restraining order that society, religion, parents, and other rational agencies place upon the Id. We are beset by three "tyrants," Freud explains: the Id, the Superego, and the environment. It is the role of the Ego to establish some kind of balance in the midst of these warring factors. But the Ego is weak. More often than not, it can do nothing other than repress its bitter conflicts, which would finally erupt in neurotic anxiety.

Having been despiritualized and depersonalized, the Ego is left with no energy of its own. It is entirely passive, a mere rider on the horse.[11] The question that Freud faces, and it is a formidable one, is how can civilization, with its obvious needs for order, harmony, and a common good, come to terms with the individual and the irrational forces that surge from within each individual?

Freud wrote two books on the subject, Civilization and Its Discontents and The Future of an Illusion. These works are interesting in the way they express the human dilemma. But they shed no light on the subject, nor do they offer any hope. In his excellent study on Freud, The Mind of the Moralist, Philip Rieff states that Freud has "no message" for the modern world in the sense of "something positive and constructive to offer." "None of the consolations of philosophy or the hopes of religion are to be found in Freud."[12]

The main theme of Civilization and Its Discontents is the irremediable antagonism between the demands of instinct (as found ultimately in the Id) and the restrictions of civilization. The individual and society, man and reality, self and instinct are all hopelessly and antagonistically pitted against each other. Life becomes a rather miserable experience and cries out for help. Freud writes:

> The service rendered by intoxicating media in the struggle for happiness and in keeping misery at a distance is so highly prized as a benefit that individuals and peoples alike have given them an established place in the economics of their libido.[13]. .. Life as we find it, is too hard for us; it brings us too many pains, disappointments and impossible tasks. In order to bear it, we cannot dispense with palliative measures.[14]

Freud enumerates the indispensable need for "powerful deflections" to make light of our misery, "substitutive satisfactions" to diminish it, and "intoxicating substances" to make us insensitive to it. Man is victim of an inner

irrational drive and lives in a restrictive, repressive environment. The result is misery. But the matter is bewildering. Why would man, dominated and surrounded as he is by irrationality, crave a life of rational order? Why would he flee from the clutches of the irrational, the very factor that defines him in his essence? Reason, for Freud, is not instinctive. From whence does it originate? This is a conundrum for which the father of psychoanalysis has no answer.

Given man's dilemma and his need for a variety of illusions, it is curious that Freud has such strong objections to that particular illusion he calls religion. In his Future of an Illusion, Freud recognizes the likelihood that the removal of religion would lead to chaos:

> If men are taught that there is no almighty and all-just God, no divine world-order and no future life, they will feel exempt from all obligation to obey the precepts of civilization. Everyone will, without inhibition of fear, follow his asocial, egoistic instincts and seek to exercise his power; Chaos, which we have banished through many thousands of years of the work of civilization, will come again.[15]

Freud seems to forget for a moment that religion is not merely a negative force, but played a central role in the development of civilization. He also seems to forget that chaos has not exactly been banished. Nonetheless, assigning a central role to the irrational in the human being, weaving it intimately with the "death instinct," and perceiving that all forms of reasonable restrictions are tyrannical (albeit necessary), it is not surprising that Freud can find no specific prescription for hope. Yet he stubbornly insists that the belief that science can bring about a vastly better world is not an illusion and that it is an illusion to think that anything other than science can help us. His closing comment is merely this: "No, our science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere."[16]

3. Mythic: Freud's attempt to harmonize the irrational with the rational and materialism with an overarching philosophy had produced an incoherent mishmash of imaginative, but radically incompatible, elements. Something was needed to tie up the many loose ends in his thinking.

In a letter to his Swiss friend Oskar Pfister, Freud wrote, "By the way, how comes it about that none of the godly ever devised psychoanalysis and that one had to wait for a godless Jew?" According to David Bakan in Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition, Freud conceives of himself as a new Lawgiver who replaces Moses, the previous Lawgiver. The new Lawgiver must revoke the older one. Moses bringsa law that binds; Freud brings a law that

frees. “Thus Freud plays the role of a new Moses who comes down with a new Law dedicated to personal psychological liberty.”[17] Religious man was born to be saved; psychological man was born to be pleased. Freud saw himself not only as a sexual liberator, but also, in identifying himself as a secular messiah, a new Moses, he was viewing himself in mythic proportions.

The greatest figures for Freud, the ones he virtually idolized, were Moses, Oedipus, and Leonardo da Vinci. It is noteworthy that none of them were either empirical scientists or atheists. They represent personalities that are larger than life, characters of mythic proportions.

In deliberating on the origin of religion, Freud came to the conclusion that something nonreligious must have transpired in the distant past that provides its explanation. He concludes that the great crime of killing the father occurred, and this formed the basis for Judaism and subsequently for Christianity. In his papers on religion, and more particularly in Moses and Monotheism, he elaborates this daring hypothesis, one that, we might add, lacks even the slightest shred of scientific justification. As literary critic George Steiner has said of this hypothesis, it is “a piece of mythology of controlling metaphor as vital to the agnostic world view of Freud as is the parallel metaphor of sin in the world view of theology.”[18] Freud was proposing something more than science and philosophy. He was proposing a new religion, and he was its new Moses.

Freud’s fascination for Moses is clearly a matter of intense self-identification. When Freud first saw Michelangelo’s overpowering statue Moses, in that little church in Rome, San Pietro in Vincoli, he fainted. Like the Moses of the Old Testament, Freud was, or at least thought he was, a leader, destined to deliver mankind to a land of milk and honey. As Freud’s professional situation became both more celebrated and more controversial, his identification with Moses intensified. He also appears to have analogized the Mosaic wanderings with the progress of the psychoanalytic movement that he spawned.

David Bakan develops and convincingly documents the thesis that, at least metaphorically, Freud entered into a “Satanic pact” and that psychoanalysis was its result. Soon after the pact, after having gone through a period of unproductivity and depression, Freud wrote The Interpretation of Dreams (1910), which he always regarded as his masterpiece. He chose for its epigraph the words Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo (if the gods above are no use to me, then I’ll move all hell).[19] Bakan argues that it made logical sense for Freud to think of himself as the devil, since both he and the devil were the opposites of Moses. He cites a remark that Freud once made to colleagues: “Do you know that I am the Devil? All my life I have had to play the Devil, in order that others would be able to build the most beautiful cathedrals that I

produced."[20] Bakan then adds, "The disease of the neurotic is guilt. This guilt is, in itself, an evil and its removal is good. .. . If God is the guilt-producing image, then the Devil is the counterforce."[21]

Paul Roazen points out in Freud: Political and Social Thought that "Freud came back again and again to the fantasy of being raised fatherless." Fatherhood, for Freud, would represent the Superego and therefore a restriction of freedom. As the great liberator, Freud had to be totally free himself. From the viewpoint of the Judeo-Christian tradition, only God the Father is fatherless. Claiming to be fatherless is tantamount to claiming to be God. Pope John Paul II has stated, "Original sin attempts . . . to abolish fatherhood . . . leaving man only with a sense of the master/slave relationship."[22]2 The absence of fatherhood implies the impossibility of brotherhood. It is no accident that Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Sartre, in addition to Freud, all struggled with the notion of fatherlessness. Its exalted, but unrealistic, implication is godlessness and self-deification. But its more immediate, existential implication, as we have seen, is being orphaned and abandoned. It is curious that Freud, despite his extensive knowledge of classical literature, either ignored or repressed its most trenchant moral, namely, that by equating oneself with the gods, one invokes their anger and punishment. The gods will not be mocked, and they are intolerant of hubris.

We conclude, then, that the mythic element in Freud is entirely without scientific foundation. He tried to propound a philosophy that is scientific, though in reality it is largely mythical. Even as a mythology, Freud's account is not credible. For a mythology to be credible, it must both illustrate and illuminate common human experience, even while it transcends it. But Freud's fundamental approach, being essentially reductionistic, could present a view of reality that appeared only through a distorted lens. Neither his mythology nor his science captured the integrated person.

He talks about love in terms of Eros, but, in truth, he reduces it to an instinctive desire that depletes itself as it expends itself. His "love" is really a movement toward death.[23]He talks about getting at the truth of things by probing the depths of the unconscious, but he reacts with Puritan disdain at what he finds there. He exemplifies "militant Puritanism," in the words of Philip Rieff. He talks about liberation from oppression, and yet his view of life reflects a Schopenhauerian pessimism. He proclaimed love, truth, and freedom. But he did not have the wherewithal to deliver any of them.

In America today, Freud's intellectual influence is, in many respects, greater than that of any other modern thinker. He presides in the college classroom, over the mass media, in the chatter at cocktail parties, and in the advice dispensed by sex counselors. His clinical terms—repression, anxiety, guilt feelings,

displacement, libido, penis envy, castration complex— are known to a large segment of the population and are traded as common coin. He has achieved that rare and remarkable transition from intellectual revolutionary to household word. His name is indelibly associated with sexuality, but also with originality, daring, and liberation. He is a secular messiah, a legend, a trailblazer. All this despite the fact that his philosophy does not hold together, his methodology is inconsistent, and his positive contribution to the world is negligible. Sadly, even though his positive system is not credible, the negative aspects of his philosophy continue to corrode like an uncontrollable acid. Freud's rejection of religion, distrustof fatherhood, suspicion of morality, and reduction of love to sex have unleashed a plague of problems that has produced widespread and adverse effects.

Freud's reductionism, then, has been a major factor in contributing to the Culture of Death. Karl Stern, in criticizing Freud, has pointed out that unspeakable things have happened, as in Nazi Germany, when "the biological was allotted a position of primacy."[24] Of course, we do not need to turn to Nazi Germany to view the darkness caused by the reduction of human beings from spiritual and bodified persons to mere biological entities, as our own embrace of abortion and various modes of genetic engineering well attest. "God is not mocked. For what a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows in the flesh, from the flesh also will reap corruption. But he who sows in the spirit, from the spirit will reap life everlasting."[25]

—D.D.M.

[1] Cited in Calvin S. Hall, A Primer of Freudian Psychology (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 19.

[2] Jacques Maritain, "Freudianism and Psychoanalysis," in Cross Currents of Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis, ed. W. Birmingham and J. E. Cunneen (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 353.

[3] Ibid., p. 354.

[4] Karl Stern, The Third Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1954), p. 119.

[5] Ernest Becker, The Denial of Death (New York: Free Press, 1975), p. 98.

[6] Maritain, "Freudianism," p. 355.

[7] Rollo May, Love and Will (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 233.

[8] Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), standard ed. (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 18:6.

[9] Ibid., p. 38.

[10] Sigmund Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (New York: Avon Books, 1962), p. 109.

[11] See Gordon Allport, Personality and Social Encounter (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 139.

[12] Philip Rieff, The Mind of the Moralist (New York: Viking Press, 1959), p. xx.

[13] Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962), p. 25.

[14] Ibid., p. 22.

[15] Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), p. 34.

[16] Ibid., p. 56.

[17] David Bakan, Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand, 1958), p. 329.

[18] George Steiner, Nostalgia for the Absolute (Toronto, Ont.: CBC Enterprises, 1983), p. 22.

[19] The passage is from Virgil's Aeneid (bk. 7, 1. 310) and reads in its entirety as follows: "Well, if my powers are not great enough, I shall not hesitate —that is true—to ask help wherever help may be found. If the gods above are no use to me, then I'll move all hell."

[20] Bakan, Freud, p. 132.

[21] Ibid., p. 233.

[22] Pope John Paul II, Crossing the Threshold of Hope (Toronto, Ont.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. 228.

[23] Paul Roazen, Freud: Political and Social Thought (New York: Vintage Boots, 1970), pp. 176-81.

[24] Stern, Third Revolution, p. 132.

[25] Gal 6:8.

Wilhelm Reich

Karol Wojtyla had been bishop for two years when his Love and Responsibility was first published. It was 1960, the beginning of a licentious decade that, according to popular sentiment, marked the dramatic unfolding of the "sexual revolution." For Wojtyla, the central issue that this "revolution" posed was not freedom or repression, but "love or its negation." Love and Responsibility stressed the counterrevolutionary theme of responsible love in the context of a communion of persons, man and woman giving themselves to each other in marriage.

Three years earlier, in 1957, in a federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, a man passed away who did more than anyone else to warrant the title "father of the sexual revolution." His revolution was intended to liberate people from sexual repression. But it had no provision for personal love. Inevitably, it led to its own opposite, a tyranny of the flesh that repressed man's spiritual potentialities for love and community. The romantic attempt to prohibit all prohibitions pointed the way not to a Utopia, but to a meaningless contradiction.

Wilhelm Reich was born in Austria in the year 1897. His father was a farmer who was prosperous enough to support a cook, a housemaid, and a nurse in addition to his wife and two sons. Leon Reich ruled his farm despotically and expected complete obedience from his workers. He abandoned his Jewish religion and exposed his boys to a purely secular education. Wilhelm declared himself a "confirmed atheist" at the age of eight.[1]

We know a great deal about the intimate details of Wilhelm's childhood from his autobiography, Passion of Youth, which was published posthumously in 1988. As with the life of Alfred Kinsey, the account is both lurid and disturbing. With little hint of any shame, he confesses his juvenile obsession with sex. He tells us about witnessing the sexual act between the housemaid and the coachman at age four, an experience that gave him "erotic sensations of enormous intensity."[2] He recounts his first experience of sexual intercourse, at age eleven, with the cook. He discusses his erotic fantasies, his sexual involvement with farm animals, his addiction to brothels, and so on. His most significant revelation, however, is something he rightly identifies as the "catastrophe."

When Wilhelm was thirteen years of age, he discovered that his mother was conducting an affair with a younger man. The episodes, which continued for

some time, took place within the Reich household whenever the father was away. The discovery was a source of enormous confusion in the young teenager's mind. On the one hand, he had a strong urge to join his mother and her lover. On the other hand, he was horrified. It was the latter reaction that was the more dominant. He informed his father of the affair, partly, he felt, as a way of punishing her. The consequences were truly catastrophic. The father's first impulse was to shoot his wife's lover. The mother reacted by ingesting poison and killing herself. Her adulterous relationship, in her own mind, was unforgivable. Her distraught widower soon found life without his wife to be unbearable. He waded into a freezing pond and stood there for hours, hoping to catch pneumonia and die. He did contract the affliction, but his life lingered on. He died four years after his wife's demise, from tuberculosis, which developed from the pneumonia.[3]

Wilhelm, now seventeen years of age, was deeply tormented by the realization that he had driven both his parents to suicide. "I was shocked," he wrote, "to recognize the full extent of my hideousness." His torment was further exacerbated by his sexual fantasies, which were interwoven with his grief and his lingering ambivalence for both his mother and father.

He felt love for his father yet was appalled at how "he would beat Mother mercilessly."[4] Moreover, the beatings his father administered to him were also problematic and left permanent psychological scars. He did feel a strong attachment to his father, though he tells us in his autobiography, "I cannot remember my father ever having cuddled or treated me tenderly—nor can I recollect feeling any attachment to him."[5]

From a psychological point of view, it is understandable that Reich would cultivate a view of life that denounced authority and denied freedom. If there were no authority,there would never be any abuse of authority and consequently no beatings. If there were no freedom, there would be no willful complicity in wrongdoing and hence no basis for guilt. Reich propounded a philosophy that enabled him to come to terms with his ambivalence about his father and the unbearable recognition that he was instrumental in bringing about the deaths of both his parents. But it was not a philosophy that anyone could live by. He became uncompromisingly authoritarian himself, stubbornly refusing to give any quarter to even reasonable authority. He needed to deny freedom in order to avoid guilt. And yet he needed to embrace the notion of freedom wholeheartedly in order to free himself and others from the tyranny of authority and all other forms of repression. His philosophy was not really a philosophy at all, but a desperate psychological maneuver to keep himself from mental disintegration. For if there is neither authority nor freedom, then direction as well as love are

impossible. And without direction and love, life sinks into meaninglessness. There were times when he was painfully confronted with the ambivalence of his own identity. “My life is revolution—from within and from without,” he wrote, “or it’s comedy! If I could only find someone who has the correct diagnosis!”[6] The more sinister alternative is that it might be a tragedy.

Because he was trapped by his own psychological problems, Reich never developed a coherent philosophy. Authority, for him, was never authority in the universal sense, but authority as personified by his father. Nor did he recognize human sexuality precisely as human sexuality—with its natural ordination to love, marriage, and new life—but only in terms of his private obsession with it. Despite all this, Reich made his way in the world and left his mark on it.

Reich studied medicine at Vienna University. In 1922, Sig-mund Freud selected him to be a first assistant physician for his newly formed Psychoanalytic Polyclinic. He was also an avid student of Marxism. In 1930, he left Vienna and went to Berlin, where he became an active member of the German Communist Party.

His affections for Freud and Marx were not without critical reflection. He knew that Freud had no politics and that Marx had no psychology. He was also convinced that society was both sick and unjust. He wanted to provide a grand therapy that would not only cure individuals from their private afflictions, but also heal society from its own social pathologies. In order to do this, he felt it was necessary to combine Freudianism and Marxism into a single therapeutic theory so that he could free the individual from his repressions as well as society from its cultural inhibitions.

So it was that Reich became the world’s first Freudo-Marxist. Since he felt that by themselves neither Freud nor Marx could provide the comprehensive therapy that the world needed, he was ultimately ejected from both Freudian and Marxist circles. Yet Reich was enthralled by the grandeur and scope of his own revolution, one he accused the Freudians and Marxists as being too timid to launch. “There can be no doubt,” he exclaimed, “the sexual revolution is underway, and no power in the world will stop it.” The revolution that Reich envisioned was far more sweeping than that of any Marxist. His war against repression went further than that of any Freudian. His aim was to strip away all repression, all cultural and social masks, all forms of authority, so that a total revolution would be achieved in which the real human being would emerge, whole and clean.

To achieve this, all traces of what Freud called the “Superego” had to be dissolved. In this regard, Reich saw “conscience” as the first “tyranny.” With the dissolution of conscience, morality would also disappear, as well as any

lingering voice of authority. With all this stripping away, what could possibly remain? For Reich, it was man's "primary biological impulses," the bedrock that lay at his "deep, natural core."

Jean-Jacques Rousseau had maintained that the source of all evil is civilization. He rejected the Christian notion of Original Sin as "blasphemy." For Rousseau, man would find his beatitude in a primitive state of innocence. Rousseau had a deep influence, not only on the "flower children" of the sixties, but also on Reich. But Reich went further. For him, Original Sin is fear of self. Yet the self, for Reich, is essentially the erotic impulse, an instinct that is far below the level of either personality or community. Man begins to "armor" himself against himself at the moment he begins to think. "I think, therefore, I am neurotic" became Reich's anti-intellectual, yet self-identifying, logo. He feared that the act of thinking would divide the individual, separating thought from body at the expense of his primal urges. Thinking, therefore, was a disease. The ideal character for Reich is the unafraid, unthinking individual who has "satisfied his strong libidinal needs at the risk of social ostracism."

Reich saw the family, with its inevitable patriarchal authority, as the chief source of repression. Therefore, the family had to be dismantled. His rejection of the father gave him a certain stature as a feminist. He proclaimed that his heroines were "courtesans who rebel against the yoke of compulsive marriage and insist on their right to sexual self-determination." In rejecting the authority of both parents, he allied himself with a broad spectrum of secular sex educators. He insisted that we must free young people from "parental ideas." He urged the practice of adolescent inter-, course and inaugurated a children's crusade against all authority. In 1930, when he was banished from the Austrian Communist Party, he complained, "Irresponsible politicians who had promised the masses a paradise on earth, expelled us from their organization because we are defending children's and teenagers' right to natural love."[7]

Reich once delivered an ultimatum to his first wife, Annie, that she agree to place their two children in a Marxist commune, or he would leave her. Overwhelmed by her husband's dominant and inflexible personality, she agreed, although it went against all her natural instincts. The children, as it turned out, hated the commune. Their natural resistance to being indoctrinated into Communist ideology played no small role in their displeasure. It did not seem to occur to Reich that he was not freeing his children from all authority. In fact, he was simply subjecting them to a different kind of authority, one that used ideological indoctrination to supplant familial love.

In his book The Tyranny of Pleasure, Jean-Claude Guille-baud states that for this "rebellious son of Freud, dissenting Marxist, Jewish anti-Nazi, supposed

victim of American ‘repression,’ every detail of Reich’s life came together almost miraculously into what Max Weber called ‘a social pathos,’ the chaotic and romantic pathos of the Sixties.”[8] Reich was not someone to be read and taken seriously. Rather, he became the center of a mythology to be admired and imitated, if not to be understood.

Ever the empirical scientist, Reich wanted to discover what was at the core of the erotic impulse. Somewhat akin to Margaret Sanger’s strange notion that sexual energy is the source of genius, Reich claimed as his great discovery, made in 1939, that at the heart of all matter is a hitherto unknown energy that he called “orgone,” which he described as “the basic life-stuff of the universe.” Three years later he founded the Orgone Institute, where the “science” of orgonomy would be studied.

Reich claimed that he could measure and collect this “orgone” in an “orgone box” and use it as a form of therapy. Although hitherto unknown, Reich stated that at favorable times he could actually see the orgone. He alleged that it gave off a “bluish-green” color that flickered vibrantly as if it were vitality itself. Reich sold his “orgone energy accumulators” for $225 each and rented them for $10 per month. (His alleged discovery of “deadly orgone energy” [DOR], a cosmic correlative to Freud’s “death instinct,” late in his life, caused him to become apprehensive about its negative effect on the cosmos.)

Representatives of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, however, did not see the orgone. They charged Reich with fraud and prosecuted him as a quack, peddling across state borders empty boxes for purchasers to sit in while awaiting a cure for whatever ailed them. The FDA stated in its official complaint, issued on February 10, 1954, after (only!) seven years of investigation, that the orgone accumulator did not work and couldnot work, since orgone energy did not exist. Reich was sentenced to two years in prison for contempt of court and violation of the Food and Drug Act. At first, he entered the Danbury Federal Correctional Institute in Connecticut. When the psychiatrist there diagnosed him as paranoid, Reich was transferred to the Lewisburg Penitentiary, which had psychiatric facilities.

In the year 1960, the FDA supervised the burning of Reich’s books and materials, the sale of which had been banned by court injunction. The following year, the tide turned in favor of Reich’s popularity. The prestigious New York publisher Farrar, Straus, and Giroux reissued Reich’s The Function of Orgasm and Character Analysis in the so-called banned edition. This was done legally, since the works mentioned in the injunction had ceased to exist. Reich had thus become something of a martyr, and his “banned” books were now available for enthusiastic liberal-minded readers.

Sociologist Philip Rieff has said of Reich that this unusual man, who saw himself as the only healthy person in the world, “does seem more than a little sick himself.”[9] Some contend that toward the end of his career, Reich lapsed into insanity. But Reich saw himself as a visionary and prophet and compared his work with that of Darwin, Nietzsche, Lenin, and even Aristotle. He was virtually alone, however, in this appraisal. Martin Gardner states in Fads and Fallacies in Science (1972) that, with the possible exception of the early Freudian period, Reich’s work was unalloyed nonsense. Reich’s biographer, Michel Cattier, shares the same view.[10] It is indeed difficult to take a man seriously when he claims to be a “healer” and at the same time informs us that “I realized that I could no longer live without a brothel.”[11]

Although Reich talked about “love,” what he had in mind was nothing personal or free or directed to the good of another. He imagined love as something like electricity bouncing off the insides of boxes. His quixotic adventure in healingthe world led him to his own isolation in prison. His revolutionary attempt to rid the world of repression led to the repression of personality and love. The Culture of Life that he proposed was clearly more consistent with a Culture of Death.

One critic of Reich has said, “He lacked that sense of humor which can protect even messiahs from becoming arrogant with the grandeur of their own vision.”[12] Reich lacked much more than a sense of humor; he lacked common sense and enough humility to allow for corrective criticism. He assumed that anyone who disagreed with him was motivated by either envy or hatred. He summarily dismissed his critics as victims of the “emotional plague,” a phrase he coined that was supposed to be akin to hysteria.

Yet, despite his arrogance, his unscientific claims, and his ultimate nihilism, Reich continues to maintain considerable influence on modernity. His influence is particularly evident among radical feminists, left-wing university students, secular sex educators, and enemies of the family, as well as in various cults, works of art, and publications. Difficult as it may be to imagine, the Orgone Institute Press continues to publish his works. Plans for constructing Reich’s orgone energy accumulator (as well as other orgone “therapies”) can be readily purchased over the Internet. A movie star has written a book in praise of Reich’s orgone therapy. A two-act musical, “Wilhelm Reich in Hell,” and at least two additional songs and one motion picture have been produced in his honor. Also available are Wilhelm Reich videos, tapes, CDs, photographs, and T-shirts.

Precisely because of their broad influence, Reich’s ill-conceived therapies warrant his inclusion among the architects of the Culture of Death. He not only deformed sexuality, but also omitted both love and personality from his

grandiose revolution. The reasons for these deformations and omissions seem to be largely psychological, dating from the catastrophic experiences of his youth. His career was an unceasing attempt to force everything into his own Procrustean bed. As a particularly lurid example, four years before his death, he published The Murder of Christ. He portrays not the historical Christ, the embodiment of love and personality, but a Reichian construct that fits into his own idiosyncratic psychological needs. Therefore, he portrays Christ as the splendid embodiment of "orgiastic power" pushed to the extreme that invites mankind to release its own pent-up sexual energy.

In the final analysis, Reich reduces love to material energy and personality to irrepressible instincts. "You are really only the plaything of instincts," he tells us. He leaves man deprived of both his true nature and his hoped-for destiny. Thus deprived, man begins his descent into death. Reich wanted to liberate too much and, in effect, sought to liberate man from himself. By denying the freedom, spirituality, personality, and destiny of man, he essentially denied man his authenticity, his own life.

Philip Rieff states that Reich's viewpoint can be summed up by the phrase "life is God."[13] This formulation, however, by reducing God to "life," submerges the deity into a pantheistic, cosmic protoplasm. Conversely, the reverse expression, "God is life," indicates that life is an attribute of God, one that does not rob him of his sundry other attributes, including love, personality, creativity, intelligence, wisdom, and so on. Reich searched for life as if it were a primordial substance and in the process found death. Life ceases to be life when it is severed from its nourishing root. God is Life, but he sustains life and gives it a face. Life is joyful not simply because it is life, but because it abounds with other attributes, including personality and love.

—D.D.M.

[1] Wilhelm Reich, Passion of Youth: Wilhelm Reich, An Autobiography, 1897-1922, ed. Mary Boyd Higgins and Chester M. Raphael, M.D., trans. Philip Schmitz and Jerri Tompkins (New York: Farrar, Giroux, and Straus, 1988), p. 45.

[2] Ibid., p. 5.

[3] Colin Wilson, The Quest for Wilhelm Reich (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981), p. 29.

[4] Reich, Passion of Youth, p. 33.

[5] Ibid., p. 5.

[6] Ibid., p. 126.

[7] Quoted by Jean-Claude Guillebaud in The Tyranny of Pleasure, trans. Keith Torjoc (New York: Algora Publishing, 1999), p. 37.

[8] Ibid., p. 31.

[9] Philip Rieff, The Triumph of the Therapeutic (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 183.

[10] Michel Cattier, The Life and Work of Wilhelm Reich (New York: Avon Books, 1971).

[11] Reich, Passion of Youth, p. 46.

[12] Rieff, Triumph, p. 145.

[13] Ibid., p. 166.

Helen Gurley Brown

A reliable indication that one is representing the Culture of Death is that he mistakes vice for virtue. In Zarathustra, Nietzsche singles out three particular vices that, for him, are his most cherished virtues. They are voluptuousness, passion for power, and selfishness.[1] Concerning the first, he states that it is “a thing innocent and free, the garden-happiness on earth ... the great cordial, and the reverently saved wine of wines.”[2]Passion for power “mounteth alluringly even to the pure and lonesome, and up to self-satisfied elevations, glowing like a love that painteth purple felicities alluringly on earthly heavens.”[3] Of the third, he writes, “blessed selfishness, the wholesome, healthy selfishness, that springeth from the powerful soul.”[4] By dint of these three essential virtues, Nietzsche hoped to establish a kind of paradise on earth. Unlike Mac-beth’s witches, who sensed something ominous about confusing what is foul with what is fair, Nietzsche did not sense the sinister implications inherent in making virtues out ofvices. “It is sad,” writes the Russian novelist Nikolai Gogol, “not to see the good in goodness.” It is equally unfortunate not to see the vice in viciousness. Gogol’s remark could serve as an epitaph for twentieth-century moral philosophy.

The practice of using vices as virtues is still very much in vogue, especially on the level of popular culture. Nietzsche’s style may be, according to the current lingo, a bit “over the top.” His identification with Nazi philosophy is also a problem. Though his ideas, indeed, survive, his emotion-charged, overheated language would not appeal to today’s readers.

Enter Helen Gurley Brown. Admittedly, she seems to be an unlikely reincarnation of the creator of Zarathustra. To the eye, and from all other superficial vantage points, she appears to be the very antithesis of Nietzsche. Yet behind the new image that she puts forth are the same old ideas that Nietzsche molded and defended with such uncommon passion. The packaging is different, but the product is the same. Having It All is her Zarathustra transmogrified for today, an artful transcription of “voluptuousness” into sex, “passion for power” into money, and “selfishness” into success.

Like Nietzsche, Brown takes special pride in inverting virtues and vices. St. Augustine, in his Confessions, warned about three fundamental vices that could destroy the soul: “Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” Lust, avarice, and pride, for Brown, are not to be feared. Indeed, they are to be adopted as the most needful of virtues. Reinterpreted as “sex,” “money,” and

“success,” they become indispensable ingredients for the good life. In her view, the wages of sin are not death, but higher wages. A reliable indicator of the presence of the Culture of Death is that discredited old vices return as newly styled virtues that are congenial to the myopia of the times.

Gone is the sizzling character of Nietzsche’s powerful rhetoric. In its place we find a much more prosaic and flat popularization of Nietzsche’s glorification of passion and self-will, one fitted for popular consumption, but one that is every bit as deadly as Nietzsche’s. Brown’s philosophy of sex is a paragon of reductionism: “Sex is about it feels good . . . very good.”[5] Then she reminds us, citing her oft-quoted and favorite aphorism, “Sex is one of the three best things we have, and I don’t know what are the other two.”[6] But she does know what the other two are. Concerning money, she writes, “Money matters. Only a silly goose thinks it doesn’t. Money will be your friend when other friends have left town, will help you keep your dignity and have fun when you’re old.”[7] Success establishes the motive and meaning of life and permeates virtually all of her writings. Its possible loss (“Nothing recedes like success”) is a major source of insecurity and anxiety in her life.[8] But, however uninspiring Brown’s prose appears, when contrasted with Nietzsche’s, she built a publishing empire that spreads the same poisonous message, and across a far wider audience. Just who, then, is Helen Gurley Brown, and how did she come to have such a broad cultural influence?

Helen Gurley Brown was born in Green Forest, Arkansas, on February 18, 1922. After attending Texas State College for Women and Woodbury Business College, she held seventeen different secretarial positions in Los Angeles. In 1959she married movie producer David Brown. At this point in her life there was nothing to indicate that she was on the road to success or that she was becoming one of the most influential women in twentieth-century America. At age thirty-seven, she seemed to be, in “success” terminology, a nobody going nowhere. By her own admission, she was a “mouseburger,” a term she invented to describe people “who are not prepossessing, not pretty, don’t have a particularly high IQ, a decent education, good family background or other noticeable assets.”[9] She did have one fungible asset. From the time she was twenty until her marriage, she had a risqué, Dionysian sex life.

Her twice-married, twice-divorced husband encouraged her to write about her wild escapades as a bachelorette. She obliged, though she had never published so much as a magazine article before. The result was Sex and the Single Girl, a “shameless, unblushing, runaway, unmitigated”[10] manual advising and instructing women on how to seduce men and enjoy their inalienable right to have as much sex as is humanly possible.

The book was a national sensation. Brown, then forty, was sounding the clarion call to release all single girls from their sexual inhibitions. She was granting permission for their Ids to operate independently of any culturally imposed Superegos, while promising them a better sex life than their married counterparts.[11] The author of Sex and the Single Girl had become for single girls what Hugh Hefner had been and was continuing to be for single men. But she was without competition in her field. She had a sexually curious and highly susceptible female readership all to herself.

Helen Gurley Brown had arrived. Or had she? One incident, while Sex and the Single Girl was perched on the bestseller list, put the whole matter into a more realistic perspective. When her husband's new secretary met her for the first time, she remarked, "But, Mrs. Brown, you aren't sexy at all!"[12] Such honesty, uttered in surprise at finding so great a difference between the public persona and the actual person, cost the secretary her job. There are some truths that apparently are better left unsaid. They tend to shatter illusions. As the secretary rightly realized, behind the fabricated image was a person who was neither sexy nor single nor a girl.

Yet, despite the sizable gap between image and substance, Brown's public persona rapidly grew in stature. The success of Sex and the Single Girl, "my first baby,"[13] as she called it, led to the movie bearing the same name. Although the film version, in which Natalie Wood played Brown as a psychologist, had nothing to do with the book, it meant $200,000 in movie rights for the author. The fledgling writer had now parlayed sex into both money and success. She was well on her way.

Her next stop, on the wings of her first book's success, was as editor-in-chief of Cosmopolitanmagazine. At that time, in 1965, the magazine was floundering. As a literary journal, it had featured writers such as Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and John Dos Passos. But now it needed a new face. Brown gave it that new face: she increased circulation from three-quarters of a million subscribers to three million, thereby putting the magazine in the black, and stayed on at the helm for thirty-two years.

When she left her post in 1996, Cosmo was number six in newsstand sales among 11,475 magazines published, and number one for the sixteenth straight year at college campus bookstores. But, although no longer editor-in-chief, she did not leave Cosmo. She now supervises its thirty-nine international editions, all of them likewise in the black financially. The Ladies' Home Journal named Brown among its "100 Most Important Women of the 20th Century." The Sophia Smith Library at Smith College is the repository for her manuscripts, papers, and letters. Cosmo Girl, for teenagers, is a spinoff of Cosmopolitan.The hit television

show “Sex in the City” is a trendy and even more shameless reincarnation of Sex and the Single Girl. Brown’s legacy is undeniable, and her influence is incalculable.

Although Brown did not have children of her own, she did invent, or at least shape, the “Cosmogirl”—the “girl” between eighteen and thirty-four who wants to take charge of her life, which means being free to pursue the cherished trinity of sex, money, and success. This ideal woman is, of course, made in her own image, but it is Brown’s image that is deftly projected onto Cosmo Girl’s highly suggestible readers, molding them into countless “children” of Brown.

Cosmo’scovers are, by and large, the creations of one photographer, Francesco Scavullo. They depict young women of flawless complexion who are stunningly beautiful, but remote and inaccessible. They are virtually interchangeable, showing infinitely less variety than what Shakespeare had envisioned for Cleopatra. Model Cindy Crawford has appeared on the cover no less than eight times. Would Monica Lewinsky be a “Cosmo girl”? “Yes,” Brown reckons, especially “since Cosmo girls do get involved with married men.” However, the genuine article would not have “a creepy girlfriend like Linda Tripp.”[14]

Under the editorial direction of Brown, Cosmopolitan has consistently and effectively popularized Brown’s image of sexual freedom, using every method of reaching and influencing its readers. Cosmopolitan was titillating: its readers once confessed to the most unusual places where they made love (“in Edgar Allan Poe’s bed at the University of Virginia”). It was outrageous: “How I’d steal the president [Nixon] away from Pat.” And it was shocking: in 1992, it unabashedly provided its readers (viewers) with America’s first male centerfold —Burt Reynolds au naturel. Such shenanigans outraged feminist founder Betty Friedan, who called the magazine “quite obscene and quite horrible.” By this time, its editor had learned to take the bad with the good and had become immune to such criticism. After all, she had been booed and bombed with tomatoes at public appearances when she was promoting Sex and the Single Girl.

Whatever might be the other shortcomings of Betty Friedan, she did realize that Brown’s vision of women was far from harmless. Indeed, an exclusive preoccupation with sex, money, and success does not provide a sufficiently broad basis on which a woman can build a healthy and balanced life.

What does not fit conveniently into the Cosmo myth is presumed either not to exist or to be harmless. For example, Brown defends never including anything that might remind her readers of their own mortality on the basis that her youthful females are too young to think of such things.[15] Concerning AIDS,

she casually assures her reading public, “It is probably not really something to be worried about if your lover is not an intravenous drug user, a homosexual or bisexual.”[16] On the subject of sexual harassment, her advice is to change jobs when it occurs, rather than stay and fight. Besides, she tells her female cohorts, most male sexual advances are either flattering or harmless.[17] She advises her readers to “make your own rules about ‘promiscuity’. I think enlightened selfishness is a good one.”[18] Nymphomania is a nonissue because “most psychiatrists say there is no such thing as nymphomania.”[19] And she cannot understand the hullabaloo over adultery. In fact, she states, “I don’t see how a single girl can survive without an occasional married man—to fill in the gaps, stave off hunger during the lean days.”[20] For Brown, the only danger in regard to sex is the attempt to limit it. According to her, trying to deny our sexual desires could cause one to “drive off a cliff some night coming home from a party.”[21] Sex is in the driver’s seat; the Cosmo girl is its “liberated” passenger.

As a faint imitation of Nietzsche’s penchant for philosophical aphorisms, Brown enjoys needlepoint and stitching hip slogans onto pillows. One of her favorites is “Good Girls Go to Heaven, Bad Girls Go Everywhere.” Here is a charming example of the arithmetic fallacy—by adding anything to something, you automatically enrich it. Adding ice cubes to Dom Perignon, needless to say, does not add to its richness. Another one of her favorites, “I Love Champagne, Caviar, and Cash,”[22] is an amusingly alliterative way of reiterating her commitment to sex, success, and money.

Yet, as we have seen, such worship of one’s private desires brings about an intense loneliness that is at odds with our fundamental social nature. “‘Power’ yourself to achievement,”[23] she urges us. But along this power trip, there is little time for or point to genuine human relationships. “Inter-subjectivity” is not a thought or word that crosses her mind or enters her books. She advises her readers, “Get rid of your guilt about dropping old friends you no longer feel comfortable with.”[24] She makes no distinction between true and false guilt, since any guilt would impede the Ego’s quest for gratification.

As we should expect, Brown’s campaign to glorify self-gratification subverts her view of sexuality. Her concept of sex brings to mind the Sartrean notion that people invariably turn each other into objects for their own private use. “Being a sex object is a very good thing,” she says. “If you’re not a sex object, you’re in trouble.” “You can’t get anybody to bed unless you are the object of sexual desire. So there is nothing wrong with being a sex object. He is your sex object. It works both ways.”[25] While she distances herself from feminists who seemingly hate men, it does not occur to her that using them cannot be all that removed from hatred. “Since sex is terrific and it comes from

men, you can’t rule men out of this world and say they’re terrible and rotten—because you’re going to need one of them for your own purposes.”[26] While she freely advocates using men as sexual objects, sheseems, at the same time, to despise her own sex. In rather tortured prose and sounding more like Arthur Schopenhauer than a liberated woman, she writes, “What comes up and grabs me sometimes and chokes the breath way [sic] like a mongoose with its jaws around a cobra (you like that simile?), is the realization of how totally terrible women are.”[27]She then chides the sisterhood for not “bashing” themselves enough.

In the end, Helen Gurley Brown is about Helen Gurley Brown. The dust jacket on her memoir tells us that hers is “a life lived to the hilt.” Hype of this kind is to be expected. Nonetheless, we may ask, could anything be further from the truth? An excessive preoccupation with self contracts life. Love and altruism expand it. Yet Brown rejects these virtues because she sees them as intruding upon her selfishness.

Her memoir contains virtually nothing about her father. She mentions his death in an elevator accident when she was ten years of age, parenthetically, while speaking of something else.[28] In her chapter “Parents,” which is barely three pages in length, she complains that her mother told her innumerable times how her body was “torn up” giving birth to her and her sister, Mary. Helen never wanted and never had children. She hints that one reason is the fear that her offspring would be as uninterested in her life as she was in her mother’s: “Who needed a child’s boredom, his or her eye-glazing, when one was talking about oneself even if the child caved in and started paying a little more attention when he got to be about 39.”[29]

She tells us repeatedly that she never wanted to have a child, and it is no coincidence that she was in the forefront of the fight to keep abortion legal. Nonetheless, she concludes her memoir with a thirteen-page letter to her fantasy child, whom she calls Anna Marie. She informs her nonexistent offspring, “Your mother doesn’t believe in God . . . but I do believe in the okayness of everybody here on earth.”[30] It is difficult to read this final entry of her memoir and not sense that, at seventy-nine, Brown knows in the inner recesses of her soul that she has nothad it all. Anna Marie will not be receptive to her mother’s advice. Her mother’s words will fall not on deaf ears, but on no ears. They will echo within the mind of the childless mother, emphasizing all the more that no children will grieve for her or carry on her legacy once she is no more.

If Helen Gurley Brown did not want children, she certainly wanted something she realized more and more, with the passage of time, that she could not have—immortality.Although she tried to keep mortality a secret from her

readers, she herself has been ever more haunted by what should be a truism, that old age brings us closer to the hollowness of a life spent pursuing sex, money, and success. As St. Augustine has said, anything that is not eternal is too brief. This might explain why she finds herself “waking up scared every morning” and why her advanced age prevents her from being happy.[31] No amount of cosmetic surgery (she had breast augmentation when she was seventy-three) can keep the grim reaper at bay.

But as Brown herself knows all too painfully, aging does not escape the attention of other people. One time, whenBrown was sixty-four years old, she was riding the Number 30 Madison Avenue bus in New York City. An attractive young girl asked her if she would like her seat. Stupefied, Brown stared at her accommodating benefactress for about fifteen seconds without uttering a single world. She could not bear the painful truth that other people were witness to the ugly fact that Helen Gurley Brown was getting old. She lied about getting off at the next stop and then hid in the front of the bus. Now she was hiding not only from her age, but also from people who saw through her. She, the mother of the Cosmo girl, was an old woman.[32]

Not surprisingly, we next find Brown “sobbing her brains out” in her psychiatrist’s office. Dr. Kennedy’s words, “But you want to be young,” offered no consolation. “Older is what we get,”[33]Dr. Kennedy added, underscoring the implacable truth that we cannot always get what we want and often get what we do not want. The grim fact that we all age is something against which we have no defense. We cannot appeal our death sentence. At best, we can win a temporary reprieve through dieting, exercising, and lots of affirmation from others. But time is running out for all of us. Sex, money, and success mean less and less until, finally, they mean nothing at all.

The life of Helen Gurley Brown well illustrates that one of the roots of the Culture of Death is, paradoxically, a fear of death that is so strong that it blocks out the spiritual realities that transcend it. While the pursuit of sex, money, and material success may, at times, seem to eclipse our need for transcendence, we cannot escape the existential reality that we are spiritual beings. This means that we need a form of nourishment that sex, money, and success cannot provide.

Yet, because the Culture of Death is defined by its rejection of that transcendence, it regards the possibility of such transcendence as the disease rather than the cure. At a luncheon a few years ago in Washington, D.C., Helen Gurley Brown found herself seated next to the editor of an orthodox Catholic magazine. When she was apprised of his occupation, she glowered at him and said, “So, you’re the enemy.”[34] Such is the great inversion of good and evil in the Culture of Death, a self-inflicted blindness that embraces self-destruction and

mistakes friend for foe.

—D.D.M.

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, trans. Thomas Common (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), p. 208.

[2] Ibid., p. 209.

[3] Ibid., p. 210.

[4] Ibid., p. 211.

[5] Helen Gurley Brown, I'm Wild Again: Snippets from My Life and a Few Brazen Thoughts (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 52.

[6] Ibid. See also Helen Gurley Brown, The Late Show (New York: Willam Morrow, 1993): "I'll just remind us again that sex is one of the three best things there is and I'm not sure what the other two are."

[7] Brown, Late Show, p. 283.

[8] "Bad Girl," Psychology Today, Mar.—Apr. 1994, p. 22.

[9] Helen Gurley Brown, Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money . . . Even If You're Starting with Nothing (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), p. 10.

[10] Ibid., p. 439.

[11] Brown, Late Show, p. 15.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Helen Gurley Brown, The Writer's Rules (New York: William Morrow, 1997), p. 84.

[14] Brown, Wild Again, p. 281.

[15] "Bad Girl," p. 22.

[16] Brown, Late Show, p. 74.

[17] Brown, Having It All, p. 49.

[18] Ibid., p. 228.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.,p. 275.

[21] Brown, Wild Again, p. 52.

[22] Ibid., p. 32.

[23] Brown, Having It All, p. 33.

[24] Ibid., p. 66.

[25] "Bad Girl," p. 70.

[26] Ibid., p. 71.

[27] Brown, Wild Again, p. 5.

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., p. 276.
[31] “Bad Girl,” pp. 70, 22.
[32] Brown, Late Show, p. 12.
[33] Ibid., p. 13.
[34] “Personal communication with the editor, May 13, 1999, Atlanta, Ga.

PART SIX

THE SEX PLANNERS

Margaret Mead

Margaret Mead was the best known anthropologist of the twentieth century, not just for her contributions to the field of anthropology, but even more for her continual presence as a public figure of authority offering expert advice on the family and culture. As to the latter, she wrote a very popular and influential monthly column for the magazine Red-book from 1961 to her death in 1978. Time magazine even named her “Mother of the World” in 1969. She was showered with nearly every imaginable honor during her lifetime, receiving at least two dozen honorary degrees from prestigious universities and serving on the board of trustees of such distinguished universities as Columbia, Vassar, New York University, Emory, Yale, and the New School for Social Research. She was president of the American Anthropological Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science and rose from being assistant curator to curator emeritus of the American Museum of Natural History from 1926 to 1971. She was an ongoing advisor to presidents and congressmen. Her face was known to millions, and her advice was taken by millions as well. It would be hard to imagine a more beloved, renowned member of the scientific community, and if measured by the magnitude of her influence on society, she was probably without peer among her fellow scientists.

Sadly, her advice in regard to sexuality, marriage, the family, and society was often not just ill conceived, but outright pernicious. Her great influence, in regard to both her study of primitive peoples and her popular writing, helped bring the twentieth-century sexual revolution to its culmination, and her advocacy of abortion speaks for itself as a sign that, whatever her good intentions, she must be regarded as one of the twentieth century’s great architects of the Culture of Death.

Margaret Mead was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on December 18, 1901, the eldest of five children (one of whom died in infancy). Her father, Edward Mead, was a professor, and her mother, Emily Fogg Mead, was likewise well educated, receiving a doctorate, a rare achievement for a woman at the beginning of the twentieth century. Margaret’s parents were rather aloof, but she gained the affection she craved from her grandmother, who lived with the Meads.

As to her religious background, on both sides there was agnosticism. An uncle managed to be driven out of the Unitarian Church on grounds of heresy, and Emily, her mother, likewise found Unitarianism too confining. Yet, much to

her parents' dismay, young Margaret took to religion and was baptized just before her eleventh birthday. She thought she would become an Episcopalian and even kept religious statuary in her room. As she was to confide later about her early life, Margaret hungered for ritual rather than a creed (and she even lamented when she was a young girl the fact that she could not wear a veil in the low Episcopal Church in which she sought to be confirmed). Her hunger for ritual kept her within the circle of religion that she entered against the desires of her father and mother. In contrast to most of her academic colleagues, as well as to her own parents, Mead was not an atheist, but she attended the Episcopalian Church all her life.

Yet Margaret did follow in her parents' well-educated footsteps, earning a bachelor's degree from Barnard College, and master's and Ph.D. degrees from Columbia University. She chose to study anthropology after taking a course with the eminent anthropologist Franz Boas, and it was Boas who was responsible for Mead's meteoric rise.

Boas considered the current belief in cultural determinism to be fundamentally flawed and hoped to find evidence among primitive peoples of a wide variety of beliefs and practices, thereby justifying his claim that human behavior, rather than being determined by nature, was significantly malleable. In particular, he wanted to find out whether the rebellious adolescent phase, the so-called storm and stress, was peculiar to Western culture or was written into human nature as such. He decided to send Mead, his young graduate student, to Polynesia (the American Samoa group, protected by the U.S. Navy) to study adolescent Polynesian girls, hoping to find a much different transition from childhood to adulthood among the Polynesians. A fateful decision it was.

Margaret Mead, then only twenty-three years old, was most eager to comply. She had recently married (in 1923) a graduate student in theology, Luther Cressman, but the newly-weds agreed to part so that Mead could fulfill her obligations. At the time, they had no children, and indeed, Mead had been told that she could have none, a fact that distressed her, as she hoped to have six.

The result of Mead's stay in Samoa was the best seller called Coming of Age in Samoa (1928), written not as a dense academic tome, but as a short, breezy, popular work. It was an immediate best seller and established her fame and authority even before she turned thirty years old. We shall turn to an analysis of this seminal text momentarily.

At the time of the publication of Coming of Age in Samoa, Mead was off to New Guinea with her husband, a new husband, Reo Fortune. What had happened to her first husband? Mead had stayed in Samoa only nine months, a very short time given her scant initial knowledge of Samoan language and

culture, and had set sail for Europe by way of Sydney, Australia, the Suez Canal, and Marseilles. On the SS Chitral she met Reo Fortune, a twenty-four-year-old New Zealand-born scholar on his way to study psychology at Cambridge University. She married him as quickly as she could divorce Cressman, and she and Reo sailed off to New Guinea for a joint anthropological study in 1928. The literary result of this venture was a follow-up book to her first (although not nearly as successful) called Growing up in New Guinea (1930). A second book, and a second marriage, all within two years. Her second marriage was not to be her last, however. In 1928 she divorced Reo Fortune, and in 1936 she married Gregory Bateson. Nor was the second divorce to be her last. She and Bateson were officially divorced in 1950.

Whatever the other causes for her three failed marriages— oddly, Mead insisted, “I don’t consider my marriages as failures!”[1]—certainly Mead’s bisexuality was a contributing factor. Kept from the public eye until after her death, the secret was made public by her own daughter, Mary Catherine Bateson, after she herself discovered this hidden aspect of Mead in her mother’s private papers.[2]

From her early college years, Mead was anxious about her own sexuality and recorded recurrent dreams of dead or murdered babies that she interpreted as a “heterosexual attitude neglected or starved.” A dream of a baby shut up in a box in her room was, for her, “an expression of a suppressed fear that I after all am primarily a homosexual person.”[3] Mead’s ambivalence marred her first marriage from the start. According to her first husband, Luther Cressman, Margaret exhibited rather curious behavior on their honeymoon, insisting at first on separate rooms but then throwing herself, days later, into consummation. To Cressman, Mead’s “tightly barred gates were a sign of both psychological fear and hostility to the commitment of marriage.”[4] These were truer words than Cressman could imagine. Just before or soon after her marriage, Mead entered a long-standing lesbian relationship with Ruth Benedict, an anthropology instructor at Barnard.

While Mead guarded her own bisexuality (especially when Benedict’s lesbianism later became well enough known that Mead was asked rather pointed questions about her own sexuality in public), she did speak out on behalf of what she herself kept so well hidden. To the Washington Press Club Mead remarked that “rigid heterosexuality is a perversion of nature.” On behalf of bisexuality, in one of her Redbook columns she asserted that we must “come to terms with the well-documented, normal human capacity to love members of both sexes.”[5] At a conference in 1974 she declared that members of an ideal society would be homosexual when young and old, but heterosexual during midlife.[6] This would

seem to be an autobiographically encouraged assessment, as Mead most certainly had a sexual relationship with her closest friend, Rhoda Métraux, with whom Mead lived from 1955 until her death.[7]

All of this is essential background for understanding Mead's most important work, the work that established her intellectual and moral authority, Coming of Age in Samoa. For as we shall soon find out, rather than offering an accurate account of the Samoan understanding of sexuality, Mead offered autobiography disguised as anthropology instead.

Mead portrayed Samoa as a sexual paradise, free from all the oppressive restrictions on sexuality that burdened the West. According to Mead, "Romantic love as it occurs in our civilization, inextricably bound up with ideas of monogamy, exclusiveness, jealousy and undeviating fidelity, does not occur in Samoa."[8] For the Samoans, in contrast to the West, "casual sex relations carry no onus of strong attachment"[9] because of "the lack of the specialization of feeling, and particularly of sex feeling, among Samoans."[10] These happy natives, according to Mead, were thereby freed from all the ill effects of channeling sex only into monogamy, the dread error of the West stemming from Christianity. The Samoans, declared Mead, had no need for "our category of perversion, as applied to [sexual] practice; ... they legislate a whole field of neurotic possibility out of existence. Onanism, homosexuality, statistically unusual forms of heterosexual activity, are neither banned nor institutionalized." Since they accepted a much wider range of sexual practices, "frigidity and psychic impotence do not occur and ... a satisfactory sex adjustment in marriage can always be established."[11]

The "only dissenters" in Samoa from such free sexuality, according to Mead, "are the [Christian] missionaries who dissent so vainly that their protests are considered unimportant."[12] Even though Christian missionaries had "introduced a moral premium on chastity," the "Samoans regard this attitude with reverent but complete skepticism and the concept of celibacy is absolutely meaningless to them."[13]Indeed, Mead claimed that even though Samoans had been Christians since the 1840s, the Christianity they actually accepted was "gently remolded" by being filtered through the carefree and casual attitude of Samoan life, so that "its sterner tenets" were blunted, resulting in a liberalized form of Christianity "without the doctrine of original sin."[14] Having escaped from the shackles on sexual freedom that Christianity had used to bind the Western conscience, the Samoans were able to engage in socially sanctioned "free experimentation" in regard to sex, the results being, Mead proclaimed, wholly positive.

Perhaps Mead's most famous picture of this sexual paradise was that of the

casual lovers going for a sexual tryst “under the palm trees.”[15] In her celebrated description “A Day in Samoa,” she painted the following tantalizing scene:

As the dawn begins to fall among the soft brown roofs and the slender palm trees stand out against a colorless, gleaming sea, lovers slip home from trysts beneath the palm trees or in the shadow of beached canoes, that the light may find each sleeper in his appointed place.[16]

As evidence for this assessment, Mead offered the examples of “Fala, Tolu, and Namu.” “The three girls made common rendezvous with their lovers and their liaisons were frequent and gay.” There was also “Luna,” who “quite easily and inevitably took one lover, then two, then a third—all casual affairs.”[17] The casual nature of sexual experimentation among heterosexuals led to casual homosexuality as well. “Where heterosexual relationships were so casual, so shallowly channeled, there was no pattern into which homosexual relationships could fall.” Simply put, for the Samoans, sexual desire was omnivorous and omnipresent and had no goal other than the pleasure received; having no goal other than pleasure, the Samoans cared little for Christian distinctions between licit and illicit sex, the very distinctions that, according to Mead, so distort our original, natural sexual freedom.[18]

As one might have guessed, Mead asserted that Samoans took marriage lightly. If, for example, “a wife really tires of her husband, or a husband of his wife, divorce is a simple and informal matter, the non-resident simply going home to his or her family, and the relationship is said to have ‘passed away.’ It is a very brittle monogamy, often trespassed and more often broken entirely.” Adulteries do occur, but they “hardly threaten the continuity of established relationships. The claim that a woman has on her family’s land renders her as independent as her husband, and so there are no marriages of any duration in which either person is actively unhappy. A tiny flare-up and a woman goes home to her own people; if her husband does not care to conciliate her, each seeks another mate.”[19] Carefree marriage. No-fault divorce.

Mead ended her book with the underlying goal that had animated the entire work, a call for release from the moral strictures of a society still formed by Christianity. “At the present time,” she claimed, “we live in a period of transition,” but still, unfortunately, “believe that only one standard can be the right one.” We need to preach a new form of charity, one that takes Samoa as its paradigm. Children “must be taught tolerance, just as to-day they are taught intolerance. They must be taught that many ways are open to them, no one

sanctioned above its alternative."[20]

Beautiful as this picture of an island of sexual freedom appeared to many in the West, Mead's account of Samoa as an Epicurean paradise was almost completely false. In truth, Samoans both before and after Christianization were, if anything, far more morally severe than people in the West. Thus, Mead's defining work looks suspiciously like a kind of justification of her own sexual beliefs and practices as projected onto the poor Samoans. Even more important, the immediate and immense popularity and prestige of Coming of Age in Samoa can be explained only by a readiness on the part of the reading public in the early twentieth century to hear the good news of the discovery of a sexual paradise freed from the moral burdens of Christianity.

It was not until 1983 that the myth of Mead was exploded by Derek Freeman's Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth (although much of academia has refused to admit the damage done to her conclusions).[21] Freeman, an anthropologist and professor in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies in the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Australian National University for forty years, showed step by step that nearly every assertion made by Mead in Coming of Age was either completely false or severely distorted. Unlike Mead, who did not even speak Samoan when she arrived to do her research in 1925 and stayed for only nine months, Freeman has had nearly a half-century of research on Samoa and knows its culture and language inside and out. In his damning words, "The main conclusions of Coming of Age in Samoa are, in reality, the figments of an anthropological myth which is deeply at variance with the facts of Samoan ethnography and history."[22]

To begin with, Mead's assertions that the Samoans paid only "the slightest attention to religion" wherein "all contacts with the supernatural were accidental, trivial, [and] un-institutionalized" directly contradicted the actual fervent religious nature of the Samoans both before and after Christianization. Whereas Mead painted Samoans as so devoted to pleasure that they had "no room for the gods," in truth, according to Freeman, pre-Christian Samoans were devoted polytheists, with very intricate and elaborate religious beliefs and rites, and after being converted by missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century, they became "almost fanatical in their practice and observance of Christianity."[23]

In parallel to her utter misrepresentation of Samoan religious beliefs and practices, Mead completely misrepresented Samoan sexual attitudes and practices both before and after the arrival of Christianity. Rather than being built on promiscuity, the entire society was actually built on the veneration of virginity, a devotion that Christianity only intensified. For Samoans there were

no women more esteemed than the ceremonial virgins (called taupous), whose sexual purity at the time of marriage was so important that Samoans had an elaborate public ritual to determine their virginity prior to marriage. In the event that the bride-to-be failed the test, “she was sorely abused by her friends, called a prostitute, and hastened away, while her intended husband, refusing to take her to wife, at once reclaimed his property.” Sometimes the family was more severe, the brother or father of the girl beating her with clubs.[24]

Furthermore, as Freeman shows, this regard for virginity was not confined to the upper classes, from whom the taupous came, but permeated the entire society, down to the lower levels, the levels that Mead claimed were sexually the freest.[25] Casual sexual liaisons under the palm tree, rather than being smiled upon, were (when they actually did occur) “recognized by all concerned as shameful departures from the well-defined ideal of chastity.”[26] When young men and women did slip away in the night, it was almost always to elope, and this elopement entailed a deflowering of the virgin in imitation of the public deflorations used with the ceremonial virgins, done not only as a sign of the girl’s previous chastity but also (because the Samoans consider such elopement to be a formal marriage declaration) of the young man’s exclusive union with the girl.[27] This marital exclusivity was taken with the utmost seriousness by the Samoans, adultery originally being punished by death or by severe beating or mutilation.[28]

After the mid-nineteenth century, as Freeman points out, the addition of Christianity only intensified the “cult of virginity.”[29] In complete contradiction to Mead’s claim that the Samoans were guilt free and that they quickly dispatched with Christian notions of Original Sin, Samoans themselves informed Freeman that “sinfulness, or agasala (literally, behavior in contravention of some divine or chiefly ruling, deserving of punishment), is a basic Samoan concept antedating the arrival of Christianity. Further, the doctrine of original sin contained in the scriptures is something with which, as converts to Christianity, they have long been familiar.”[30] Instead of reforming Christianity to conform to a light and easy view of sexuality, Christianity only elevated the Samoan regard for sexual purity, the result being that “fornication is strictly forbidden to all church members and any suspicion of indulgence in this ‘sin’ results in expulsion from the church.”[31] In short, as Freeman concludes, it should “be apparent that Samoa, where the cult of female virginity is probably carried to a greater extreme than in any other culture known to anthropology, was scarcely the place to situate a paradise of adolescent free love.”[32]

The evidence that Freeman brings against nearly every assertion made famous by Mead is so overwhelming that one might well ask what caused Mead

to create such a fiction—and even more telling, what caused the twentieth century to be so easily duped? Simply put, her belief in the malleability of human nature and her desire to eliminate restrictions upon sexuality determined her conclusions. Her science was a form of autobiography, as is clear from the earlier account of her own life. All too often she "found" in primitive societies what she hoped to establish in her own. The enthusiasm with which her conclusions were met only attests to a similar desire on the part of her vast audience.

This can be seen all too clearly in her popular Redbook columns, in which she was asked every manner of question and answered with all the force of her immense cultural authority. In her February 1963 column she was asked, "Would you favor changing our abortion laws?" Mead replied, "I believe that our abortion laws should be changed. In a country where there is a genuine and convinced divergence of ethical belief, I believe that we should not prescribe the conditions under which abortion is permissible."[33] Mead was not an unambiguous advocate of abortion, but the ambiguity with which she defended it made her "halfway" position all the more attractive to those sitting on the moral fence between the Culture of Death and the Culture of Life.

In contrast to others, Mead took a "moderate" position on abortion, and she asserted that "reliance on abortion is at best a poor solution." In a column written the year before Roe v. Wade, Mead stated, "It is human to interrupt a pregnancy in certain circumstances—when a woman has suffered rape or when disease threatens the normality of the fetus or the life of the mother." Yet, lamented Mead, "abortion, no matter how phrased, is too close to the edge of taking life to fit into a world view in which all life is regarded as valuable." Oddly, she thought that "the only viable solution is the repeal of all restrictive laws controlling abortion" so that society could then work on limiting the need for abortion by "establishing widespread knowledge of contraception" and by developing "life-styles and personal relationships that are consistent with the idea of conceiving, bringing into life and caring for children, all of whom are desired and loved."[34] This "every child a wanted child" was essentially the public position of Clarence Gamble, Margaret Sanger, and Planned Parenthood. While wearing an attractive face, it diverted attention both from the real horror of any abortion and from the all too predictable result, that removing legal restrictions on abortion multiplies rather than reduces the number of abortions.

In a March column (1963), she was asked, "Do you believe that our laws on drug addiction should be revised?" She responded, "Our present laws on drugs and addiction are dangerous, illogical and inhumane.... The sale of drugs to addicts should be legalized, put under strict medical control, as has been done in

England, and the drugs should be sold as inexpensively as their real cost permits." Criminalization, Mead argued, only leads to crimes committed to obtain the drugs.[35]

In being asked about whether homosexuality was on the increase (July 1963), Mead replied that the seeming increase was in great part due simply to wider sophistication on our part, "as we have shifted from a frontier society, with very primitive codes of human relationships, to a cosmopolitan society, which like all cosmopolitan societies has more room for the nuances of human behavior and a greater tolerance of individual choice." In addition, increased knowledge of other cultures allows us to come to "a recognition that bisexual potentialities are normal and that their specialization [into, for example, heterosexual monogamy or homosexuality] is the result of experience and training."[36]

In October 1974 she was asked, "Do you think every human being should have the right to decide that he does not want to live?" Mead replied, "I do think so." While the legalization of suicide would introduce "thorny problems" concerning the capabilities of the person considering ending his life, Mead believed that "each person has the right to decide how long his life should be and when he is ready to end it." Unfortunately for Mead, in 1974 Americans held beliefs in contrast with this alleged right. "As long as we maintain, as many people do and as the law does, that a person's life is not his own, that he merely holds in trust a life that belongs to God or to society or to the family, we will continue to take the position that suicide is, in effect, a sin or a crime." [37]

Of all that she said in Redbook and elsewhere, one of her most famous, or better infamous, suggestions was the "two-step" marriage. In a 1943 essay entitled "The Family in the Future," Mead took stock of the American family and found that the two most significant problems plaguing it were, first, a surplus of women who did not want to or could not get married and, two, a longer period of maturation than in less advanced societies. She suggested that society set up a legal marriage tier, with the first level being a "socially sanctioned, childless contract" in which the couple had all the sexual benefits of marriage in a kind of trial period, but none of the permanence entailed in bringing children into the world. This, she thought, was better than having guilty sex outside of marriage by the surplus women, or a high divorce rate caused by immature couples trying and failing to bond permanently (and the emotional destruction this caused the children of such divorces). The second level was to be permanent and undertaken only by those who had proven themselves in their trial marriage to be capable of having children. Obviously, birth control would be essential for her program, and Mead was an early advocate of contraception not only for this reason, but for reasons of general population control as well.

This suggestion of a two-step marriage by Mead, a suggestion that she repeated most notably in a Redbook column of 1966, was met by howls of indignation, especially since, given the ease of her own divorces, she seemed to be offering society advice heavily tainted by self-justification. But such protest did not damage her credibility, which only increased over the next quarter century (along with the divorce rate and the acceptance of premarital sex). As with her suggestions about abortion and the legalization of drugs, her cure for divorce could only increase the disease.

A great part of Mead's influence was the result of her seemingly endless energy, a restlessness that allowed her to be culturally omnipresent. Mead was active, by all accounts hyperactive, until the end of her life, jetting all over the world to every imaginable congress and committee, only to rush home to meet with church groups, women's groups, academics, heads of government, and students. Her influence could not have been more energetically spread.

Nothing could stop her, or so she thought. In 1978 Margaret Mead was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, a diagnosis she refused to accept as either factual or fatal. In desperation, she even made use of a faith healer. It was not until a week before her death that she finally acknowledged she had cancer, and suddenly she wanted the world to know about it so that someone could cure it. Such was not to be. She died on the morning of November 15, 1978, but she is still honored this day by the Culture of Death she did so much to build.

—B.D.W.

[1] Interview with Cosmopolitan quoted in Robert Cassidy, Margaret Mead: A Voice for the Century (New York: Universe Books, 1982), p. 18.

[2] Hilary Lapsley, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict: The Kinship of Women (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), p. 76.

[3] Ibid., p. 26.

[4] Ibid., pp. 79-80.

[5] Quoted in ibid., p. 308.

[6] Jane Howard, Margaret Mead: A Life (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1984), p. 367.

[7] Lapsley, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, pp. 308-9.

[8] Margaret Mead, Coming of Age in Samoa (New York: American Museum of Natural History Edition, 1973), p. 58.

[9] Ibid., p. 117.

[10] Ibid., p. 119.

[11] Ibid., p. 124.

[12] Ibid., p. 112.

[13] Ibid., p. 55.

[14] Quoted in Derek Freeman, Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 91.

[15] Mead, Coming of Age in Samoa, p. 50.

[16] Ibid., p. 8.

[17] Ibid., pp. 84-85.

[18] Ibid., p. 83.

[19] Ibid., p. 60.

[20] Ibid., pp. 137-38.

[21] See also his later work, The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999).

[22] Freeman, Margaret Mead and Samoa, p. 109.

[23] Ibid., pp. 175-84.

[24] Ibid., p. 231.

[25] Ibid., p. 236.

[26] Ibid., p. 240.

[27] Ibid., pp. 240-41.

[28] Ibid., pp. 241-42.

[29] Ibid., p. 239.

[30] Ibid., p. 188.

[31] Ibid., p. 185.

[32] Ibid., p. 250.

[33] Margaret Mead, Margaret Mead: Some Personal Views, ed. Rhoda Métraux (New York: Walker, 1979), pp. 70-71.

[34] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

[35] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

[36] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[37] Ibid., p. 237.

Alfred Kinsey

Alfred Charles Kinsey was born on June 23, 1894, in lowly Hoboken, New Jersey, the son of Alfred Seguine Kinsey and Sarah Ann Charles Kinsey. His father, a firm adherent and beneficiary of the Protestant work ethic, had sweated and toiled his way up from blue-collar mechanic to white-collar college teacher at Hoboken's Stevens Institute of Technology.

Fitting into the classic mold in regard to religion itself, the Kinseys were stern, no-nonsense evangelical Protestants. Each week without fail, Alfred senior would shepherd his wife and three children to Sunday school, then the morning service, and finally to the evening prayer meeting. In the religious life of the Kinseys, there was more talk of hellfire and the justice of God than the joys of heaven and the love of the Lord, thus providing a view of God that mirrored the elder Alfred's overbearing sternness. Young Alfred was therefore more than aware of the moral commands that Christianity entailed, and because of ill health —including severe cases of rickets, rheumatic fever, and typhoid fever—he had more than the usual time to contemplate the terrors of God's judgment visited upon those who strayed onto deviant paths.

All in all, Kinsey had a very unhappy childhood, sickly and continually under the shadow of a father who was quick to condemn and had little use for affection or praise. Young Alfred felt the great burden of moral rectitude perpetually weighing upon him from his earliest youth, but without the benefits of love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness on the part of either his Protestantism or his father. But as much as he desired to excel in following his parents' stern moral codes, Kinsey harbored a dark secret. He was obsessed with masturbation and his own masochistic, homosexual desires. Hidden from his parents, young Kinsey would engage in masochistic forms of masturbation, his favorite mode being with a "foreign objected inserted up his penis."[1] From his very boyhood, then, Alfred Kinsey's sexuality was a gross distortion of both of his male nature and even nature itself.

As we shall soon see, this difference between the public Kinsey and the private Kinsey would mark his entire life, and he became an expert at carefully contrived duplicity. When Kinsey would later build his reputation as the twentieth century's greatest "sexologist," he was ever mindful of keeping both his private life and his revolutionary agenda hidden behind an austere and carefully crafted scientific facade. In contrast to his youth, when he reached adulthood, he decided that society should be compelled to accept homosexuality,

masochism, and a host of other sexually deviant behaviors as natural, and he crafted the scientific facade as the means by which such a revolution could be effected. By such a revolution, Kinsey hoped that his own deviancy, long hidden, could be released from its reluctant cover and brought into full daylight for all to see and accept.

But when young, Kinsey's double life caused him only great pain and anxiety. He had not yet conceived of changing society to conform to his distorted sexuality. At this age, he was still innocent enough that he believed himself to be in violation of real moral standards. Thus, Kinsey was divided against himself, both fervently trying to adhere to a strict sexual morality and just as fervently breaking it. Indeed, up until the time he went to college, he was considered by all who knew him as the most devout and serious of Christians and as one of the very best, most promising students of his high school (as evidenced by his being named valedictorian of the class of 1912). His fellow students even prophesied that he would become the "second Darwin," for Kinsey had already formed a great passion for biology. In addition to his academic success, Kinsey was an accomplished classical pianist (eschewing jazz and ragtime as morally degrading), an avid and learned bird watcher who gave public lectures even in high school, and an equally avid woodsman who earned the rank of Eagle Scout. In all things, Kinsey had a passion to excel, and to all appearances, he was a perfect, morally upright, and conscientious young man who was bound to make a mark. And so he would.

Under the direct guidance of his father, Kinsey entered his father's college, the Stevens Institute, where he spent two miserable, misplaced years, until he finally rebelled against his father and withdrew. Young Alfred longed to study biology, and he would do it even if it meant rejecting his father's authority and foregoing his financial support. Alfred senior gave his son a new suit and nothing else, and Alfred junior was forced to make his own way through college. Kinsey enrolled in Bowdoin College to study biology, breaking with the authority of his father forever and soon enough breaking with the stern morality and Christianity of his father as well.

At Bowdoin, Kinsey excelled, not only in biology but also on the debating team. He attended church regularly, choosing the First Congregational Church, a less strict denomination than his childhood Methodism, and he was very active in the YMCA. Yet among all this seeming normality, Kinsey began to feel ever stronger homosexual desires, desires that he struggled to hide, but that, as always, manifested themselves in morbid acts of masturbation.

As his homosexual desires became stronger, his earlier religious fervency became weaker. Kinsey was beginning to see science as a replacement for

religion. By comparison, science seemed to be indifferent to Kinsey's distorted sexual desires and acts. But even better than its indifference, Kinsey began to see that science could be used as a means of rejecting the religious, moral code that ran so counter to his hidden self and of supporting his sexual liberation.

Kinsey graduated from Bowdoin in 1916, successful enough to be admitted to Harvard, where he would go on to earn a doctorate in science. His specialty was taxonomy, and he became a world-class authority on the gall wasp. But the real effect of Harvard on Kinsey was the nearly complete erosion of his religion and hence the foundation of the morality in conflict with his homosexuality.

William Wheeler, the director of the Bussey Institute at Harvard where Kinsey studied, was a great influence on Kinsey during these years. Not only was Wheeler an impressive, classically trained intellectual, but he was a robust, hard-drinking, no-nonsense atheist, who made it quite clear that the study of nature revealed a godless world completely at odds with the Puritan Protestantism still clinging to Kinsey when he arrived. Slowly but surely, Harvard would dissolve the vestiges of Kinsey's Christian upbringing, and, in no small part, this dissolution was brought about by the substitution of William Wheeler as a kind of father figure, an authority who did not condemn.

The Bussey Institute was a major center for evolution, the New Biology, as it was called, and therefore a passionate institutional supporter of eugenics.[2] Wheeler's eugenics struck a chord with Kinsey. As with the rising middle class in Darwin's England, Kinsey had struggled up the ladder of success with no help from his father, and the notions that nature rewards those who struggle and that success is the result of superior abilities appealed to him. Kinsey, like Margaret Sanger and so many other proponents of eugenics in the twentieth century, wanted the fit to breed more and the unfit to be either isolated or sterilized.[3] Following Wheeler, Kinsey came to believe that society should cast off its pre-scientific, religious restrictions and rebuild itself according to the eugenic tenets of Darwinism. Interesting, in this regard, is that Kinsey held dear through all his life an imaginative, satirical essay written by Wheeler entitled "The Termitodoxa, or Biology and Society." In it, an imaginary termite kingdom is taken over by Darwinian biologists—social engineers— who first abolish the termite priests (hence ridding themselves of religious-moral obstacles) and then set up mandatory eugenics and birth control programs.[4] This essay would feed Kinsey's desire to become a social engineer, for the sake of a sexual, more than a eugenic, revolution.

Kinsey graduated from Harvard and, after a year in field research, landed a job at Indiana University, beginning in the fall of 1920. Since many graduate students did not marry until after the all-consuming rigors of graduate school

were complete, Kinsey's bachelor status did not arouse suspicions at the time. Yet he could not remain a bachelor long without pushing the limits of social expectations for a young professor.

So Kinsey would soon marry, his haste, perhaps, being a clue to his hidden self. Kinsey met Clara Bracken McMillen, a bright young chemistry major at Indiana, rather dowdy, even boyish in appearance, the only child of Josephine and William McMillen. Unlike the Kinseys, the McMillens were rather weak Protestants. A bit over two months after their first date, Kinsey proposed, and they were engaged on Valentine's Day, 1921. They were married on June 3, 1921, with no member of Kinsey's own family in attendance. The new Kinseys were not able to consummate the marriage for many months, in part due to a then-unknown physical defect in Clara, but also because of a combination of Kinsey's own sexual disorders and Clara's sexual inexperience.

During this time, another change was under way for Kinsey. As we have seen, he was always driven to succeed, but until this point, he was, in personality, quite affable even while being rather shy. Soon he would become opinionated and domineering, and this new persona was not popular with either his colleagues or his students. Yet he was quite successful academically, writing three introductory biology books within a decade, the first of which, An Introduction to Biology, eventually sold over a half million copies, and continuing his work on gall wasps, on which topic he published purely academic articles and books over the next two decades as well. Even with all this work, Kinsey achieved scientific respectability, but not fame, and he was distressed that the great Ivy League schools did not recruit him away from humble, backwater Indiana.

As for his home life, Kinsey was finally able to consummate his marriage (after his wife had an operation to remove the physical defect),[5] and their first child, Donald, was born on July 16, 1922. Three more children, Anne, Joan, and Bruce, were born by 1928. Sadly, Donald would die of diabetes when he was three. Kinsey was especially heartbroken, and Clara never recovered from the pain of losing her firstborn.

Kinsey was a strong disciplinarian and ran a tight ship at home, but, in contrast to his father, he was also an affectionate man who spent time with his children. Quite unlike the elder Alfred, by the time Kinsey set up household, it moved very quickly from being weakly religious to strongly secular. By this time Kinsey had grown to despise religion, for it stood in condemnation of his sexual practices and ambitions and stood condemned by the atheistic implications of his Darwinism. He now embraced passionate atheism. According to one close colleague, by the 1940s Kinsey was "not only irreligious; he was

anti-religious."[6]

Other aspects of Kinsey's household were even more opposed to his father's. In reaction to his own sexual guilt as a youth, a guilt he now saw as unnecessary and corrupting, Kinsey made sure that his children were well versed on the details of sex and were not made to feel guilt about "self-exploration." So as to make them more "comfortable" with their bodies, the Kinseys encouraged nudity both within the confines of their house and also in their secluded backyard. While on vacation they bathed naked together in secluded mountain streams. Both Kinseys, Alfred and Clara, were quite interested in nudist camps, and Kinsey would make it a point to walk around stark naked in front of male graduate students, whom he took on field trips. Kinsey also made it a matter of compulsion that his students bathe daily while on field trips, and he often popped in during midshower to ensure compliance. Just as often, he would shower with his students. In addition, he not only began to make it a habit to speak openly and in extraordinary detail with his students about his own marital sex, but also began to probe into the intimate lives of his students and (out of the closet and into the classroom) to preach to them about the glories of masturbation. After his students graduated, he would keep up a constant stream of letters, especially to the men, filled with erotic references and poems. As for Clara, his wife, she soon enough learned of his homosexuality and, rather than turn against him, threw herself willingly into Kinsey's revolution, agreeing cheerfully to have sex with men whom Kinsey himself was trying to bed.

Simply put, Kinsey's sexual obsessions began to grow uncontrollably in the 1930s and would turn into a full-scale revolution in the next decade. A change in college presidents at Indiana University allowed the revolution to burst into flame. Herman Wells succeeded William Bryan in 1938, and he was determined to make Indiana a cutting-edge university. That meant an openness to new ideas. Students, sensing this new openness, lobbied for a new approach to sex education, and Kinsey immediately lobbied even harder to deliver it, offering to teach a course on marriage and the family. He was granted the opportunity, and the first course commenced in the summer of 1938 (although because of complaints about the content, Kinsey would be forced to cease offering it two years later).

During the course, Kinsey immersed himself in sexual research, especially in wheedling sexual "histories" from students. He now saw such research as the means by which he could remold society according to his own sexual agenda. His modus operandi for effecting the revolution has since become standard for sex educators: present the most lurid sexual detail in the manner of the most dispassionate scientist and treat everysexual expression as merely a harmless and

natural variation; then attack traditional morality as an irrational, unnatural, and destructive enemy of the natural, unrestricted expression of sexuality.

The Institute for Sex Research, founded by Kinsey at Indiana University in 1947, would become the center of the revolution. Kinsey was able to use his authority gained as a professor of zoology to fund and found the institute, which, of course, was presented to the potential benefactors and administrators as being as scientifically sound as his work on the lowly gall wasp. But hidden behind the protective academic walls was a bubbling cauldron of sexual perversity, a minisociety patterned after Kinsey's now unrestricted libido, a pattern that represented what Kinsey was trying to effect for the entire culture. As Kinsey biographer James Jones reveals, senior staff members of the institute and their spouses formed an "inner circle" with whom Kinsey could "create his own sexual Utopia, a scientific subculture whose members would not be bound by arbitrary and antiquated sexual taboos." Hidden behind the closed doors of the institute, "Kinsey decreed that within the inner circle men could have sex with each other, wives would be swapped freely, and wives, too, would be free to embrace whichever sexual partners they liked."[7]

Thus, rather than immersing themselves in legitimate research, Kinsey and his esteemed associates were simply acting out each and every sexual desire that struck their individual or collective fancies—all at the expense of those who funded him and under the academic protection of Indiana University. The more Kinsey's perversities were fed, the more boundless did they become. Once the members of the inner circle began to bore him, he insisted upon bringing in outside "subjects," ostensibly as part of the institute's tireless dedication to research but actually in an ongoing attempt to fulfill Kinsey's insatiable masochistic and homosexual desires. One such willing subject, whose name has been withheld, reported that he not only had sex with Kinsey regularly but "also had sex with everybody else around there [in the institute] too." As Jones reports, this particular subject had "fond memories of copulating with Clara [Kinsey's wife] and Martha ([staff member Ward] Pomeroy's wife) and equally warm recollections of his contacts with their husbands."[8]

Part of their sexual bacchanalia-posed-as-research was devoted to the continual filming of their own lurid activities, carefully done, however, so as not to reveal the identities. Not only did Kinsey demand that his wife be filmed engaging in sex acts, but he both directed and starred in many of these research films.[9] Kinsey was of course primarily interested in filming homosexual acts, especially acts of sadomasochism, and was himself by no means camera shy, as institute staff photographer William Dellenback recalled. According to Dellenback, he "often filmed Kinsey, always from the chest down, engaged in

masochistic masturbation." In this, we see the distorted sexuality of Kinsey's boyhood, which he was so careful to hide, now played out in front of the glaring lights. The following description by Jones is, to say the least, sickening, a glimpse into the hell of sexual distortion into which Kinsey so fervently threw himself. Yet, given Kinsey's stature in our culture, based in large part on the belief that his studie sof sex were the result of dispassionate investigation, we must view the real Kinsey—keeping in mind that these very films are still locked away in the vaults of the institute.

Once the camera started rolling, the world's foremost expert on human sexual behavior and a scientist who valued rationality above all other intellectual properties would insert an object into his urethra [two examples given were a toothbrush, brush end first, and a swizzle stick], tie a rope around his scrotum, and then simultaneously tug hard on the rope as he maneuvered the object deeper and deeper.[10]

These films would remain the private preserve of the institute, however, and are still kept under lock and key. To this day, we might add, the institute has never been thoroughly investigated, and one can only imagine what else Kinsey thought worthy to dedicate to film, especially since, as we shall soon see, he thought pedophilia and bestiality to be sexually normal.

In order to bring about the sexual revolution, Kinsey knew that he and his colleagues at the institute could not be satisfied with living out each and every one of their distorted sexual fantasies in private, but would have to publish groundbreaking books that could serve as bibles for like-minded sexual revolutionaries. This he did with Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (1948) and Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (1953). True to his strategy, Kinsey reported all sexual behavior as if he were merely a neutral, scientific observer, never making distinctions between normal and abnormal, natural and unnatural, good and evil. Then he would declare that, since all kinds of hitherto taboo sexual acts actually occur far more often than readers had been aware, they couldnot be considered abnormal, because whatever occurs frequently must really be quite normal. What is normal must also be natural, and what is natural cannot be bad. Therefore, all sexual activities, whatever previous generations have thought of them, must be good. Science, therefore, can free us from the irrational prejudices of previous generations, for "there is no scientific reason for considering particular types of sexual activity as intrinsically, in their biologic origins, normal or abnormal."[11]

And so, veiling his strategy behind imposing charts and the high scientific

tone of statisticians, Kinsey asserted that “many items in human sexual behavior which are labeled abnormal, or perversions, in textbooks, prove, upon statistical examination, to occur in as many as 30 or 60 or 75 per cent of certain populations. ... It is difficult to maintain that such types of behavior are abnormal because they are rare.”[12]

The next step in effecting the revolution was to show not only that sexual abnormality must now be considered normal, but also, even more important, that many pillars of society engaged in every manner of sexual activity have been unjustly classed as deviant. And so, crowed Kinsey, “Many of the socially and intellectually most significant persons in our [sexual] histories, successful scientists, educators, physicians, clergymen, business men, and persons of high position in governmental affairs, have socially taboo items in their sexual histories, and among them they have accepted nearly the whole range of so-called sexual abnormalities.”[13] Despite the fact that society unfairly burdened them with the label of abnormality, causing them to hide such “socially taboo items” from public view, nearly all of these individuals, reported Kinsey, were “well adjusted.” Indeed, all would be well, if only society would end its unjust restriction of sexuality to monogamous, heterosexual marriage. “Most of the complications which are observable in sexual histories are the result of society’s reactions when it obtains knowledge of an individual’s behavior, or the individual’s fear of how society would react if he were discovered.”[14]

Science could put an end to such “complications” by removing society’s prejudices, for science does not judge the modes by which sexuality is expressed; it only tabulates them. Thus, in the Male Report, Kinsey examined six different ways that males reach “sexual climax”: masturbation, dreams, heterosexual petting, heterosexual intercourse, homosexual intercourse, and “contact with animals or other species.”[15]Given Kinsey’s own history, we are not surprised to find that the chapters given to masturbation and homosexuality were very long and that Kinsey and his team concluded that such practices were very frequent and hence quite natural. Nor should we be surprised to find out that Kinsey manipulated his research to fit his predetermined goal.

In regard to homosexuality, we have all heard the claim repeated, based on Kinsey’s data, that at least 10 percent of the male population is homosexual. Too few are aware of the interesting methods he used to arrive at that figure. To begin with, in order to ensure that homosexuality would be overrepresented (and hence appear normal), Kinsey purposely selected interview populations with high rates of homosexuality, concentrating especially (25 percent) on an interview pool that had prison or sex offender history and even using (as admitted by Kinsey himself) “several hundred male prostitutes.”[16]

Kinsey made even greater efforts to ensure that the interview sample within the selected population was not random. As Kinsey associate Paul Gebhard would later confide, when gathering data in prisons, Kinsey and his team would purposely seek out “sex offenders,” especially “the rarer types,” in order to maximize the statistical magnitude of deviancy thereby avoiding a true random sampling of the prison populations. In addition, Kinsey “never . . . [kept] a record of refusal rates—the proportion of those who were asked for an interview but who refused,”[17] but eagerly took the histories of all those who volunteered.

As to the last point, given his predetermined goal, Kinsey refused to make allowance for what social scientists call “volunteer bias.” As social scientists have shown, it is precisely those who least represent the ideas, opinions, and activities of the society as a whole who are most likely to volunteer for an interview. In regard to sexuality, then, volunteer bias would result in attracting disproportionate numbers of those who have engaged in sexual deviancy Kinsey was well aware of this problem. Abraham Maslow, who did the groundbreaking research in regard to the effects of volunteer bias,pointed the problem out directly to Kinsey. But as one might suspect, Kinsey would not shun any method that could inflate sexually abnormality, so he purposely ignored Maslow’s warnings, published the results as if they represented the entire population, and never mentioned the highly questionable nature of his methods.[18] For Kinsey, science must serve the sexual revolution, even at the expense of being unscientific.

If that were not all, as Judith Reisman points out, Kinsey indiscriminately mixed data from “two totally different types of homosexual experience. . . . Incidental adolescent homosexual experiences of heterosexuals (the most common type of same-sex experience recorded by Kinsey) were combined with the adult experiences of true homosexuals. This created the illusion that a significant percentage of males were genuinely homosexual.”[19]

Yet, however shocking and disreputable Kinsey’s distortion of data in regard to homosexuality, his treatments of pedophilia and bestiality are more shocking still. In regard to pedophilia, Kinsey was quite outspoken in his advocacy of the normalization of adult-child sex. As difficult as it is to imagine, few have asked, when viewing the extraordinary amount of data the institute gathered in regard to pedophilia, exactly where this information came from. As it turns out, the main source, perhaps nearly the only source, for Kinsey’s data came from a single man. According to Kinsey researcher Wardell Pomeroy, Mr. X (so called in order to preserve anonymity) was “sixty-three years old, quiet, soft-spoken, self-effacing—a rather unobtrusive fellow.”[20] In perfect parallel

to Kinsey, hidden behind this benign appearance was a man of epic perversity, who “had sex with his grandmother when he was still a young child, as well as with his father. In the years that followed, the boy had sexual relations with seventeen of the thirty-three relatives with whom he had contact.” In later life, Mr. X “had had homosexual relations with 600 preadolescent males, heterosexual relations with 200 preadolescent females, intercourse with countless adults of both sexes, with animals of many species, and besides had employed elaborate techniques of masturbation.” Most important for Kinsey, who craved data to build his scientific facade, “he had made extensive notes on all his sexual activities, chronicling not only his behavior and reactions but those of his partners and victims.”[21]

For Kinsey, Mr. X was not an unnatural sexual monster, but (in contrast to the rest of us) a purely natural man, man as he would be if society had not placed artificial constraints on sexuality. As Jones remarks, “Kinsey had long believed that human beings in a state of nature were basically pansexual” and that if we could view them in this natural state, we would find that they “would commence sexual activities early in life, enjoy intercourse with both sexes, eschew fidelity, indulge in a variety of behaviors, and be much more sexually active in general for life. To Kinsey, Mr. X was living proof of this theory,” a man who represented Adam as he would appear in Kinsey’s sexual Eden.[22]

Kinsey used Mr. X as the scientific foundation for the fifth chapter of the Male Report, the goal of which was to normalize pedophilia. As with all the other forms of sexual deviancy, Kinsey claimed that the problem with pedophilia was not that it was unnatural, but that it was censured by society.

As Kinsey argued more openly and fervently in Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, the only problems with adult-child sex stem from the negative reaction of society and not from the actual experience:

> It is difficult to understand why a child, except for its cultural conditioning, should be disturbed at having its genitalia touched, or disturbed at seeing the genitalia of other persons, or disturbed at even more specific sexual contacts. When children are constantly warned by parents and teachers against contacts with adults, and when they receive no explanation of the exact nature of the forbidden contacts, they are ready to become hysterical as soon as any older person approaches, or stops and speaks to them in the street, or fondles them, or proposes to do something for them, even though the adult may have had no sexual objective in mind. Some of the more experienced students of juvenile problems have come to believe that the emotional reactions of the parents, police officers, and other adults who discover that the child has had such contact, may

disturb the child more seriously than the sexual contacts themselves. The current hysteria over sex offenders may very well have serious effects on the ability of many of these children to work out sexual adjustments some years later in their marriage.[23]

Kinsey's views on the naturalness of pedophilia, we should mention, have become the foundation of the current revolutionaries now pushing adult-child sex as natural.[24]

One last taboo, sex between human beings and animals, had to be erased. Again, Kinsey followed his normalizationstrategy, beginning with a patronizing account of common opinion. "To many persons it will seem almost axiomatic that two mating animals should be individuals of the same species," but such beliefs hardly qualify as scientific. Bestiality merely "seems particularly gross to an individual who is unaware of the frequency with which exceptions to the supposed rule actually occur," but such childlike beliefs are inappropriate to the scientist, who scans with detachment the full range of sexual experience. In contrast to the all too commonly accepted view that bestiality is a particularly egregious offense against nature, science has become increasingly aware of "the existence of interspecific matings," not only among plants, but also "among birds and higher mammals," so that "one begins to suspect that the rules about intra-specific matings [i.e., between members of the same species] are not so universal as traditions would have it." The only truly odd thing about the whole matter of bestiality is "the degree of abhorrence with which intercourse between the human and animals of other species is viewed by most persons who have not had such experience."[25] Such abhorrence comes from ignorance or, better, inexperience, and hence (we presume) practitioners of bestiality are the only qualified judges of its merits.

From where did the taboos against human-animal sex come? As with the prohibition against homosexuality that had so plagued his early years, this irrational prejudice came from Judaism and Christianity. Against these repressive, pre-scientific religions, science has discovered anew that bestiality is a near-universal phenomenon and hence quite natural. According to Kinsey, it is certain that human contacts with animals of other species have been known since the dawn of history, they are known among all races of people today, and they are not uncommon in our own culture, as the data in the present chapter will show. Far from being a matter for surprise, the record simply substantiates our present understanding that the forces which bring individuals of the same species together in sexual relations, may sometimes serve to bring individuals of different species together in the same types of sexual relations.[26]

And so Kinsey argued for a logic of normalization of yet another kind of sexual perversity: animals do it, and human beings are animals; therefore, bestiality is natural for us as well.

In conclusion, then, Kinsey assured readers that, no matter what they may happen to think is morally deviant, the truly scientific approach to sexuality, rather than dividing sexual acts into right and wrong, merely distinguishes different types of sexuality. The categories of sexual activity Kinsey distinguished—masturbation, spontaneous nocturnal emissions, petting, heterosexual intercourse, homosexual contacts, and bestiality—"may seem to fall into categories that are as far apart as right and wrong, licit and illicit, normal and abnormal, acceptable and unacceptable in our social organization. In actuality, they all prove to originate in the relatively simple mechanisms which provide for erotic response when there are sufficient physical or psychic stimuli."[27] Since "sufficient physical or psychic stimuli" may come from a multitude of sources, no source can be ranked above any other morally; only the individual can judge for himself what provides the most satisfactory stimuli for his "erotic response."

Such were the arguments of the twentieth century's greatest sexual scientist. As we have clearly seen, however, Kinsey's vantage point was not in the least objective, but merely a projection of his internal sexual disorders onto a world he hoped so desperately to remold in his own distorted image.

In the 1950s, Kinsey's health began to deteriorate, yet he pushed himself all the harder. He became more and more worried that the institute's funding would be cut off and that society would undermine his revolution. On August 25, 1956, he died of a combination of health problems: a bad heart, pneumonia, and an embolism. Despite Kinsey's fears, the institute survived and is still ensconced at Indiana University today, now called, more familiarly, the Kinsey Institute. (Readers may view the benign-looking Web site at www.indiana. edu/~kinsey/.)

In many respects, although he died an unhappy man, tortured by the belief that all his efforts had failed to overturn the established order, in reality, Kinsey had actually won. He succeeded in masking the profound perversity of the institute and of his private sexual demons, and his revolution has all but been completed since his death. The press had only praise for him when he died, sadly remarking on the death of a brave and dispassionate scientific pioneer. The New York Times declared him "first, last and always a scientist," and the Indiana Catholic and Record, while admitting its fundamental disagreement with Kinsey's sexual conclusions, expressed its admiration of "Kinsey's devotion to knowledge and learning," even asserting that "one cannot deny that Dr. Kinsey's unremitting efforts, his patient, endless search, his disregard for criticisms and

ridicule, and his disinterest in financial gain should merit him high marks as a devoted scholar."[28] As they should have realized, praising him as a scientist meant praising the "results" he obtained and hence aiding and abetting the Kinsey revolution. But perhaps the duping of the press should not surprise us. As we have seen, Kinsey had perfected the art of using science to mask his distorted desire so that he could all the more effectively remold society in his own dismal image, an image worthy of honor only to the Culture of Death.

—B. D.W.

[1] James H. Jones, Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public /Private Life (New York: W. W Norton, 1997), pp. 82-83.

[2] Ibid., pp. 129, 153.

[3] Ibid., pp. 194-95, and p. 809, n. 78.

[4] Ibid., pp. 153-54.

[5] She had an adherent clitoris.

[6] Quoted in Jones, Kinsey, p. 258.

[7] Jones, Kinsey, p. 603.

[8] Ibid., pp. 603-4.

[9] Ibid., pp. 608-10.

[10] Ibid., p. 609.

[11] Alfred Kinsey et al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1948), p. 202.

[12] Ibid., pp. 199-201.

[13] Ibid., p. 201.

[14] Ibid., p. 202.

[15] Ibid., p. 157.

[16] Quoted in Judith A. Reisman and Edward W. Eichel, Kinsey, Sex and Fraud (Lafayette, La.: Huntington House, 1990), p. 29. Kinsey also engaged in what statisticians call the "accumulative incidence" technique of data manipulation, which treats "each case as if it were an additional case falling within each previous age group or previous experienced category." This technique falsely stacked the numbers in all previous categories in accord with Kinsey's belief that whatever is done once must have been done all along and allowed him to inflate percentages in all age categories.

[17] Quoted in Judith A. Reisman, Kinsey. Crimes and Consequences (Arlington, Virginia: The Institute for Media Education, 1998), pp. 52-53.

[18] See Reisman and Eichel, Kinsey, Sex and Fraud, pp. 20-21, 62.

[19] Reisman and Eichel, Kinsey, Sex and Fraud, p. 186.

[20] Jones, Kinsey, p. 508.

[21] Ibid., p. 507.

[22] Ibid., p. 512.

[23] Alfred Kinsey et al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1953), p. 121.

[24] For the “state” of the revolution see especially Reisman and Eichel, Kinsey, Sex and Fraud, pp. 128-34, 205—13, and Reisman, Kinsey: Crimes and Consequences, pp. 230-36.

[25] Kinsey et al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Male, pp. 667-68.

[26] Ibid., pp. 668-69.

[27] Ibid., p. 678.

[28] Quoted in Jones, Kinsey, p. 770.

Margaret Sanger

Margaret Sanger, the daughter of Michael Hennessey Hig-gins and Anne Purcell Higgins, was born on September 14, 1879, in Corning, New York. Margaret, later to become the founder of Planned Parenthood, was one of eleven children, four girls and seven boys. In addition, Margaret's mother had seven miscarriages.

While her mother remained, albeit silently, a devout Catholic, Margaret's father was to her the larger-than-life influence in her early years. In Margaret's words, Michael Higgins was a "non-conformist through and through."[1] He was a socialist and a freethinker, incensed at the treatment of the poor and suspicious of organized religion, especially Catholicism. Hence, he would not allow his wife to go to Mass or instruct the children in the faith. Ironically, he made his living as a stonemason, "chiseling angels and saints out of huge blocks of white marble or gray granite for tombstones in cemeteries."[2] But because he offended Catholics in his support for certain political causes (in particular, advocating a single tax on land) and by inviting a known opponent of orthodox Christianity to speak in Corning, he lost much of his business, thereby making provision for his ever-growing family far more difficult. (His generally improvident nature added to this difficulty. He would often lavish needed household money on his favorite causes, such as when he used the entirety of the winter coal money to throw a banquet for social reformer Henry George.)

In Sanger's autobiography, she makes clear what impressions in her childhood most influenced her later crusade for birth control. In her memory of Corning, "Large families were associated with poverty, toil, unemployment, drunkenness, cruelty, fighting, jails; the small ones with cleanliness, leisure, freedom, light, space, sunshine":

> The fathers of the small families owned their homes; the young-looking mothers had time to play croquet with their husbands in the evenings on the smooth lawns. Their clothes had style and charm, and the fragrance of perfume clung about them. They walked hand in hand on shopping expeditions with their children, who seemed positive in their right to live. To me the distinction between happiness and unhappiness in childhood was one of small families and of large families rather than of wealth and poverty.[3]

As noted above, in regard to Margaret's religious upbringing, all that could be done was done furtively, under the shadow of her freethinking father. Her

mother, Anne, would not dare to go to church against her husband's wishes, but young Margaret would slip off to church when her father was working out of town. It was not until March 23, 1893, when she was thirteen, that she was finally baptized, and with just as much secrecy, she was confirmed over a yearlater, in July of 1894. But as her father's opinions of Catholicism were well known, she felt less than welcome at church.

Margaret went away from Corning to Claverack College (which was actually a boarding high school). There she met fellow student Corey Alberson, to whom she became secretly engaged, but instead of consummating the engagement in marriage opted for a "trial marriage." She was not to finish her studies, however. Her father called her home because her mother was dying. Against his character, Michael Higgins allowed a priest to administer last rites on March 31, 1899. "My Heaven begins this morning," Margaret's mother replied after receiving the final sacrament. Never close to her mother, Margaret stood by emotionless.

Margaret resented being called back from school, and she now fought constantly with her father, whom she accused of killing her mother. "She was only forty-nine when she died. But those eighteen pregnancies didn't hurt you a bit," she screamed at him. Soon enough, Margaret left Corning again, this time for good.

She ended up in White Plains , New Jersey, working as a kind of apprentice nurse at a hospital. There, at a hospital party, Margaret met a young architect, William Sanger, who was immediately smitten with her. Sanger spared no expense in wooing Margaret. In turn, she found both him and his radical views attractive—he was a socialist anarchist and was even more adamantly opposed than her father to all organized religion. They were married after William literally snatched her away in a horse and buggy in the heat of August 1902, taking her, surprised and distressed, to a waiting minister and two witnesses. She was both angry at the outrage and very happy to be married.

Soon after, the couple moved to New York and then Hastings. Three babies soon followed, Stuart in 1903, Grant in 1908, and Peggy in 1911. Margaret was a distracted mother, affectionate but bored with home life. As biographer Madeline Gray noted, "She loved to hug and kiss her children, but taking responsibility for them was something else."[4] Along with her husband, she had a love of radical political causes, including anarchism, and the young couple was often either away or entertaining a party of radicals at home. There was little time left, apparently, for the children. In Gray's words, "Characteristically, Margaret barely noticed what was happening to her children. She declared she was seized with a mysterious 'nervous malady' whenever she had to take care of them, and

clutched at the first outside interest that came along."[5] Rather than tending her children, as her own mother, Anne, had dutifully attended her and her siblings, "Margaret was usually off somewhere, leaving them in charge of neighbors or anyone she could find."[6]

Spending time in radical circles brought her in touch with the rising birth control movement, and by 1911 she was lecturing and writing on the necessity of contraception. As with her father, seeing the plight of the working poor—the horrid conditions in which they lived and worked—ignited a fiery indignation and fueled her desire to agitate for various socialist causes. She also found participation in discussions of the radicals far more engaging than motherhood. It was in just such discussions that she was introduced to the "free love" movement by Emma Goldman. While William Sanger was a radical, this he could not condone. Judging by her later actions, Margaret apparently thought otherwise.

During this time, Margaret turned from her complete immersion in radical politics and went back to nursing, focusing on midwifery. Working for the Visiting Nurses Association of New York City, she went into poverty-stricken areas and helped women deliver their babies. In the summer of 1912 she witnessed the death of Sadie Sachs, a death caused by a self-induced abortion. According to Sanger, Sachs had pleaded with her three months earlier to supply some kind of contraceptive after recovering from a previous self-induced abortion. This event was, for Sanger, pivotal. "I went to bed [that night], knowing that no matter what it might cost, I was finished with palliatives and superficial cures; I was resolved to seek out the root of evil, to do something to change the destiny of mothers whose miseries were vast as the sky."[7]

Or so she would have us believe. While the image of Sachs certainly played some role in her advocacy of birth control, as we shall soon see, two other aspects of her thought loomed far larger as causes of her championing of birth control: the liberation of sexual desire and the new science of eugenics.

William Sanger became more and more miserable as his wife became a more and more frank advocate of the joys of sexual liberty. William and Margaret attended the "Evenings," as they were called, held at the Greenwich Village salon of the wealthy divorcee Mabel Dodge. Here Village intellectuals gathered to discuss the latest radical ideas, Dodge normally assigning a topic for each evening. Margaret soon became well known for her opinions about sexuality. Of her, Dodge stated, "It was she who introduced us all to the idea of Birth Control and it, along with other related ideas about sex, became her passion. . . . She was the first person I ever knew who was openly an ardent propagandist for the joys of the flesh."[8]

Margaret was not merely preaching a theory. In the summer of 1913, when she was visiting free-love advocate Emma Goldman, Margaret had an affair, which, she confessed to a confidante, “really set me free.”[9] William found out and was furious, and angry as well at finding the children to be almost entirely neglected. As her son Grant stated, “Mother was seldom around. She just left us with anybody handy, and ran off we didn’t know where.”[10] William had found out where and, although violently angry, decided that a second honeymoon in Paris might cure the marriage and also provide him with a chance to throw himself into his passion for painting. They were to stay for six months.

In Europe, Margaret was delighted to find many methods of available contraceptives, and within a month insisted on returning to America to disseminate the information. William wanted to stay in Europe. Margaret took the children and sailed without him.

Soon William was hearing through the grapevine that Margaret had taken another lover. He was not amused at her suggestion that he take a mistress. The anarchist husband was sorely distressed at his wife’s embrace of the anarchist position concerning sexuality.

Margaret now turned her considerable energies to publishing, beginning in 1914 with The Woman Rebel, a newspaper decorated with the slogan “No Gods! No Masters!” In it Sanger railed against the evils of capitalism and religion and hailed the benefits of contraception. During this time her rebellion against marriage became more pronounced as well. When William complained from Paris about hearing more rumors, she informed him that she needed sexual intercourse to relax her and that he could stay celibate if he liked, but she most certainly would not.

At this point, no one could accuse her of hypocrisy. Her attitude and behavior accorded perfectly with her self-defined creedal statements, which she boldly trumpeted in The Woman Rebel: “A woman’s duty: To look the whole world in the face with a go-to-hell look in the eyes, to have an ideal, to speak and act in defiance of convention.”[11] Foreshadowing her influence as an architect of the Culture of Death, she also offered the following credo: “Rebel women claim the following Rights: The Right to be Lazy. The Right to be an Unmarried Mother. The Right to Destroy. The Right to Create. The Right to Live and the Right to Love.”[12]By late in 1914, she had so antagonized authorities by her promotion of birth control and anarchist ideas that she had to flee to Europe to evade trial. She left behind her children and husband, William (who had since returned to the States). In mid-December, she wrote a letter to William, in her words, “ending a relationship of over 12 years.”[13] (Three years later she would push him for a divorce, which would take four more before it would

become official.)

In exile for a year, she busily gathered more birth control information from European sources and sat at the feet of the great “sexologist” Havelock Ellis, whom she revered as a kind of sexual-scientific prophet (referring to him as the “King”). He too became her lover, which so distressed Ellis’ wife, Edith, that she attempted suicide several times, finally dying of a diabetic coma brought on by her failing health.

The affair with Ellis was by no means Sanger’s last. Anarchist Lorenzo Portet, Jonah Goldstein, Hugh de Selincourt, Three-in-One Oil magnate J. Noah Slee (whom she later married for his money and made sign a marriage agreement allowing her complete freedom, no questions asked), H. G. Wells, Herbert Simonds, Harold Child, Angus MacDonald, Hobson Pitman, and many others whose names have been lost to biographers—all, in turn, became her lovers. Such was the pattern of her entire life. As an old woman, she penned the following advice to her sixteen-year-old granddaughter: “Kissing, petting and even intercourse are alright as long as they are sincere. I have never given a kiss in my life that wasn’t sincere. As for intercourse, I’d say three times a day was about right.”[14]

She was not satisfied merely to act upon her voracious and unlimited sexual desire, but rationalized her sexuality according to a rather bizarre evolutionary theory. According to Sanger, sexual desire was a dynamic biological drive that could take evolution beyond mere survival of the fittest to the development of genius. But the sexual path to genius faced obstacles, because “ethical dogmas of the past, no less than the scientific, may block the way to true civilization.”[15] True science would soon provide liberation, however. “Psychology is now recognizing the forces concealed in the human organism. In the long process of adaptation to social life, men have had to harness the wishes and desires born of these inner energies, the greatest and most imperative of whichare Sex and Hunger.”[16] While “Hunger ... has created ‘the struggle for existence,’ ... no less fundamental, no less imperative, no less ceaseless in its dynamic energy, has been the great force of Sex.”[17] The importance of sex, then, was not primarily procreation (as with most evolutionary thinkers); rather, sex was the evolutionary force that creates genius:

Modern science is teaching us that genius is not some mysterious gift of the gods. . .. Nor is it. .. the result of a pathological and degenerate condition.... Rather it is due to the removal of physiological and psychological inhibitions and constraints which makes possible the release and channeling of the primordial inner energies of man into full and divine expression. The removal of

these inhibitions, so scientists assure us, makes possible more rapid and profound perceptions,—so rapid indeed that they seem to the ordinary human being, practically instantaneous, or intuitive.[18]

Needless to say, Sanger believed that Christianity had suppressed the font of human genius. Yet, for Sanger, there was hope:

Slowly but surely we are breaking down the taboos that surround sex; but we are breaking them down out of sheer necessity. The codes that have surrounded sexual behavior in the so-called Christian communities, the teachings of the churches concerning chastity and sexual purity, the prohibitions of the laws, and the hypocritical conventions of society, have all demonstrated their failure as safeguards against the chaos produced and the havoc wrought by the failure to recognize sex as a driving force in human nature,—as great as, if indeed not greater than, hunger. Its dynamic energy is indestructible. It may be transmuted, refined, directed, even sublimated, but to ignore, to neglect, to refuse to recognize this great elemental force is nothing less than foolhardy.[19]

Indeed, in a strange twist of reason, Sanger asserted that the Christian insistence on virtue was the actual cause of vice: “Out of the unchallenged policies of continence, abstinence, ‘chastity’ and ‘purity,’ we have reaped the harvests of prostitution, venereal scourges and innumerable other evils.”[20] For Sanger, the old view of sexuality, “taught upon the basis of conventional and traditional morality and middle-class respectability, ... is a waste of time and effort.”[21] Conventional and traditional morality and middle-class respectability had to be purged from the culture, and a new mode of understanding sexuality must be introduced.

“The great central problem, and one which must be taken first is the abolition of the shame and fear of sex,” and this requires reeducation. “We must teach men the overwhelming power of this radiant force.... Through sex, mankind may attain the great spiritual illumination which will transform the world, which will light up the only path to an earthly paradise. So must we necessarily and inevitably conceive of sex-expression.”[22] For Sanger the release of sexuality from restriction became a kind of religious goal, a goal that heralded its own this-worldly view of paradise, one in which “men and women will not dissipate their energy” in the Christian belief in “the vague sentimental fantasies of extramundane existence,” but will realize that here on earth, in a sexual Utopia of our own making, we shall find “ourparadise, our everlasting abode, our Heaven and our eternity.”[23] Of course, such a paradise would have

great need of birth control.

But we must understand that the release of sexual desire was not the only reason Sanger promoted birth control. Birth control was seen by her as a eugenic solution, helping to eliminate “the dead weight of human waste.”[24] As with her account of sexually derived genius, her eugenic arguments were couched in evolutionary terms.

In the early history of the race, so-called “natural law” [i.e., natural selection] reigned undisturbed. Under its pitiless and unsympathetic iron rule, only the strongest, most courageous could live and become progenitors of the race. The weak died early or were killed. Today, however, civilization has brought sympathy, pity, tenderness and other lofty and worthy sentiments, which interfere with the law of natural selection. We are now in a state where our charities, our compensation acts, our pensions, hospitals, and even our drainage and sanitary equipment all tend to keep alive the sickly and the weak, who are allowed to propagate and in turn produce a race of degenerates.[25]

Contrary to what Planned Parenthood would have us believe, eugenics was not a side issue to Sanger or merely the result of her being a woman of her time, but was absolutely essential to her understanding and propagation of birth control. In 1917 Sanger founded The Birth Control Review, which, while not as shrill as the Rebel, was nevertheless filled with the strongest and crudest arguments for eugenics. One of her favorite slogans adorning the masthead was “Birth Control: To Create a Race of Thoroughbreds” (discontinued in 1929 and replaced with the more salable “Babies by Choice, Not Chance”).[26]

For Sanger, “the most urgent problem to-day is how to limit and discourage the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective.” Indeed, “possibly drastic and Spartan methods may be forced upon American society if it continues complacently to encourage the chance and chaotic breeding that has resulted from our stupid, cruel sentimentalism.”[27]

To reverse the alleged ill effects of such “stupid, cruel sentimentalism,” Sanger offered birth control as the compassionate antidote, a medicine she pushed with great fervency, fueled especially by her fear and horror at the great tide of “feeble-minded” persons she believed was swamping the population and dragging humanity back down the evolutionary slope. “There is but one practical and feasible program in handling the great problem of the feeble-minded,” she declared, and that is “to prevent the birth of those who would transmit imbecility to their descendants.” Reject or ignore her prophetic warning, and civilization “will be faced with the ever-increasing problem of feeble-mindedness, that

fertile parent of degeneracy, crime, and pauperism."[28] One can only imagine with what horror Sanger viewed the moiling masses of those for whom her own sexually induced genius was out of reach.

Degeneracy, crime, and pauperism could be solved by no other means, especially traditional philanthropy. Such philanthropy did not attack the root of the problem, the fertility of the feebleminded. Thus, "it encourages the perpetuation of defectives, delinquents and dependents. These are the most dangerous elements in the world community, the most devastating curse on human progress and expression."[29] Sang-erian philanthropy, however, would not perpetuate the "dead weight of human waste,"[30] but instead would take immediate eugenic means to eliminate the problem. Feebleminded women and men should be forcefully segregated from each other and made to live apart "during the reproductive years." Failing that, society might need to adopt more drastic measures. As Sanger said rather candidly, under such circumstances, "we prefer the policy of immediate sterilization, of making sure that parenthood is absolutely prohibited to the feeble-minded."[31]

Sanger believed that birth control solved a problem that had vexed most eugenicists, from Darwin and Galton on down to her own day. Natural selection was no longer able to remove the unfit because civilization had softened much of the severity of nature by its misguided compassion. Adding to the problem, as we have seen, was the characteristically high fecundity of the feebleminded. "Birth Control ... is really the greatest and most truly eugenic method," trumpeted Sanger, "and its adoption as part of the program of Eugenics would immediately give a concrete and realistic power to that science." For this reason, eugenic birth control "has been accepted by the most clear thinking and far seeing of the Eugenists themselves as the most constructive and necessary of the means to racial health."3[32]

Viewing all of the above, it is quite clear that all three motives—the relief of women overburdened with children, the release of sexuality from traditional morality, and finally eugenics—formed the goals of all the organizations launched by Sanger. First she founded the National Birth Control League, renamed the American Birth Control League and established as a corporation in 1922; then it became, in 1939, the Birth Control Federation of America; and finally in 1942 it received the name it bears today, Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA)—although, interestingly enough, Sanger protested the name change. True to Sanger's credo that women should have "The Right to Destroy," Planned Parenthood is now the world's largest provider of abortion. Nor does PPFA shy away from eugenics. Prior to World War II, when eugenics had not yet received the "taint" of Nazism, there were many board

members common to both Planned Parenthood (and its precursors) and the American Eugenics Society. Even after the war, Alan Guttmacher, the president of PPFA from 1962 to 1974 and founder of PPFA's affiliate Alan Guttmacher Institute, was the vice-president of the American Eugenics Society in 1957. Continuing the eugenic tradition of Sanger, PPFA became a big advocate of prenatal testing as a standard precaution for those who are "at risk" for having babies with birth defects. In a policy paper written in 1977, "Planned Births, the Future of the Family and the Quality of American Life: Towards a Comprehensive National Policy and Program," PPFA called for national "pregnancy testing and preventive services, prenatal diagnosis of fetal defects, genetic counseling, venereal disease prevention and other services" such as abortion. As for sexuality itself, PPFA is well known for advocating sexual "freedom" and hence breaking down traditional moral barriers, the very barriers Sanger argued must be destroyed to allow for her sexual Utopia to flourish.[33]

Perhaps the most accurate indication of the ultimate poverty of Sanger's views is Sanger's own life, the life she kept hidden from public view. As we have seen above, Sanger was relentlessly selfish, all but abandoning her children (one of whom, Peggy, died in 1915) so that she could pursue her continual romances, attend to the propagation of birth control, and enhance her own fame. As her biographer, Madeline Gray, makes all too clear, Sanger was consumed with sexual passion to the point of absurdity, restlessly sailing from America to Europe and back again to meet her lovers during both of her marriages and in between. As she got older, her passion became only more inflamed, and she needed ever more assurance that she was indeed desirable. She purchased such assurance through money, having inherited five million dollars after the death of her husband Noah Slee. Sanger would throw party after party to fill her empty days and use her wealth to attract younger men, who would pay her court. Becoming ever more depressed as age took its toll and her beauty waned, she turned to alcohol and (after an operation) to pain killers, often spending the day sleeping or incoherent. Finally, she had to be taken to a nursing home after she took to drunken wandering during the night. Sanger died on September 6, 1966, just short of her eighty-seventh birthday, having all too effectively passed on a view of happiness through sexual freedom that, in regard to her own life, ultimately proved only empty, dark, and miserable.

—B.D.W.

[1] Margaret Sanger, An Autobiography (New York: Dover Publications,

1971), p. 12. Sanger's autobiography was originally published in 1938.

[2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] Ibid., p. 28.

[4] Madeline Gray, Margaret Sanger (New York: Richard Marek Publishers, 1979), p. 36.

[5] Ibid., p. 40.

[6] Ibid., p. 47.

[7] Sanger, Autobiography, pp. 89-92.

[8] Gray, Sanger, pp. 58-59.

[9] Ibid., p. 61.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 70.

[12] Ibid., p. 72.

[13] Ibid., p. 84.

[14] Ibid., pp. 227-28.

[15] Margaret Sanger, The Pivot of Civilization (New York: Maxwell Reprint Company, 1969 [originally published by Sanger in 1922]), p. 237.

[16] Ibid., p. 227.

[17] Ibid., pp. 227-28.

[18] Ibid., pp. 232-33.

[19] Ibid., p. 246.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 249.

[22] Ibid., p. 271.

[23] Ibid., pp. 275-76.

[24] Ibid., p. 116.

[25] Margaret Sanger, "Birth Control and Women's Health," Birth Control Review 1, no. 12 (Dec. 1917): 7.

[26] Those interested in witnessing how thoroughly and crassly eugenic Sanger really was, and what kind of intellectual company she kept, should read through The Birth Control Review (edited by Sanger from 1917 to 1938). See also Robert Marshall and Charles Donovan, Blessed Are the Barren (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991); George Grant, Grand Illusions, 4th ed. (Nashville, Tenn.:Cumberland House, 2000); Elasah Drogin, Margaret Sanger: Father of Modern Society (Coarsegold, Calif.: CUL Publications, 1980); and Rebecca Messal, "The Evolution of Genocide," Human Life Review 26, no. 1 (winter 2000): 47-75.

[27] Sanger, Pivot of Civilization, p. 25.

[28] Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[29] Ibid., p. 123.
[30] Ibid., p. 112.
[31] Ibid., pp. 101-2.
[32] Ibid., p. 189.
[33] For documentation of this, see Marshall and Donovan, Blessed Are the Barren, chap. 4.

Clarence Gamble

Clarence Gamble was the son of David Gamble and the grandson of James Gamble, the cofounder of the very famous and very profitable Procter and Gamble. Clarence was born in Avondale, a suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio, on January 10, 1894, one of four children. Ironically, he was a "surprise baby," born when his mother, Mary Gamble, was thirty-nine and his father, David, was forty-seven. An interesting beginning for a man who was to take as his motto for birth control advocacy "every child a wanted child."

The Gamble family was defined by the Protestant work ethic. As with the original Puritans, they avoided the ostentatious trappings of wealth, and the fathers made certain that the sons knew how to manage money by keeping a tight draw on the purse strings. Yet, even with their characteristic passion for thrift, the Gambles gave generously to all kinds of charities, taking with the utmost seriousness the biblical injunction to tithe.

Wealth made Clarence uncomfortable, however. Even when he was in his late teens, he was horrified at the thought that others would give no credit to his achievements but would mark them all down to his having been born with a very large silver spoon in his mouth.

As with all the Gambles so far, Clarence expected to work hard and make his own way. Perhaps in no small part to avoid the charge that he was merely stepping into the family company, Clarence Gamble decided to become a doctor and make a name for himself in a field unrelated to the Gamble industry. Then, on Clarence's twenty-first birthday, came a fateful letter from his father.[1]

Dear Clarence,

In honor of your arrival at man's estate your mother and I give you stock as per enclosed list. We hope that you will be able to make good use of the income. We have one request to make in connection therewith, that is you contribute at least one-tenth of the income to the church and other benevolences.

Lovingly, Father

The value of the stocks totaled around one million dollars, an incredible sum in 1915—a sum so large that Clarence would never have to work and could live quite comfortably on the interest alone. At the time, he was working in a job that paid $85 a month. He quickly calculated that the dividends on a million dollars' worth of stock would yield at least $160 a day.

The decision was not difficult: “I resigned my $85 a month and tasted the joys of release from daily round of office work [sic].”[2] But again, that did not mean that he was choosing a life of leisure. He was still bent on becoming a doctor. That fall he went to Princeton to begin the bachelor’s degree program in biology, graduating first in his class. From there he went to Harvard for his medical degree, graduating second in his class in 1920. These considerable efforts could not be marked down to being an heir to the Gamble fortune.

While at Harvard, Gamble was the picture of propriety, attending church every Sunday morning, leading a Boy Scout troop, helping poor boys who had dropped out of school, and working in a club for ex-alcoholics. In comparison to the wild and strange lives of Margaret Sanger and Alfred Kinsey, Gamble’s mode of living was a model of respectability. Yet, as we shall see, his tireless crusade for birth control puts him, along with Sanger, as one of the two most important individuals who formed the contraceptive culture of today. Insofar as Gamble’s efforts were especially focused on research and development, and then on effective dissemination of birth control, he may even rank above Sanger.

Gamble’s interest in birth control did not stem, as did Sanger’s, from a preoccupation with building a new civilization of sexual freedom. Gamble’s obsession with the development and dissemination of birth control was rooted, in great part, in his ingrained philanthropic bent. He meant to help desperate women. That is not, however, the whole story. Gamble’s passion for birth control also came from a source he had in common with Sanger, a passion for eugenics.

In regard to his eugenic bent, perhaps the most interesting and informative window into Gamble’s thinking comes in viewing his own family. Clarence married Sarah Bradley on June 21, 1924. Unlike almost all advocates of birth control, the Clarences had a relatively large family. They planned to have six children and would have, if Sarah had not had a miscarriage of the last one. Having five children, however, made them conspicuously at odds with other members of the birth control movement.

But the Gambles were not acting in contradiction to their convictions. They firmly believed that “every child should be a wanted child,” and they wanted six children. The reasons, however, were not entirely the result of familial love. As with Darwin, Haeckel, Galton, and many of the other earlier advocates of eugenics, Gamble was convinced that the best people were breeding too little, and the worst too much. He was determined to rectify the imbalance of fit to unfit, both by making his own contribution to the good eugenic pool with a large family and by reducing the breeding of the less fit through birth control.

In regard to his desire for the fit to breed more, during World War II Gamble spearheaded a program among the nation’s Ivy League schools to

encourage their graduates to breed more, especially spurring on his own almae matres, Princeton and Harvard. Gamble hoped to set up a college-by-college analysis of birthrates so as to encourage a kind of “stork derby” and believed that dangling various honors and awards in front of alumni would encourage greater breeding of the more fit. Such a program, he maintained, could help to reverse the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant “race suicide” brought on by inadequate breeding of the best. The assumption, of course, was that graduating from college was a strong if not certain indication of natural intellectual superiority. Unfortunately, at least for Gamble’s schemes, it was always the Mormon and Catholic colleges that outpaced his Protestant Ivy League favorites.[3]

On the other end of the eugenic spectrum, Gamble was a strong advocate of reducing the breeding rates of the unfit, not only through birth control but also through sterilization. As Gamble biographers Doone and Greer Williams note,

> For some years, he had sought to suppress the hereditary forms of mental retardation and mental illness by publicizing state laws providing for the sterilization of these classes of institutionalized patients. He frequently wrote and talked on sterilization, and became one of the earliest exponents of vasectomy, in those days [the mid-twentieth century] directing it at the male deemed unfit to become a father.[4]

If we look at Gamble’s Human Sterilization: Techniques of Permanent Conception Control (1950), the dark eugenic underside of Gamble’s charity becomes evident. Gamble co-wrote this pamphlet with Dr. Robert Latou Dickinson, another strong advocate of birth control, who may even have been the decisive influence in bringing Gamble to devote his life to the “Great Cause.” The opening paragraph is worthy of quote in its entirety:

> To rescue humanity from harmful fertility is no simple problem. For a million years Dame Nature found she could develop her people only by selecting for survival the most prolific, the toughest and smartest—and she had a planet for [a] laboratory and all races for experiment. In our time, notwithstanding the rapidly mounting world-wide burdens of overpopulation which are increased by limiting epidemics and salvaging weaklings, our organized efforts toward fostering breeding for quality rather than for quantity can show only three decades of active development [i.e., roughly 1920— 1950]—and that in the face of much opposition. Indeed the indications that levels of intelligence are declining has forced us to formulate programs for rescue.[5]

It is not difficult to see the lines of argument that originated in Darwin. With natural selection, the best breed the most. Modern medicine and sanitation have had the adverse effect of removing the pitiless purifying techniques of natural selection. The result has been both overpopulation and the flooding of the gene pool by the less fit. In order to redress the balance, we must introduce artificial means to limit the breeding of the unfit and increase the breeding of the fit.

Thus, “developing the most desirable sort of citizens involves providing the best candidates with aid toward fertility whenever aid is needed, while at the same time curtailing the progeny of the feebleminded and of those who have borne all the children to whom they can do justice.”[6]

While some headway in society’s “attempt to lessen productivity” of the feebleminded has been made by “segregation,” such facilities have provided “for only a small fraction of the need.” Since there is not enough room in such institutions, some of the feebleminded must be released into society. This is unproblematic as long as they receive the proper training to become self-supporting, but even “thus equipped,” they can be released only if “safeguarded by sterilization against producing more defectives.” “Such safeguard should be legally sanctioned for mental defectives for whom there is not room in our institutions.”[7]

Although the language is rather vague, it is not difficult to see that by “legally sanctioned” Dickinson and Gamble meant forced sterilization, since they later cite with approval the “27 states” that sanction sterilization “at government expense for mental defectives or psychotics.”[8]

It was in this eugenic spirit that Dickinson and Gamble offered the very detailed account of various procedures for permanent sterilization in their joint pamphlet. In the ending summary of the work, entitled “The Physician’s Responsibility,” Dickinson and Gamble asserted that the “field for sterilization includes all those who because of heredity or physical condition are totally unfit to have children, as well as those parents for whom another child would be very unwise, or an actual danger, and who lack intelligence or persistence to use other means of control.”[9]

Until now mere numbers of citizens have been a main aim of nations. The new world-outlook has for its goal the heightening of quality of its citizens and increase in well-being for the family, the community and the nation. To this end, limitation of the totally unfit is one clear-cut expedient.[10]

As with most of the birth control advocates in the first half of the twentieth

century, we can see in Dickinson and Gamble that their passion for birth control was a mix of compassion for those who suffer and a strong eugenic urge to eliminate the unfit, thereby lifting both the quality of life and the quality of the human genetic pool. After the atrocities of the Nazis in regard to eugenics became known after World War II, most advocates for “family planning” dropped straightforward eugenic advocacy and (at least publicly) focused only on compassion.

Oddly enough, while aware of the damage the open espousal of eugenics could do to the cause in 1950, Dickinson and Gamble dismissed any connection between their promotion of eugenic sterilization and that of the Nazis, even while they downplayed the actual seriousness of the Nazi eugenic program. Tucked away in the appendix to the pamphlet, and written in very small type, they note that

> the German literature [on sterilization] is voluminous, whether it is concerned with heredity indications, law, operation procedures or irradiations. .. . After thirty years of research led by authorities on eugenics like Rudin and Lenz, the proportion of feebleminded was found to run about one in 170. Inclusion of all those with mental and physical disorders definitely hereditary and seriously interfering with living in the community and preventing self-support, increased the estimate to one in 110.[11]

Of course, as we have seen in our chapter on Haeckel, such estimates formed the foundation of the Nazi eugenic programs, which led not merely to sterilization of the defectives, but also to the far more effective elimination of them. This estimate of the number of those unfit to breed must have been considered by Dickinson and Gamble to be accurate, for they then stated, “There is confirmation from Sweden, Switzerland, Holland and Denmark of such proportion.” To bring home what such a proportion would mean, in a population of 100 million, there would presumably be 909,000 deemed unfit to breed, and hence fit for sterilization, voluntary or forced.[12] For the current population of the United States, that would mean the sterilization of over 2.6 million “defectives.”

Either unaware of what actually went on in the German eugenic programs or disingenuous about the connection to their own ideas, Dickinson and Gamble asserted that “German eugenic sterilization, started in 1934, was compulsory, but the law provided very specific indications. Elaborate histories and examinations preceded recommendations to 203 hereditary courts, each had 3 judges, a district judge, a public health official and a physician specialist, and expert witnesses

were called. There were 26 courts of appeal." The happy result: over a three-year period, 225,000 were recommended for forced sterilization, the records showing that in 87,000 operations in the first fifteen months, "nearly half [were] for feeblemindedness."[13] Apparently they approved of the results; it is difficult to believe that they were ignorant of the means by which they were achieved.

Both Dickinson and Gamble seemed to think that such careful layers of bureaucracy had eliminated any unjust sterilizations, even though precisely the same kind of bureaucratic "safeguards" were in place for the Nazis' eugenic executions. The same bureaucracy dealt with both aspects of eugenics precisely because eugenic sterilization and eugenic extermination were part of a seamless eugenic garment for the Nazis. In complete self-delusion about these connections, Dickinson and Gamble end with the rather breathtaking statement that "the very secret executions by gassing late in the war for some of the worst mental defects such as marked idiocy can hardly be called sterilization; these were stopped by public protest."[14]

But again, just as Clarence Gamble was no Sangerian sexual revolutionary, neither was he a Haeckelian advocate of openly brutal eugenics. He might best be described as a man of good intentions who did not realize that these good intentions paved the way to the sexual libertinism of Sanger and the brutality of Haeckel. He had a passion for charity and chose birth control as the cause into which he would pour his considerable energies and wealth, not seeing with the clarity of Sanger and Haeckel where his charity must inevitably lead.

To turn to Gamble's career as a champion of birth control, we find that he always did exactly what he thought best. Since he had the money to do whatever he wanted, he was unhampered by the organizational strings of bureaucracy and by the need to beg for financial support.

His mode of operating—whether in the United States or in any of a number of foreign countries—was to send a "field worker" into a particular area deemed promising by Gamble. This field worker was paid directly by Gamble and accountable only to him. The chosen missionary of birth control, always an energetic woman, would set up a birth control clinic and engage in door-to-door selling of the importance of birth control. Gamble would provide her salary and the birth control devices he wanted to test for effectiveness. It was the field worker's responsibility to interest the "natives" in whatever form of birth control Gamble wished to test and to provide extensive data on effectiveness rates. These Gamble would then publish.

Beginning during the Great Depression, Gamble followed the same modus operandi in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, Japan, India, Africa, and Italy, among other places. His goal was always to

provide seed money, generate interest, and then demand that the locals fund and operate their own clinics.

One difficulty with which Gamble had continually to deal was that it often seemed to the nonwhite "natives" that the "white man" was actually more interested in reducing the population of nonwhites than in dispensing any true charity. In more than one place, Gamble and other birth control advocates were treated with great suspicion, even hostility, especially wherever the natives had had a long, historical encounter with white imperialism or slavery. Gamble's frank espousal of eugenics, especially his call to limit the breeding of the "unfit," could do little to assure them of the purity of his motives.

As an example of such difficulties, we have the now-famous letter from Gamble to Margaret Sanger, written in November 1939, which he entitled "Suggestions for Negro Project." In order to get around suspicions that he was pushing birth control on the black population as another form of white supremacy, Gamble suggested to Sanger that they should put black leaders in positions so that it would appear that they were in charge: hire a black minister to preach the gospel of birth control in the mode of a religious revival, and hire a black physician and nurse to administer the birth control and do follow-up work. Sanger, in a letter written in December of the same year, agreed: "We do not want the word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population and the minister is the man who can straighten that idea out if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members."[15] Of course, outright extermination was not their goal; rather, they desired the significant reduction of the future "Negro population."

Both out of compassion and from his eugenic convictions, Gamble was especially interested in developing an effective means of birth control for the poor and ignorant. His favorite candidate for birth control for the first half of the twentieth century was a sponge soaked in salt solution and inserted into the vagina before intercourse. When the IUD and the pill first came on the scene just after the midcentury point, Gamble seized upon them and began disseminating them far and wide, always insisting that field workers keep careful records of use and pregnancy rates.

Interestingly enough, Gamble's direct approach brought him into continual conflict with the other major birth control advocate, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). While Gamble seems to have gotten along well with Sanger herself, maintaining a continual correspondence with her over many years, the professional bureaucrats staffing the IPPF resented Gamble's complete disregard for organizational structures, pecking orders, and concerted efforts. Given the Gamble fortune and Gamble's own disposition, he was quite used to

doing exactly what he thought best and exactly when he thought it best to do it. He never changed.

The conflict with IPPF became so acute that in 1957 Gamble started the Pathfinder Fund, his own international organization for the promotion of birth control. In contrast to the entanglements of dealing with the IPPF, the Pathfinder Fund was simply an international organization that carried out Gamble's will using Gamble's money. Given that Gamble did not have to beg anyone for money or take account of financial strings attached by governments, his international work in establishing birth control was unhampered in a way that IPPF could only envy.

One of Gamble's great "victories" was the introduction of birth control in Italy via the Pathfinder Fund. This "victory" well represents an internal contradiction at the foundation of his efforts. Again, Gamble himself, especially as compared to someone like Sanger, was in many respects the very model of respectable, mainstream Protestant American sexual morality. As with many of the well-intentioned Protestants of the first half of the twentieth century, Gamble believed that birth control was something that pertained only to married life, not something that supported Sangerian sexual freedom outside of marriage. But as Pope Paul VI, the author of Humanae vitae, warned, the two could not be separated: the presence of ever more effective birth control in society meant the release of sexuality from all restrictions.

Of course, Gamble realized that the most powerful opposition to the acceptance of birth control was the Catholic Church. Thus, he believed it would be the sweetest of victories to introduce birth control into Italy, at the very doorstep of the Vatican in the surrounding city of Rome. As he wrote in one of his letters describing his battle to legalize birth control in Italy, "It is quite thrilling to have the [birth control] Center opened in the shadow of the Vatican."[16]

In order to bring about this coup, Gamble enlisted the efforts of Luigi and Maria DeMarchi. The DeMarchis, especially Luigi, were the Sangers of the Italian birth control movement; that is, they saw birth control as a way to allow for complete sexual freedom, rather than (as with Gamble) a way for married couples to limit family size. To this aspect of the DeMarchis Gamble was willing to turn a blind eye, as long as they achieved the desired goal of launching and completing a campaign to overturn Italy's anticontraception laws. Gamble, through the efforts of the DeMarchis, won, and in 1971 Italy's anticontraception laws were overturned in court.

In allying himself to proponents of birth control such as Sanger and the DeMarchis, it seems that Gamble believed sexual libertines to be useful but

ultimately unimportant helpers in spreading birth control for “legitimate” use. In this, Gamble well represents the good intentions of the mainstream Protestant churches, which, one after another, shed the long-standing Christian rejection of birth control and allied themselves with such organizations as Planned Parenthood. Whatever the original intentions, the severing of the unitive and procreative aspects of intercourse through birth control led within a very short time to a culture of sexual libertinism as envisioned by the Sangers and DeMarchis of the birth control movement. Furthermore, embracing the pleasurable aspects of sexuality and rejecting the procreative aspects necessarily ushered in a culture that embraces abortion. That is the culture of Planned Parenthood.

Gamble died in 1966. Today his legacy lives on in the Pathfinder Fund, which is a kind of sister organization to the IPPF in providing not only contraception but also abortions all over the world, spreading the Culture of Death under the veil of compassion.

—B.D.W.

[1] Quoted in Doone Williams and Greer Williams, Every Child a Wanted Child: Clarence James Gamble and His Work in the Birth Control Movement (Boston: Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, 1978), p. 19.

[2] Quoted in ibid., p. 22.

[3] Ibid., pp. 174-81.

[4] Ibid., p. 178.

[5] Robert Latou Dickinson, M.D., and Clarence James Gamble, M.D., Human Sterilization: Techniques of Permanent Conception Control (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1950), p. 3.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 4.

[9] Ibid., p. 29.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 31.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Quoted in Robert Marshall and Charles Donovan, Blessed Are the Barren: The Social Policy of Planned Parenthood (San Francisco: Ignatius Press,

1991), pp. 17-18.

[16] Quoted in Williams and Williams, Every Child a Wanted Child, p. 381.

Alan Guttmacher

Many have heard of the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the influential research arm of Planned Parenthood, but know little about the man for whom it was named. Alan Guttmacher was born May 19, 1898, in Baltimore, Maryland, the brother of an identical twin named Manfred with whom he was close all of his life. Alan's father, Adolf Guttmacher, was a leading Reform rabbi, and his mother, Laura, was a well-known social worker.

Commenting on his own upbringing and how it shaped his later thinking, Guttmacher remarked, "Both parents ... had great compassion for their fellow men. To them godliness was mainly goodness." It was upon "this solid base of social consciousness, untrammeled by rigid religious dogmas," that Guttmacher would build his life's work.[1] While his parents may have held, as least lightly, to the religious foundation of their goodness, their son Alan would renounce his faith at sixteen after his father died suddenly.[2] In Guttmacher's words, his father's death "divest[ed] me forever of a belief in God and organized religion. Suddenly, I realized I had been worshipping an anthropomorphic deity, my father, and with his death my God died too."[3] It was, in great part, Guttmacher's rejection of God that allowed him to embrace abortion.[4]

Unlike Margaret Sanger, Guttmacher was a well-educated doctor. He entered Johns Hopkins University with his twin brother in 1915, and both stayed on to graduate from Johns Hopkins Medical School in 1923. He set up practice in Baltimore, married Leonore Gidding (with whom he would have three daughters), and became an instructor in obstetrics at Johns Hopkins in 1927. This was just the beginning of a long career teaching obstetrics and gynecology, a field that Guttmacher helped to transform through his passion to make contraception and abortion essential aspects of obstetric and gynecological training and practice.

Guttmacher's advocacy of contraception and abortion had its roots not only in the "social consciousness, untrammeled by rigid religious dogmas" mentioned above, but also in his particular evolutionary view of human sexuality, a view different from but complementary to Sanger's.

To begin with the social consciousness, for Guttmacher, the question was never the morality or immorality of contraception and abortion, but, as with most liberal social reformers, who had the access. In his words,

I became interested in the birth control movement early in my medical career. It was not birth control that primarily interested me, however, but the

undemocratic distribution of such vital medical knowledge. When I first associated myself with the movement the familiar saying, “The rich get richer and the poor get children,” was even truer than it is today.. . .

As medical practice made me increasingly aware of the abortion situation I learned that abortion, above all else in American medicine, reeked of class privilege. Money could, and still can, buy a safe abortion, but poverty purchases butchery and death.[5]

To grasp more deeply why Guttmacher was never in doubt about the morality of contraception and abortion, we must delve into his evolutionary view of sexuality as outlined in his first book, Life in the Making, published in 1933.

Guttmacher believed that to understand human sexuality, we must see it as fitting into a “pattern of sexual behavior . . . found only in man and the other primates.”[6] That is, his understanding of sexuality is best understood in terms of his rejection of revealed religion and his consequent embrace of evolutionary theory. Relying on the authority of one Gerret Miller (who wrote The Primate Basis of Human Sexual Behavior), Guttmacher thought that there were “four elements of human sexual behaviour which have greatly influenced our social and economic structure.”[7]

The “first and most fundamental” element was that, unlike other animals, which go through cycles of heat that govern their sexuality, in the primate group “neither the male nor the female has a restricted mating period and both sexes are willing to copulate throughout the year.”[8] Guttmacher coined the term “polydesirous” to describe this continual desire to mate among the primates.[9]

The “second element is the human exaggeration of a tendency seen in many animals, ‘the formation of continuing associations between sexual partners’“. While monkeys and apes show some tendency in this direction, “in them it is rarely developed to such an extent as it is in man.” This “inborn tendency” to form “continuing associations between sexual partners,” a tendency so developed in man, is the evolutionary foundation of “the institution of marriage.”[10]

Before going to the third and fourth elements, it is useful to view Guttmacher’s reasoning about the connection between elements one and two so that we have a clear grasp of his evolutionary account of marriage. “It is difficult to understand why,” mused Guttmacher, “evolution has apparently progressed away from the primitive strictly seasonal breeding period [of other animals]... to this completely unrestricted human mating.” Such a “pattern of sexual behaviour is the least efficient” in regard to passing on one’s genes, since “the copulatory act,” which can occur any time, is not tied directly and obviously to a time of

fertile, sexual heat. “Is it possible,” asked Guttmacher, “that evolution has progressed in this direction to gain protection for the pregnant female?”

Guttmacher believed this was the key to understanding the evolutionary origin of marriage. In animals that pair only during a yearly mating season, “the males leave . .. when themating period is over . . . [and] the unprotected females are prey to other animals during the awkward part of their pregnancy and while they suckle their young.” In animals where the females have “recurrent mating cycles” during the year, the females “usually lose their males as soon as their own œstrous period is over, for the male goes off to pursue other females who may be in heat.”

But in contrast to such animals, for primates, sexuality is not limited by seasons or cycles, such that the males enjoy “unrestricted copulation.” As a result, the “constant protection of the male is better assured” because “he is guaranteed sexual satisfaction at all times by his own females, no matter what their reproductive state [of fertility] may be.” Such unrestricted sexual satisfaction makes the males “far less likely to stray.” Marital fidelity, then, has its roots in a kind of evolutionary trade-off. The primate male is willing to give up his wanderlust for the guarantee of “unrestricted copulation,” which the female, in turn, is willing to countenance in order to gain the protection of the male during pregnancy and early child care.

But the evolutionary tendency toward monogamy is offset by the third element determining human sexuality, a tendency “directly opposed to this permanent mating tendency.” This tendency, likewise shared with the other primates, is “the lagging sex interest which one [primate] partner shows toward the other after an association has gone on for some time; and the revivification of sex interest when he is exposed to a new partner.”[11] Again relying on Miller, who was in turn relying on the studies of another, Guttmacher quotes the following:

“The monkey when semi-fatigued sexually must have intense stimulation before he can successfully copulate with his accustomed mate; and yet the same monkey ... if allowed to have another mate, may rush into a sexual embrace with great excitement and without previous stimulation.. . . Similar behavior also occurs in man.”[12]

For Guttmacher, such “flagging sex interest” in the male “is limited to the primates alone,” so that we may conclude that “all the primates, including man, appear today fundamentally promiscuous.” If we should doubt that evolution has dealt us both a tendency to marriage and a tendency to promiscuity, “we need but

note sexual behaviour in our own society, especially among those members whose conduct is unmodified by ties of marriage." While the human male is naturally promiscuous, his "sexual conduct has been so modified by customs and laws that the tendency toward monogamy may overcome his stronger tendency toward promiscuity through the reinforcement of social factors."[13]3 Yet, since evolution hands us both tendencies, both are equally part of our nature. We can no more be praised for our monogamous desires than we can be blamed for our promiscuous tendencies.

The fourth and final element is peculiar to human beings alone. In all other animals, including all other primates, successful copulation depends upon consent by the female. The human male alone is both capable and quite willing to use his superior strength to rape the human female.[14]

Looking back over these four elements, it becomes clear, argues Guttmacher, that "many of the institutions of modern civilization are rooted in these four normal [emphasis added] and in some instances contradictory, elements of human sexual behaviour" such as monogamy, the legal punishment for rape, and prostitution.[15] Again, promiscuity and rape are just as natural for human beings as our lack of a breeding season and our tendency toward monogamy. In perfect agreement with Darwin, what evolution gives us must be natural, since it is the result of natural selection; what human beings happen to do with these natural tendencies constitutes their particular moral responses.

We are not surprised, then, to find that Guttmacher considered human laws to be purely relative responses to these evolutionary givens. As influenced by his "countless weekend walks and summer holidays with Baltimore's most liberal judge, Joseph N. Ulman," Guttmacher believed that all laws, whether ancient or modern, were remarkably variable "from culture to culture," a sure indication of "their man-made origin." Having long since renounced his faith in a superhuman Lawgiver, Guttmacher came to the conclusion that human laws in regard to marriage and sexuality that professed to be rooted in divine law were merely human and hence ripe for change if they ceased to serve their original purpose or unnecessarily frustrated one or more of our evolutionary tendencies. It is not difficult to see why he thought that the legal denial of contraception and abortion was merely of "man-made origin" and should be repealed to allow for "unrestricted copulation" without fear of pregnancy. Such would merely be taking evolution into our own hands.

While Guttmacher's evolutionary account of human sexuality and social institutions has since become mainstream, his complete materialistic reduction of human nature went much farther and foreshadows the future of the Culture of Death.

Guttmacher wanted to break down the taboos in regard to the scientific manipulation of human sexuality, considering it a mere prejudice to "hesitate to tamper with the sex life of man."[16] Not only was he one of the earliest advocates and practitioners of artificial insemination, but he believed that this advance in science would ultimately reduce the distinction of male and female to mere chemical formulae. "In the novels of the future," mused Guttmacher, "we shall read a chemical formula instead of a word picture for the heroine, and the masculine perfection of the hero will be expressed in atoms of Carbon, Hydrogen, and Oxygen."[17] Eventually, science will allow us to bypass the need for biological maleness and femaleness:

I am quite confident that after thousands of years have passed and man knows a great deal more than he knows today, creation by means of the sexual act, or by any sort of fusion of egg and sperm, will be considered antiquated. Conception will be an impersonal process involving ions and atoms, and flasks and fluids.[18]

This goal, seemingly right out of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, helps us to understand what Guttmacher was trying to achieve in his own lifetime. For all other animals, sexuality and procreation were inextricably bound, and offspring came when and in what quantity nature bid. Humanity alone can break this bond and subject nature completely to its will—a task that it has, thus far, failed to complete.

To distinguish himself from the lower animals man has taken the title homo sapiens, man, the knowing. Yet for all his vaunted wisdom he is still unable to exercise a precise control over the number of his offspring. Despite modern advances many a sterile woman still remains childless and many a fertile woman continues to bear children every year though she does not wish them.[19]

To gain such "precise control" became Guttmacher's lifelong goal, so that man could take what evolution had given him sexually and reconstruct or redirect it as he saw fit.

As for the contribution of contraception to his vision, Guttmacher's affirmation of contraception was a curious mixture of evolutionary theory, compassion, eugenics, and population worry. Ironically, as compared to either Margaret Sanger or Alfred Kinsey, Guttmacher was "conservative" in his sexual views. He thought that contraception would allow our ingrained polydesirous primate sexual tendencies to find the least harmful release and assumed that the

most beneficial area for sexuality's expression was within monogamous marriage. Indeed, when he would lecture on sexual matters to college audiences he (in his words) "inveighed against premarital promiscuity."

Guttmacher would often make statements that had the aura of strong moral rectitude, making it seem as if he was the voice of cool and conservative reason, pulling against the tide of sexual revolutionaries: "Before marriage no one owes sex to anyone else. . .. sexual promiscuity is just as wrong before marriage as it is within marriage. And in one sense, actually more evil, since it could establish a pattern of promiscuity for marriage."[20] These seemingly conservative words ere most misleading, however. As we have seen, Gutt-macher actually believed that promiscuity was by no means unnatural, so that, in his words, "there is nothing inherently evil in premarital intercourse."[21] As is evident in Guttmacher's Understanding Sex: A Young Person's Guide (1970), Guttma-cher cultivated the veneer of conservatism right up to the end of his life, and it was this veneer that made Guttmacher a much more effective purveyor of the message of the Culture of Death in regard to sexuality. In the words of Guttmacher's admirers, doctors George Langmyhr and Harold Lief,

Dr. Guttmacher's essential conservatism and his preaching of sexual responsibility put him in great demand on college campuses. It is likely that many more people were influenced by his ideas than [were influenced] by people they may have regarded as being "too radical." Knowing his conservative value position with regard to premarital intercourse, many people were more easily persuaded with regard to his views about abortion and sterilization.[22]

This insight comprises a truth too often overlooked. In the sexual revolution, more harm was done by those who seemed less revolutionary, for they more easily persuaded those teetering on the edge between the Culture of Death and the Culture of Life that moral principles alien to Christianity could be used in the service of Christianity. In this very quote, however, we see how soon a hidden spark of evil grows into a conflagration, for Guttmacher's agenda included abortion from the very beginning.

After witnessing the death of a woman from a self-induced abortion in 1927, Guttmacher decided that "safe," legal abortions were the only compassionate alternative to illegal abortions. By the early 1950s, two decades prior to Roe v. Wade, Guttmacher was at the very head of the drive to legalize abortion. When in 1952 Guttmacher was recruited from Johns Hopkins by New York's Mount Sinai Hospital to become Mount Sinai's first director of its newly combined obstetrics and gynecology department, he threw himself immediately

into the development of programs on abortion, sterilization, and contraception. Within three years of arriving, he was “already . . . regarded as a pioneer in the field of providing abortion services.”[23] Guttmacher’s public espousal of abortion was so forceful, and the abortions he performed were so numerous, that “the hospital finally asked Guttmacher to cease performing so many abortions, to avoid gaining a reputation as an abortion mill.”[24]

But how, twenty years prior to Roe v. Wade,could Guttmacher so quickly turn Mount Sinai into an abortion mill? Very simply, by his expansive application of the existing law of the time, which allowed for abortion when the mother’s life was directly in peril. Guttmacher thereby became one of the earliest abortion advocates to broaden the definition of “direct threat to the mother’s life” to a more general and indefinite threat to her “health,” including especially her psychological health. By such means, he was able, finally, to break the law by continually bending it.

Bending the existing laws in order to break them was no problem for Guttmacher. As he declared in his Babies by Choice or by Chance (1959), there are a variety of attitudes toward abortion in a variety of cultures around the world, ranging from complete legalization to strict prohibition. But each

> is based purely on local ethics and mores. ... Each has different rules and standards about induction of abortion, but in a broad philosophical sense it can scarcely be claimed that the rules and regulations of one are more or less moral than the rules of the other... . Moral conduct is largely the product of environment and habit, and in the matter of environment the all-powerful influence of whatever religion is dominant must be taken as the prime factor.[25]

Again, the very relativity of law meant, for Guttmacher, that laws were mutable as well: “Since laws regulating man’s conduct are made by man, they can be changed by man, unlike the laws of the universe.”[26] When Guttmacher was a medical student, abortions were divided by law into two groups: therapeutic abortions and illegal abortions. Therapeutic abortions were defined in terms of direct threats to the mother’s life, and all other abortions were illegal. Of course, this law was ultimately rooted in the Christian prohibition of abortion, and so Americans, at the time, thought the law immutable—a situation that chafed Guttmacher. “Americans are particularly prone to believe that the abortion law, like the law of gravity, is unchangeable.” But that “archaic” belief put Americans behind the times on the worldwide scene, for “in the last several years the right to have an abortion performed has been made legally [sic] simply for a large segment of the world’s human mass.”[27] To put America on the

abortion track with the rest of the world, Guttmacher used the tactic of interpreting the definition of “therapeutic” so broadly that almost anything could be considered a “therapeutic” reason for allowing abortion.

Guttmacher was well aware that, with the advance of medicine, there were far fewer cases where the life of a mother was directly threatened. In place of such direct threats, according to Guttmacher, many doctors at the midpoint of the twentieth century had substituted “psychiatric indications” as a sufficient threat, not to the life, but to the well-being, of a pregnant woman.[28] Going even further, and entirely beyond the existing laws, doctors like Guttmacher added eugenic considerations under the ever-expanding category of therapeutic abortions, even though the health status of the fetus did not directly endanger the life of the woman. As Guttmacher admitted, “To perform abortions for eugenic reasons requires a very liberal interpretation of the existing laws, because termination of pregnancy on such grounds does not preserve the life of the mother in a literal sense. What we have done in our thinking [at Mount Sinai Hospital] is to modify the New York State law, .. . making the phrase ‘preserve life’ include emotional as well as physical life.”[29]

While he was not the only doctor holding such views, Guttmacher bent the law far more boldly than his medical colleagues. For Guttmacher, even the possibility of malformation of the baby was enough for him to perform an abortion. In regard to rubella, for example, even while Guttmacher admitted that a baby whose mother had contracted rubella had an 85 percent chance of complete normality, such are “good odds for a horse race but very bad odds when a new life is involved. Therefore I continue to approve of therapeutic abortion on such grounds, even though most American doctors disagree.”[30] That statement was uttered in 1959. It would not take long for other doctors’ minds to conform to Guttmacher’s.

Even in 1959, Guttmacher was strongly inclined to stretch the reasons for abortion even wider to include “social and economic factors.” Admitting that, while both Americans in 1959 and even the liberal Mount Sinai Hospital denied that abortions should be allowed in respect to such factors, “I must say that I inwardly rebel against it.” Even though the official position at Mount Sinai was “to let the marital status and home conditions play no role in decisions,” such considerations would inevitably “play a subconscious role in one’s thinking” when Guttmacher was evaluating the cases of applications for abortion.

Thus, it is clear that, over a decade prior to Roe v. Wade, Guttmacher was quite prepared to extend the right to abortion indefinitely and would need only a little “push” to bring him to advocate the legalization of abortion on demand for any reason, doing away with the decades-old distinction between therapeutic

(legal) abortion and illegal abortion. That push came, according to Guttmacher, when he realized that expanding legal abortion through appeals to psychiatric reasons was quickly resulting in psychiatrists being the professional arbiters of almost all abortions. That, he thought, would only make the rich more able than the poor to procure an abortion. “I reluctantly concluded [in 1969] that the only way truly to democratize legal abortion and to reduce illegal abortion markedly is to establish abortion on request, removing abortion from the penal code.”[31] In short, Guttmacher became an advocate of abortion on demand, no questions asked.

In 1962 Guttmacher took over the helm of Planned Parenthood, a position he held until his death in 1974. As president, he was a tireless and astute promoter of the right to abortion. It was not until 1969 that Planned Parenthood endorsed abortion openly, but once it “came clean,” Guttmacher drove the organization full speed to achieve his goal.[32]Under his direction, Planned Parenthood became the largest abortion provider in the world, seeking to make abortion services available to anyone for any reason. Of course, this included his espousal of eugenic abortion.

Guttmacher himself was especially proud of his role in pushing the country toward Roe v. Wade. This he did, in no small way, as a member of New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller’s Abortion Law Reform Panel in 1968. Rockefeller’s goal was prearranged, as Guttmacher himself makes clear. “When the Governor convened the Commission he said, ‘I am not asking whether New York’s abortion law should be changed, I am asking how it should be changed.’ “ New York implemented this liberalization of abortion in 1970—the most liberal in all the nation at that time—and it became a model for abortion advocates all over the nation. When the Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand in 1973 in Roe v. Wade, Guttmacher cited the “success” of the New York law (along with that of California) as the reason for the decision.[33] He died in 1974, immensely satisified that his efforts had resulted in the landmark Roe v. Wade case.

And so Alan Guttmacher was able to take the general blueprints of the previous architects of the Culture of Death and help to build the great and hideously effective macabre worldwide empire of Planned Parenthood, thereby bringing himself the “honor” of democratizing the killing of millions and millions of children worldwide, both rich and poor.

—B.D.W.

[1] Alan F. Guttmacher, Babies by Choice or by Chance (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 11.

[2] “Guttmacher, Alan,” American Council of Learned Societies, American National Biography (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9:749.

[3] 3 Quoted from the manuscript of Guttmacher’s unfinished autobiography in Malcolm Potts, “Natural Law and Planned Parenthood,” Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine 42 (1975): 326-33, 327.

[4] Potts, “Natural Law and Planned Parenthood,” pp. 326-33, 327.

[5] Guttmacher, Babies by Choice or by Chance, p. 14.

[6] Alan F. Guttmacher, Life in the Making (New York: Garden City Publishing. 1933). p. 93.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Alan F. Guttmacher, Understanding Sex:AYoung Person’s Guide (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 5-6.

[10] Guttmacher, Life in the Making, p. 99.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

[13] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[14] Ibid., pp. 101-2.

[15] Ibid., pp. 102-3.

[16] Ibid., p. 134.

[17] Ibid., p. 152.

[18] Ibid., p. 285.

[19] Ibid., p. 287.

[20] From Alan F. Guttmacher, President’s Letter, Planned Parenthood Federation publication, New York, no. 3, Aug. 1967, as quoted in George J. Langmyhr and Harold I. Lief, “Alan F. Guttmacher, M.D.: His Role in Teaching Human Sexuality,” Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine42 (1975): 445-51, 448.

[21] Quoted in Langmyhr and Lief, “Guttmacher,” p. 448.

[22] Ibid., p. 449.

[23] Michael Burnhill, “Humane Abortion Services: A Revolution in Human Rights and the Delivery of a Medical Service,” Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine 42 (1975): 431-38, at 431.

[24] “Guttmacher, Alan,” American National Biography, p. 749.

[25] Guttmacher, Babies by Choice or by Chance, p. 165.

[26] Ibid., p. 166.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., p. 185.

[29] Ibid., p. 187.

[30] Ibid., p. 188.

[31] Alan Guttmacher, “Abortion: Odyssey of an Attitude,” Family Planning Perspectives 4, no. 4 (Oct. 1972): 5-7.

[32] See the excellent treatment in Robert Marshall and Charles Donovan, Blessed Are the Barren: The Social Policy of Planned Parenthood (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp. 239-66.

[33] Guttmacher, President’s Letter, no. 6, Feb. 15, 1973. p. 1.

PART SEVEN

THE DEATH PEDDLERS

Derek Humphry

Frances had much to live for. A mother of two sons, she was a talented middle-aged woman who was active in local community clubs and was always thinking about how she could help the people she loved. It was natural, then, for her friends to be perplexed as well as appalled when she enthusiastically spoke of how "empowering" and "ennobling" it would be for her to take her own life. They wondered where she acquired the euphemisms for self-destruction that sprinkled her vocabulary, such as "deliverance" and "final passage." They did all they could to try to convince her that her life was very much worth living.

She invited her friends to her "going-away" party, set for her upcoming birthday. No one came. Her invitees loved her too much to be complicit in such a macabre adventure. Their urgings and protestations, however, were in vain. On November 1, 1992, she checked into a hotel, got into bed, took some sleeping pills, pulled a plastic bag over her head, and expired.

Her good friend Wesley J. Smith, uncertain about what could have led her to take her own life, did some investigating. He was surprised and horrified at what he found. While examining what Frances had been reading, he came across the highlighted passages that fed her vocabulary and formed her peculiar ideas about suicide. They were all there in the Hemlock Society literature she had been studying. This literature led quickly to the chief architect of the Hemlock Society, Derek Humphry, and to his best-selling how-to-kill-yourself manual, Final Exit. "The more I thought about the Hemlock Society propaganda and its direct connection with Frances's death, the angrier I grew,"[1] he wrote. But Smith did much more than get angry. He used Frances' tragic demise as an inspiration and incentive to write a book exposing the deceitfulness and manipulative tactics inherent not only in the Hemlock Society, but in the euthanasia movement in general. The title of his well-researched study is, appropriately, Forced Exit. He became a member of the International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force. Coincidentally, the executive director of this organization was moved to write her inquiry into the world of euthanasia, Deadly Compassion, by the suicide of her close friend, Ann Humphry, Derek Humphry's second wife. Many other tragic suicides have been traced back to this author and celebrity, whom one reviewer dubs "The Lord High Executioner, Derek Humphry, prophet of Hemlock."[2]

Derek Humphry, the main founder of the Hemlock Society, was born in Bath, Somerset, southwest of London, England, on April 29, 1930. His

childhood was not a happy one. At an early age, after his parents divorced, his mother left him to marry an Australian. He did not see her again until he was twenty-three. But their reacquaintance was short lived. She announced, suddenly, “I am going back to Australia. You come and visit me.” But she left no forwarding address. He never saw her again, though he placed ads in magazines hoping to track her down and even journeyed to Australia in a futile attempt to find her.

As a young boy, and living with his aunt, he was forced to write letters to his father, who was “away at work somewhere.” He discovered years later that his letters found their way to a prison, where his father was serving time for fraud. After Derek left school at fifteen, he entered the profession of journalism, starting as a messenger boy and quickly moving up the ladder.[3]

He married Jean Crane and fathered two sons by her. While in her early forties, Jean contracted incurable breast and bone cancer. The manner in which she died in 1975 remains intensely controversial. In his memorial to her, Jean’s Way,Humphry meticulously describes her suicide and his role in assisting her. He recounts how he helped her in dying by providing her with drugs he obtained from a sympathetic doctor. He mixed her coffee with secobarbital and codeine, handed the concoction to her, and sat by her side as he watched her drink it. Two pillows were nearby. He intended to smother her if the drugs did not kill her: “I had decided that with the first stirring of life I would smother her with them.” He informs his readers, however, that he did not need the pillows, since the drugs took effect in less than an hour after she ingested them.[4]

(Humphry’s second wife, Ann Wickett, who, ironically, also contracted breast cancer and ultimately took her own life, left a suicide note that contradicts Derek’s allegedly passive role in Jean’s death. According to the note, Ann accuses her former husband of suffocating Jean. She also indicts him as an accomplice in her own demise. “What you did,” she wrote to Derek, “desertion and abandonment and subsequent harassment of a dying woman—is so unspeakable there are no words to describe it.” Humphry, as expected, vehemently denied these accusations. He does, however, admit to assisting in the double suicide of Ann’s parents and of determining the day on which his wife Jean would die.)

A few months after Jean’s death, Humphry met Ann Wickett, a Bostonian, who was doing graduate research in Birmingham. She had put an ad in the personal column of the New Statesman describing herself as “attractive, blonde, piquant, 33, about-to-be divorced.” Humphry, then forty-five, answered the ad. Soon after meeting, they decided to marry, but agreed to delay the date, since, as Ann said, “It would have looked bad for us to marry too soon after Jean’s

death."[5] Nonetheless, they married within a year of the time that Derek became a widower.

The newlyweds, "during a protracted honeymoon,"[6] collaborated to write the above-mentioned Jean's Way, a book that chronicled his relationship with his former wife and her alleged suicide. It was published in 1978. That same year, the couple emigrated to the United States, where Derek took a position at the Los Angeles Times. Two years later, together with Gerald Larue, they founded the Hemlock Society, an organization dedicated to promoting euthanasia. Ann chose the name for the fledgling group in honor of Socrates. It was, however, a blatant act of misappropriation to try to co-opt the higher moral ground that the Gadfly of Athens represents. Furthermore, Socrates' death was involuntary.

Derek Humphry produced a second book, in 1981, entitled Let Me Die Before I Wake, subtitled, "Hemlock's Book of Self-Deliverance for the Dying." In March of 1991 he wrote his magnum opus, Final Exit:The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying. This latter work was slow in winning acceptance. Initially, editors and journalists at magazines, newspapers, and TV stations ignored it despite a barrage of letters sent to them extolling the book's virtues. Humphry himself admitted that the three hundred review copies dispatched resulted in not a single review. But the book's chief publicist was undaunted. Finally, the book received some notable attention. The Wall Street Journal ran a feature provocatively titled "Suicide Manual for Terminally Ill Stirs Heated Debate." It was like setting a match to tinder. There is no substitute for controversy in getting the public's attention and swelling sales. The remainder of the 41,000 copies of the first edition (the vast majority of them) sold out in just a few days. Final Exit became the number-one best-selling nonfiction book for March 1991. By August 18, it gained the number-one spot on the New York Book Review's "Advice and How-To List." By September, it was the best-selling book of all types in the United States. When spring arrived in 1992, Final Exit had been translated into a dozen foreign languages.[7] Continued hype meant continued sales. Its author was in demand. Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, and the Today Show were eager to interview him.[8]

Anna Quindlen, in her New York Times review, suggested that purchasers of Final Exit may be men and women who have visited nursing homes and observed "people who are husks, tied upright in wheelchairs, staring at the ceiling from hospital beds, saved from death by any means possible, saved for something that is as much like life as a stone is like an egg, a twig like a finger."[9] She did not seem so horrified about what was in the book, but emphasized how current medical technology has advanced to the point that it has

left some people more fearful of dying than of death itself. Quindlen remarked that she read the book out of curiosity but planned to keep it for possible future use.

Another writer regarded Final Exit as a way “to build bridges between terminally ill patients and health care professionals.” His assumption is that the relationship between such patients and their caregivers would greatly improve if the former knew that the latter were authorized to kill them. Such an assumption, it hardly needs to be said, is actually pernicious to the caregiver-patient relationship.[10]

Leon Kass had a different assessment of the book. In a word, he found it “evil.”[11] It is a curious evil, however, one that operates with a smile and underscores the significance of looking at death “rationally.” Yet can we really look at death in such a manner? Death in itself is a blank, not an object of apprehension or an entity about which we can be rational. Through faith, we may see death as a transition to a higher life. But faith sees beyond reason. Reason itself is humbled and rendered helpless in the face of death. Can we be better off dead? Can one derive a benefit under circumstances in which he no longer exists to qualify as a beneficiary? Since we cannot reason adequately about death without the help of faith, suicide is not for the rationally disposed; it is for the desperate and the vulnerable. Life is what we know. Death is not something we know. Yet we know this: darkness is not attractive; we were made for light. That is why William Faulkner once remarked that between grief and death, he would choose grief.

Despite mere reason’s incomprehension of death and what lies beyond it, Final Exit is a book that reifies death and treats it as if it were something positive. Like Jack Kevorkian, Humphry sees “self-deliverance” as a positive act. Given this metaphysical presumption, he can then talk blandly and matter-of-factly about death. Since he regards it as a good, it should no longer be an object of fear. Consider the casualness with which he offers the following bit of advice:

> If you are unfortunately obliged to end your life in a hospital or motel, it is gracious to leave a note apologizing for the shock and inconvenience to the staff. I have heard of an individual leaving a generous tip to a motel staff.[12]

He classifies a chambermaid’s unexpected encounter with a dead body in her room as being an “inconvenience.” Spilled coffee and scattered newspapers would create an “inconvenience.” Stumbling upon a corpse would likely be traumatic. How generous should a tip be to reduce a trauma to a mere

inconvenience? (And is a dying person even eligible for generosity when he gives away money he cannot possibly spend?) This is not a matter that reason can or should even try to calculate.

For these and other reasons, in reading through Final Exit, one begins to get the sense that Humphry is using the term “rational” as a synonym for “cold-blooded.” Yet human beings are not, by and large, cold-blooded and unfeeling. They have emotions that usually recoil in horror at the sudden discovery of a “self-delivered” body. Neither a tip nor a well-written note can adequately compensate for the shock of finding one’s guest no longer among the living. “Graciousness,” need we suggest, is not compatible with arranging in a considerate way the manner in which your dead body is to be found by a motel employee.

With the same crassness, disguised as charity, Humphry blithely inserts himself among those who might achieve their own final exit: “Should you use a clear plastic bag or an opaque one? That’s a matter of taste. Loving the world as I do, I’ll opt for a clear one if I have to.”[13] Death has lost its terror. Killing oneself or assisting another to die is a choice, akin to choosing a vacation spot or selecting a dessert. That reason could be so rational as to overpower emotions and displace normal human sensibilities is not only unreasonable, it is inhuman. Kass rightly cautions Humphry’s readers not to be “blinded by blandness,” but to see that “this self-appointed messiah is indiscriminately and shamelessly teaching suicide (and worse) to countless strangers.”[14]

Humphry claims that hundreds of people have used the information he provides to kill themselves.[15] A seventy-nine-year-old Illinois woman who had severe arthritis (but was not terminally ill) killed herself by overdosing on prescription drugs. On her nightstand was a copy of Final Exit. In response to the circumstances surrounding her death, Humphry commented, “It bothers me not one whit that a terminally ill person would be found with this book on hernightstand. That’s what this book is for.”[16] The Province, a Vancouver newspaper, reported the suicides of three people in the span of a single week, all linked to Final Exit. Said British Columbia chief coroner Vince Cain, “That book, in my view, is a facilitator of suicide.”[17]

One suicide in particular received considerable national exposure through Time magazine. On the evening of September 1, 1991, Ethel Adelman and two relatives arrived at her twenty-nine-year-old son’s apartment to take him to dinner. They found him lying dead in the hallway with a plastic bag over his head. Adrian (the deceased) had been struggling with depression. Going through his belongings, police found a hoard of prescription drugs and a copy of Final Exit. “I think he [Adrian] would still be here today if it weren’t for this book,”

said his mother. Adrian's brother agreed. "The book certainly facilitated his death," he stated. "The book took away his life."[18]

Included in Adrian's suicide note was a statement lifted from page 82 of Final Exit:

> If I am discovered before I have stopped breathing, I forbid anyone, including the doctors and the paramedics, to attempt to revive me. If I am revived, I shall sue.

When confronted with the Adelmans' scathing criticism of his book, Humphry retorted, "His [Adrian's] family made a false accusation. Why did he need Final Exit? As a motivation to take his own life? He could have done it without the book. That young man chose a peaceful death as a way out." Humphry wrote a letter to the editor of Time expressing his condolences, but noted, "Suicide happens. It is part of our society."[19]

In this way, Derek Humphry absolved himself of any wrongdoing. He is not responsible in any way for Adrian's suicide because he can imagine that someone else could have been. Suicide for depression has never been part of the Hemlock credo. On page 129, well into his book, Humphry advises against suicide for persons who are merely "unhappy, cannot cope, or are confused." Does he really think, this man who extols reason, that chronically depressed individuals such as Adrian will heed his advice, especially after being presented with 128 pages providing both the propaganda and the methodology for painless deliverance from a tormented existence? Only a "fool" could believe this, says Leon Kass, and only a "knave" would pretend to believe it.[20] Humphry gives too much credit to the vulnerable and shows too little regard for their vulnerability. His "advice" is too little, too late, and too lax.

It is simply a matter of fact that the information and rhetoric that flow from the Hemlock Society and are found on the pages of Final Exit have led to the deaths of innumerable people who were not terminally ill. That Humphry could deny the incontrovertible reality of this slippery slope attests either to his naïvete or to his dishonesty. His professed belief in the innate goodness of people (though it does not seem to extend to his critics, Catholics in particular) is mere grandstanding:

> Is this the start of the slippery slope toward killing off the burdensome—our expensive elder folk, our physically and mentally handicapped, our citizens on welfare? If you believe that, it would be best to leave the country now, because you have no faith in the goodness of human nature or our ability of the American

democratic system to protect the weak.[21]

Perhaps such infidels could relocate to the Netherlands. Furthermore, does Humphry not know that the American democratic system is failing abysmally in protecting the weakest of its citizens—the unborn? More to the point, Humphry's faith in the goodness of human nature seems to rise and fall. In 1992 he predicted that after it becomes legal for the terminally ill to have suicide assistance, "Aid to the elderly in dying [will] by sheer force of public opinion [be] addressed ethically and legally"[22]

If physician-facilitated rational suicide is, as Humphry declares, "the ultimate civil liberty,"[23] then choosing death must not only be a personal good but a social good as well. From this flows the added implication that the medical profession or some other social agency has an obligation to collaborate in effecting such deaths. This romanticization of killing imbues physician-facilitated rational suicide with a built-in momentum that will carry it toward taking human lives in a variety of other circumstances. The Kevorkian killings present but one chilling example of this. Once death is taken to be a good in itself, then it becomes a morally acceptable option for anyone, not just the terminally ill. Once liberty (or freedom) is taken as an end in itself, a moral barrier is removed, thereby permitting more iniquitous forms of killing to transpire. Already we observe that what was formerly known as premeditated murder is now euphemistically called "aid in dying." Richard Lamm, whose endorsement of Final Exit appears on the book's first page, has gone on record saying, "Some individuals have a duty to die."[24]

The reality and the consequences of the slippery slope are now part of the fabric of popular culture. They have become part of everyday life. A magazine cartoon, for example, shows a library patron complaining to the librarian about being unable to find Humphry's manual for "self-deliverance" on the shelves. The exasperated librarian says, "Every copy of Final Exit is overdue and I'm overdue. I wonder why our copies of these books are never returned." The cartoon also raises an interesting question: Can a human being be overdue?

But promoting suicide is no laughing matter. Humphry's own life, as we have seen, is an obvious and sure sign of the pernicious nature of his principles. As Cal McCrystal, a British journalist who had known Ann and Derek Humphry for years, remarked, "Death was stalking the Humphreys as determinedly as the Humphreys were selling death."[25] Just as surely as "those who live by the sword die by the sword," those who promote suicide as an answer to life's problems shall feel its cold embrace in return. Charles J. Chaput, Archbishop of Denver, makes the point, in reflecting on assisted suicide, that "in helping the

terminally ill to kill themselves, we're colluding not only in their dehumanization, but our own."[26] How we treat others is an extension of how we regard ourselves. After Ann Wickett (together with her husband) assisted in the death of her mother by placing a plastic laundry bag containing soiled linens over her mouth, she was deeply tormented. "I walked away from that house thinking we're both murderers and I can't live like this anymore."[27] Less than five years later, outside of Eugene, Oregon, sheriffs men spotted Ann's blonde hair in the decaying autumn leaves. It was six days after she had taken her own life, alone and desperate.[28]

Rejecting the Culture of Death does not mean a blanket acceptance of health care in its present form. It should be axiomatic that we need to improve our treatment of the terminally ill; the chronically sick; and all others who suffer from physical, psychological, or personal problems. But if we choose to kill, we will foreclose the possibilities of these improvements. A Culture of Life is a Culture of Care. And care goes well beyond medical treatment. It includes a multitude of ministries that flow from human love. Helping the needy in this manner includes bringing them hope, affirming their dignity, reassuring them that their lives have meaning, reminding them of their honored place in the community, and letting them know that they are loved. Those who advance the Culture of Death provide a profound disservice to humanity in two ways—by promoting death and by ignoring or interfering with services of care. The Culture of Life will succeed only to the extent that all people are working for the same end.

—D.D.M.

[1] Wesley J. Smith, Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder (New York: Times Books, 1997), p. xviii.

[2] Leon Kass, "Suicide Made Easy: The Evil of 'Rational' Humanness," Commentary, Dec. 1991, p. 19.

[3] Donald W. Cox, Hemlock's Cup: A Struggle for Death with Dignity (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1993), pp. 45-47.

[4] Derek Humphry and Ann Wickett, Jean's Way (Los Angeles: Hemlock Society, 1984), p. 113.

[5] Rita Marker, Deadly Compassion (New York: William Morrow, 1993), p. 31.

[6] Cox, Hemlock's Cup, p. 48.

[7] Ibid., pp. 28-43.

[8] Marker, Deadly Compassion, p. 199.

[9] Anna Quindlen, “Death: The Best Seller,” New York Times, Aug. 14, 1991.

[10] Cox, Hemlock’s Cup, p. 43.

[11] Kass, “Suicide Made Easy,” p. 19.

[12] Derek Humphry, Final Exit (New York: Dell, 1991), p. 82.

[13] Ibid., p. 93.

[14] Kass, “Suicide Made Easy,” p. 20.

[15] Deborah Pinkney, “Humphry Asks Physicians Help in Suicide Rights Battle,” American Medical News, Apr. 20, 1992, p. 11.

[16] Dave McKinney, “Buffalo Grove Suicide Linked to Bestseller, ‘Final Exit’,” Daily Herald, Buffalo Grove, Ill., Oct. 3, 1991.

[17] Patrick Dunn, “Three B.C. Suicides Tied to Book,” Province, Vancouver, B.C., Nov. 24, 1991, p. A5.

[18] Bonnie Angelo, “Assigning the Blame for a Young Man’s Suicide,” Time, Nov. 18, 1991, p. 16.

[19] Quoted in Cox, Hemlock’s Cup, p. 39.

[20] Kass, “Suicide Made Easy,” p. 21.

[21] Quoted in Assisted Suicide, ed. Laura Egendorf (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998), p. 14.

[22] Derek Humphry, “Rational Suicide among the Elderly,” Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, spring 1992.

[23] Derek Humphry, letter to the editor, New York Times, Aug. 11, 1992.

[24] Assisted Suicide, p. 199.

[25] Cal McCrystal, “The Woman Who Chose to Die in the Wilderness,” Independent on Sunday, London, Apr. 8, 1990.

[26] Charles J. Chaput, “Eugenics to Euthanasia,” Crisis, Oct. 1997.

[27] Marker, Deadly Compassion, p. 72.

[28] Patrick Buchanan, “The Dark Underside of Euthanasia,” Washington Times, Nov. 4, 1991.

Jack Kevorkian

The soul of Shakespeare's Brutus is in disorder. Thoughts of slaying Caesar are swirling through his brain. He expresses his torment in a soliloquy that anticipates the tragedies of Hamlet, Othello, Lear, and Macbeth:

Between the acting of a dreadful thing And the first motion, all the interim is Like a phantasma or a hideous dream. The Genius and the mortal instruments Are then in council.[1]

Ideas have consequences. Bad philosophies produce bad results. Ethical values are not neutral. Morality is not relative. The fruits of wrong advice can be "dreadful."

And when the dreadful thing is done, and Caesar lies still in his own blood, what can soothe the conscience that beholds so ghastly a sight? Brutus resorts to rhetoric. Caesar's death is not death, but somehow a metaphor. In this way it becomes abstract. For Caesar it is the end of pain and anxiety. For Rome it is "peace, freedom and liberty!"[2] To his co-conspirator Cassius, Brutus says:

That we shall die, we know, 'tis but the time, And drawing days out that men stand upon.

The assassin, in executing his victim, does not invent death; he merely adjusts the clock. Death enters the world through some other route. "Killing" is a cruel word to describe an act that simply advances time or hastens the inevitable. Grasping Brutus' logic, Cassius is eager to extend it a bit further:

Why, he that cuts off twenty years of life Cuts off so many years of fearing death.

Life is not life, as much as it is an occasion for experiencing death. The partial deaths that prefigure ultimate death assault life in a myriad of ways, through pain, anxiety, frustration, melancholy, disease, disability, remorse, and so on. Final death releases one from all the partial deaths that make life as troublesome as it is. Looking at death in this manner, Brutus then concludes:

Grant that, and then death is a benefit:
So are we Caesar's friends, that have abridged

His time of fearing death.[3]

Good friends kill each other! That is how they demonstrate their friendship. There is something of the statue in both Brutus and Cassius. “They have the clarity and simplicity of worked marble,” Mark Van Doren says of them. Another American literary critic, John Mason Brown, remarks, “Brutus seemed no more than a resounding set of vocal chords wrapped up in a toga.” Brutus and Cassius are bloodless. Life is death, and death is liberation. There is no personal element in killing, no violation of dignity, no mourning, no regret. It is a sensible way of delivering people from the misery of human existence. Neither Brutus nor Cassius, of course, benefited themselves from their peculiar philosophy. They both died soon enough after Caesar’s death on the Plains of Philippi. Cassius died using his own “good sword that ran through Caesar’s bowels,” with the assistance of his servant, Pindarus. Later in the day, Brutus ran on his own sword, with the help of his servant, Strato. With Caesar in mind, he spoke his final words: “I kill’d not thee with half so good a will.”[4]

The misguided ethics that deluded Brutus and Cassius are by no means restricted to their historic lives or to Shakespeare’s play. They continue to be reenacted. Caesar’s assassins are long dead. But the treacherous council that misled them lives on. Herein is the greater tragedy. We are gravely mistaken if we think that the desperate rationalizations for killing that we find in dramatic literature are not also to be found in life. Consider the following two cases:

• The wife of a medical doctor, who is also a physician, is stricken with multiple sclerosis. She perceives her life as useless and a burden to her husband. If she could die soon, while her husband is young, he still has an opportunity to make a new life for himself. She begs him to put her out of her misery. He complies, injecting her with a lethal drug. The husband is charged, but a jury of his peers acquits him.

• A married woman is disabled by multiple sclerosis. In her husband’s estimation, she is a burden to him. He urges her to commit suicide. When she finally agrees, he prepares a poison for her to drink. But the poison merely puts her to sleep. He then suffocates her using a plastic bag. The husband is charged with homicide, but serves four months in jail as a part of plea bargaining. He uses his time in jail to write a book defending euthanasia and subsequently becomes a popular speaker on the subject.

Both cases are strikingly similar. Two husbands kill their wives, who suffer from multiple sclerosis. They are inconvenienced temporarily by the judicial

process, but are exonerated and then return to society, heroes to some.

The first case transpired in Germany and was the basis for a propaganda film produced in 1941—Ich klage an (I Accuse). The point of making the film was to promote the notion that disabled people have lives that are not worth living and that euthanasia can be viewed as a compassionate act.

The second case took place in 1995 in the United States. The husband's name is George Delury and his wife was Myrna Lebov. The New York Hemlock Society created a legal defense fund in his behalf. The publisher of Final Exit, Derek Humphry's manual on how to kill oneself, agreed to publish Delury's book.

Both cases involve a three-step process: (1) a husband kills his wife, who suffers from a disability; (2) the judicial system either acquits him or gives him a slap on the wrist; (3) the media is used to justify the husband's act and to arouse popular sympathy and win public approval for euthanasia.[5]

The rhetoric put forward to rationalize the killing of an innocent person, especially one with whom the killer has a close or even intimate relationship, has always required considerable ingenuity. This is not so much the case at the present moment. In recent years, an individual has come into prominence who is the very personification of death on request. Shunning the need for labored rhetoric or tortured rationalization, Jack Kevorkian, also known as Dr. Death, plies his trade as if there were no need to justify what he does. "My specialty is death," he says, without apology or any trace of self-consciousness.[6] As Time magazine says of him, "With his deadly humor and his face stretched tight around his skull, he has become a walking advertisement for designer death."[7]

When Kevorkian (born in 1928) was a pathology resident in the 1950s, he proposed experimental surgery on a voluntary basis for death-row prisoners. The more problematic aspect of his proposal was his intention not to revive the prisoners once the experiments on them had been completed. In response to Kevorkian's persistence in urging this proposal, the University of Michigan Pathology Department dismissed him from his residency.

During the ensuing two decades, Kevorkian lobbied politicians to introduce legislation that would allow the organs of executed prisoners to be donated to others. Few people took him seriously. In the 1980s, while much attention was being directed toward the issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide, Kevorkian devised a suicide machine, or "mercitron," as he calls it. He intended its use for those individuals who wanted to be released permanently from their suffering. At this time, he also advocated "obitoria," professional venues where such deliverances would take place.[8] He assembled his "killing machine" from scrap aluminum, a toycar that the now unemployed Kevorkian had torn apart for

its pieces, and other odds and ends he found at garage sales and flea markets.[9] He tried to have an advertisement for his death machine published in the Oakland County, Michigan, Medical Society Bulletin. When the bulletin's seven-member board turned down the ad, news services and then talk shows picked up on the story. Kevorkian found, through the media, the publicity he was seeking.[10]

His first client was fifty-four-year-old Janet Adkins of Portland, Oregon. Mrs. Adkins had been diagnosed as having early-stage Alzheimer's disease. She and her husband, both members of the Hemlock Society, had watched Kevorkian present his case on the Phil Donahue Show. It was the husband, however, who found himself unable to sleep at night. And it was he who contacted Kevorkian and made all the arrangements for his wife's death. Janet Adkins did not meet Kevorkian until the weekend before her demise.

Adkins, who "did not want to be a burden to her husband and her family,"Rita Marker, Deadly Compassion (New York: William Morrow, 1993), p. 163.[11]was a vigorous woman who showed little adverse signs of her incipient illness. A week before she died, this vital woman defeated her thirty-two-year-old son in a game of tennis.[12] On the day prior to her suicide, she wrote a statement explaining her decision. Her well-written final testament indicated no signs of mental deterioration.[13] Her doctor testified in court that he believed she would be mentally competent for another three years.

On June 4, 1990, Kevorkian parked his rusty 1968 Volkswagen van at a campsite just outside of Detroit. There, in the van, he hooked Adkins up to his "mercitron." He had trouble inserting the needle into a vein in her arm, but finally succeeded after several botched attempts, which left his hands and clothes spattered with blood. He also spilled the sedative as he was pouring it into one of the machine's bottles. Having left Adkins in the van, he drove forty-five miles to his home to get a new supply.

According to Kevorkian, Adkins pushed a button on his machine that released the toxic concentration of potassium chloride that ended her life. After he allegedly assisted in her suicide, he then notified the medical examiner and the sheriff of what had transpired. He did express one regret: namely, that he did not rush the deceased to the hospital. "You could have sliced her liver in half," he said, "and saved two babies, and her bone marrow could have been taken, her heart, two kidneys, two lungs, and pancreas."[14]

The Reverend Alan B. Deale, who presided over the memorial service for Adkins, referred to the concept of planned death as "an idea whose time had come." He said that he did not feel that it was his job to try to talk her out of committing suicide.[15]

On December of the same year, Kevorkian was charged with murder. Eleven days later, Judge Gerald McNally of the Oakland Country District Court (Michigan) dismissed the charges. He believed that what Kevorkian did was theinauguration of a practice that could not be stopped. “I’m confident that this thing Kevorkian is spearheading or leading is not a false trend,” he told a Michigan reporter. “ Those trends are irreversible and you have to go along with it.”[16]

The public’s initial reaction to Kevorkian’s deed was negative. But support for Kevorkian began to appear in various strategic and influential places. Marcia Angell, executive editor of the New England Journal, wrote an opinion piece in the New York Times entitled “Don’t Criticize Doctor Death.” She invited people to examine the problem of assisted suicide “forthrightly and compassionately.”[17] Derek Humphry, cofounder of the Hemlock Society, perhaps America’s best-known advocacy group for euthanasia, applauded Kevorkian’s actions while referring to him as a “brave and lonely pioneer.”[18] In a letter to the editor of the same New England Journal of Medicine, Myriam Coppens, representing the Hemlock Society, put the matter in the context of “choice” and “dignity”:

Having Alzheimer’s disease, she [Janet Adkins] wanted to die before her mind escaped her and made her, in her own eyes, a nonperson. She wanted death with dignity, and she found it. By giving her the choice she wanted, Dr. Kevorkian permitted her in turn to enjoy life fully while she still could. That she died in a van in a parking lot was of no importance to her. It was the choice that counted.[19] The rhetoric of “choice” and “dignity” has immense persuasive power, even where it is highly questionable as to whether it applies to the situation at hand. Whether Adkins was the one who chose death or whether her husband and others who were close to her chose it for her remains at least debatable. Given the unnecessarily dreary, unprofessional, and impersonal conditions attending her final moment, the employment of the word “dignity” hardly seems an apt description of the manner in which she passed from the earth.

Although charges that Kevorkian had murdered Adkins were dropped, a temporary injunction was issued to prevent him from using his suicide machine again. In issuing the injunction, circuit court judge Alice Gilbert stated that it was a necessary procedure in the interest of protecting public health and welfare. Outraged by the injunction, Kevorkian argued that it was he who was serving the public good. “The voluntary self-elimination of individual and mortally diseased

or crippled lives taken collectively can only enhance the preservation of public health and welfare," he wrote.[20]

Within a year, Kevorkian acted in violation of the injunction. On October 23, 1991, he assisted in the deaths of forty-three-year-old Sherry Miller and fifty-eight-year-old Marjorie Wantz. Neither was terminally ill. The three met in a rustic cabin, where Kevorkian videotaped the two women expressing their desire to die. After their deaths, the Hemlock Society issued a press release stating, "Dr. Kevorkian's motive was purely humanitarian. . . . Dr. Kevorkian has done the nation a service."[21] Nonetheless, a grand jury indicted Kevorkian on February 5, 1992, on two counts of murder in the deaths of Miller and Wantz. While awaiting trial, Kevorkian assisted in the death of another woman, fifty-two-year-old Susan Williams, who had multiple sclerosis. The charges were eventually dismissed.

From 1990 through 1998, Kevorkian, by his own admission, assisted in the deaths of some 130 human beings, the vast majority of whom were not terminally ill. He was acquitted of homicide in three trials. A fourth was declared a mistrial on a technicality.[22]

The problem in securing a conviction lay in the fact that Kevorkian rested his defense on the humanitarian grounds that he intended not the deaths of his clients, but only to end their suffering. Jurors, sympathetic to the plight of the suffering, were inclined to interpret Kevorkian's actions not as homicidal, but as compassionate. For example, Gwen Bry-son, a juror in the Thomas Hyde case, stated, "We believe the intent was not to help Hyde commit suicide. We believe it was to relieve pain and suffering."[23] (Kevorkian had been charged with breaking Michigan's assisted suicide law in helping Thomas Hyde, age thirty and suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease, to die.)

Acquittals on the basis that ending a person's suffering is a more central legal issue than ending his life raises an important question. Would the courts also apply this priority given to ending suffering in cases where a person directly killed a suffering client, rather than merely assisted in his death? Kevorkian wanted to test the law. On November 22, 1998, before tens of millions of televiewers who had tuned in to CBS's 60 Minutes, Kevorkian injected fifty-two-year-old Thomas Youk with potassium chloride, thereby ending his life.

Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca issued a warrant charging Kevorkian with premeditated murder: "Not withstanding Youk's consent, consent is not a viable defence in taking the life of another, even under the most controlled environment." State Senator Bill Regenmorter was pleased with Gorcyca's decision. "This is a defining moment for Michigan," he said. "We are either going to pursue a culture of death or a culture of life. My hat is off to

Prosecutor Gorcyca."[24] Kevorkian was subsequently convicted of second-degree murder and was sentenced to ten to twenty-five years in prison.

The media, in giving Kevorkian extensive coverage, has also created the myth that Dr. Death is really a humanitarian who respects people's choices and is motivated by compassion to relieve the afflicted of their suffering. Kevorkian himself explodes this myth in his book Prescription: Medicide. The Goodness of Planned Death and in various interviews. He states that those subjects slated for death "would be free to change their minds: but revocation must be limited, say to within one week of the scheduled date of execution (after which the initial assent must stand)."[25] So much for choice and client autonomy. In an interview with the atheist journal Free Inquiry, Kevorkian makes it clear that relieving the afflicted of their suffering through death is not the only thing on his mind. In fact, even more important to him is the use of their organs. In response to his interviewer's remark that "one positive benefit is that the patient will not suffer agonizing pain and torment," Kevorkian states the following:

That's a minor benefit. That the family will suffer less psychological pain and loss of assets is also minor, as well as that society will be spared the waste of some resources. Three minor benefits do not counter-balance the loss of a human life. But if the patient opts for euthanasia, or if someone is to be executed, and at the same time opts to donate organs, he or she can save anywhere from five to ten lives. Now the death becomes definitely positive.

In a court statement he prepared on August 17, 1990, Kevorkian admitted that the suicide of disabled people represents a good for the general public. In his view, such deaths, by making bodily organs available, can contribute only to the good of society. The part, in Kevorkian's calculus, is more important than the whole person, if that person happens to be disabled.

Wesley J. Smith, in his book Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder, does not view Kevorkian as a humanitarian, a folk hero, or, as suggested on the cover of Timemagazine, "an angel of mercy."[26] In fact, he sees him as a "quack," a "ghoul," and a "fiend." But he is not easy on contemporary society for having afforded Dr. Death stature and license: "The ultimate horror of Jack Kevorkian lies not in the hollowed-out body of his latest victim, but in the hollowness he has exposed in the society that tolerates—and even celebrates—his increasingly gruesome killing spree."[27]

Leon Kass was a witness for the state on matters of medical ethics in Kevorkian's first civil trial. He carefully observed Kevorkian's demeanor in court, read the correspondence in which Kevorkian promised to "help" a woman

who was found to be suffering from nothing more than treatable migraine, and viewed the “self-serving” and “manipulative” videotape he made of his only conversation with Adkins before he helped her to “self-deliver.” In response, he had this to say: “I feel the deepest shame for my profession that he [Kevorkian] should be counted a member.”[28]

No individual more clearly and strikingly personifies the Culture of Death in contemporary American society than does Jack Kevorkian. His twisted rationalizations echo those of Brutus and Cassius. But they conceal a far more sinister motive. There is no political idealism that animates Kevorkian’s mind. It is death itself that appears to be his passion.[29]Dante saw fit to put these two assailants of Julius Caesar, together with Judas Iscariot, in the Ninth Circle of Hell, where three-headed Lucifer grinds them eternally, one in each of his three mouths. What place and manner of fitting punishment would the great Florentine poet have assigned Kevorkian? In performing “dreadful” acts, Kevorkian has advanced the Culture of Death. And in the process, he has found many allies who regard him as a celebrity and look to him as a pioneer.

—D.D.M.

[1] William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, II, 1.

[2] Ibid., III, 1.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., V, 5.

[5] See Wesley J. Smith, “Dr. Death’s Mouthpiece Mouths OS,” Human Life Review, fall 1998, p. 20; Wesley J. Smith, “Kevorkian Proves His Contempt of Disabled,” Detroit News, Aug. 24, 1997.

[6] Nancy Gibbs, “Death Giving,” Time, May 31, 1993, p. 49.

[7] Ibid., p. 46.

[8] David Cundiff, M.D., Euthanasia Is Not the Answer (Totowa, N.J.: Humana Press, 1992), pp. 184-85.

[9] Neal Rubin, “In Royal Oak: The Death Machine,” Detroit Free Press Magazine, Mar. 18, 1990, p. 4.

[10] Cundiff, Euthanasia, p. 185.

[11] Rita Marker, Deadly Compassion (New York: William Morrow, 1993), p. 163.

[12] B. Johnson et al., “A Vital Woman Chooses Death?” People, June 25, 1990, pp. 40-43.

[13] Cundiff, Euthanasia, p. 185.

[14] Quoted by Patrick J. Buchanan, “Doc Kevorkian’s Suicide Machine,” NewYork Post, June 9, 1990.

[15] Bonnie De Simone, “She Said She Had No Regrets,” Detroit News, June 7, 1990.

[16] Quoted in Marker, Deadly Compassion,p. 166.

[17] Marcia Angell, “Don’t Criticize Doctor Death,” New York Times, June 15, 1990.

[18] See Marker, Deadly Compassion, p. 166.

[19] Myriam Coppens, L.M.F.T., C.N.P., New England Journal of Medicine, May 16, 1991, p. 1435.

[20] Marker, Deadly Compassion, p. 167.

[21] National Hemlock Society press release, Oct. 24, 1991.

[22] “Kevorkian Charged with 1st-Degree Murder in Telecast Euthanasia,” Record, Kitchener, Ont., Nov. 26, 1998, p. A7.

[23] Julia Prodis, “Jury Acquits Kevorkian in Assisted Suicide Case,” Union News, Springfield, Mass., p. 8.

[24] “Kevorkian Charged. ...”

[25] Jack Kevorkian, Prescription: Medicide. The Goodness of Planned Death (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1991), p. 34.

[26] Time, May 31, 1993.

[27] Wesley J. Smith, “The Serial Killer as Folk Hero,” Weekly Standard, July 13, 1998.

[28] Leon Kass, “Suicide Made Easy,” Commentary,Dec. 1991, p. 19.

[29] See Mark Hosenball, “The Real Jack Kevorkian,” Newsweek, Dec. 6, 1993. While Kevorkian was in medical school in the 1950s, he “made regular visits to terminally ill patients and peered deeply into their eyes. His objective was to pinpoint when the precise moment of death occurred.” See also Jack Lessenberry, “Death Becomes Him,” Vanity Fair, July 1994, p. ro6. Kevorkian is a painter who sometimes paints with his own blood and creates grotesque pictures such as one “of a child eating the flesh off a decomposing corpse.”

Peter Singer

After ruling our thoughts and our decisions about life and death for nearly two thousand years, the traditional Western ethic has collapsed.[1]

On this triumphant note, Professor Peter Singer begins his milestone book, Rethinking Life and Death. It conveys an attitude of revolutionary confidence that brings to mind another atheistic iconoclast, Derek Humphry, who has said, “We are trying to overturn 2,000 years of Christian tradition.”[2]

The new tradition that Singer welcomes is founded on a “quality-of-life” ethic. It allegedly replaces the outgoing morality that is based on the “sanctity of life.” Wesley J. Smith states that “Rethinking Life and Death can fairly be called the Mein Kampf of the euthanasia movement, in that it drops many of the euphemisms common to pro-euthanasia writing and acknowledges euthanasia for what it is: killing.”[3] A disability advocacy group that calls itself “Not Dead Yet” has fiercely objected to Singer’s views on euthanasia. Some refer to him as “Professor Death.” Others have gone as far as to liken him to Josef Mengele.[4] Troy McClure, an advocate for the disabled, calls him “the most dangerous man in the world today.”[5] There is indeed a bluntness to Singer’s pronouncements that gives his thought a certain transparency. This makes his philosophy, comparatively speaking, easy to understand and to evaluate.

Despite the vehemence of some of his opponents, Professor Singer is regarded, in other circles, as an important and highly respected philosopher and bioethicist. His books are widely read, his articles frequently appear in anthologies, he is very much in demand throughout the world as a speaker, and he has lectured at prestigious universities in different countries. He currently holds the Ira W. DeCamp chair of Bio-ethics at Princeton University’s Center for the Study of Human Values. And he has written a major article for Encyclopedia Britannica.

Singer’s philosophy begins in a broad egalitarianism and culminates in a narrow preferentialism. His egalitarianism has won him many supporters; his preferentialism has earned him his detractors. Hence, he is both strongly admired and soundly vilified. In his widely read article “All Animals Are Equal,” Singer expresses his disdain for racism and sexism. Here he is on solid ground. From this beachhead, he invites his readers to conquer “the last remaining form of discrimination,” which is discrimination against animals. He refers to this form of discrimination, borrowing the term from Richard Ryder, as “speciesism.” This latter form of discrimination rests on thewholly unwarranted assumption, in

Singer's view, that one species is superior to another. "I am urging," he writes, "that we extend to other species the basic principle of equality that most of us recognize should be extended to all members of our own species." [6]Here Singer endears himself to animal "rights" activists. In 1992, he devoted an entire book to the subject—Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for Our Treatment of Animals.[7]

From this, it should be clear that Singer is taking Darwinism to its ultimate conclusions. As we have seen, Darwinism erased any ultimate distinction between human beings and other animals, putting all on the same evolutionary spectrum. Since Darwin rejects the traditional understanding of the unique dignity of the human species—that human beings, being made in the image of God, have an immortal, immaterial soul—Darwinism must reject any moral distinctions based on the traditional distinctiveness of human nature.

It is not surprising, then, that Singer rejects what he regards to be nonphilosophical ways of understanding human beings and nonhuman animals. Thus, he finds notions of "sanctity of life," "dignity," "created in the image of God," and so on to be spurious. "Fine phrases," he says, "are the last resource of those who have run out of argument."[8] Following Darwin, he sees human nature as a phase in the ongoing flux of evolution. Therefore, he rejects any notion that human beings have a determinate nature. As a result, he sees no moral or philosophical significance to traditional terms such as "being," "nature," and "essence." He takes pride in being a modern philosopher who has cast off such "metaphysical and religious shackles."[9]

What is fundamentally relevant, for Singer, is the capacity of humans and nonhuman animals to suffer.[10] Surely non-human animals, especially mammals, suffer. At this point, Singer adds to his egalitarian followers those who base their ethics on compassion. Singer deplores the fact that we cruelly and unconscionably oppress and misuse nonhuman animals by eating their flesh and experimenting on them. Thus, he advocates a vegetarian diet for everyone and a greatly restricted use of animal experimentation.

By using a broad egalitarian base that elicits a compassionate response to the capacity of human and nonhuman animals to suffer, Singer thereby replaces the sanctity-of-life ethic with a quality-of-life ethic that, in his view, has a more solid and realistic foundation. In this way, Singer appears to possess a myriad of modern virtues. He is broad-minded, fair, nondiscriminatory, compassionate, innovative, iconoclastic, and consistent. It is the quality of life that counts, not some abstract and gratuitous notion that cannot be validated or substantiated through rational inquiry.

Charles Darwin once conjectured that "animals, our fellow brethren in pain,

disease, suffering and famine . . . may partake of our origin in one common ancestor—we may all be melted together."[11] Singer takes Darwin's "conjecture" and turns it into a conviction. Thus he adds Darwinists and assorted evolutionists to his coterie of adherents.

Humans and nonhuman animals are fundamentally sufferers. They possess consciousness, which gives them the capacity to suffer or to enjoy life, to be miserable or to be happy. This incontrovertible fact gives Singer a basis, ironically, for a new form of discrimination that is more invidious that the ones he roundly condemns. Singer identifies the suffering/enjoying status of all animals with their quality of life. It follows from this precept, then, that those who suffer more than others have less quality of life, and those who do not possess a sufficiently developed consciousness fall below the plane of personhood. He argues, for example, that where a baby has Down syndrome, and in other instances of "life that has begun very badly," parents should be free to kill the child within twenty-eight days after birth.[12] Here he is in fundamental agreement with Michael Tooley, a philosopher he admires, who states that "new-born humans are neither persons nor quasi-persons, and their destruction is in no way intrinsically wrong."[13] Tooley believes that killing infants becomes wrong when they acquire "morally significant properties," an event he believes occurs about three months after their birth.[14]

Having discarded any real distinction between human beings and animals, Singer is compelled to declare that some humans are nonpersons, while some nonhuman animals are persons. The key is not nature or species membership, but consciousness. A preconscious human cannot suffer as much as a conscious horse. In dealing with animals, we care only about their quality of life. We put a horse that has broken its leg out of its misery as quickly as possible. This merciful act spares the animal an untold amount of needless suffering. If we look upon human animals in the same fashion, our opposition to killing those who are suffering will begin to dissolve. The "quality-of-life" ethic has a tangible correlative when it relates to suffering; the "sanctity-of-life" ethic seemingly relates to a mere vapor.

Here is where Singer picks up a host of detractors. According to this avant-garde thinker, unborn babies or neonates, lacking the requisite consciousness to qualify as persons, have less right to continue to live than an adult gorilla. By the same token, a suffering or disabled child would have a weaker claim not to be killed than a mature pig. Singer writes in Rethinking Life and Death:

Human babies are not born self-aware or capable of grasping their lives over time. They are not persons. Hence their lives would seem to be no more

worthy of protection than the life of a fetus.

And writing specifically about Down syndrome babies, he advocates trading a disabled or defective child (one -who is apparently doomed to too much suffering) for one who has better prospects for happiness:

We may not want a child to start on life's uncertain voyage if the prospects are clouded. When this can be known at a very early stage in the voyage, we may still have a chance to make a fresh start. This means detaching ourselves from the infant who has been born, cutting ourselves free before the ties that have already begun to bind us to our child have become irresistible. Instead of going forward and putting all our effort into making the best of the situation, we can still say no, and start again from the beginning.[15]

Needless to say, we all begin our lives on an uncertain voyage. Life is full of surprises. A Helen Keller can enjoy a fulfilling life, despite her limitations; Loeb and Leopold can become hardened killers, despite the fact that they were darlings of fortune. Who can prognosticate? Human beings cannot be subject to factory-control criteria. Even in starting again, one still does not generate the same individual who was lost. Singer's concern for quality of life causes him to miss the reality and the value of the underlying life.

Ironically, the man who claimed to be conquering the last domain of discrimination was offending his readers precisely because of his penchant for discrimination (and even in failing to use discrimination). A number of statements that appeared in the first edition of his Practical Ethics were expurgated from the second edition. They include his demeaning of persons with Down syndrome,[16] reviling mentally challenged individuals as "vegetables,"[17] rating the mind of a one-year-old human below that of many brute animals,[18] and stating that "not . . . everything the Nazis did was horrendous; we cannot condemn euthanasia just because the Nazis did it."[19]

For Peter Singer, a human being is not a subject who suffers, but a sufferer. Singer's error here is to identify the subject with consciousness. This is an error that dates back to seventeenth-century Cartesianism captured in Descartes' famous phrase "I think, therefore I am" (which is to identify being with thinking). Descartes defined man solely in terms of his consciousness as a thinking thing (res cogitans) rather than as a subject who possesses consciousness.

By contrast, at the heart of Pope John Paul II's Personalism (his philosophy of the person) is the recognition that it is the concrete individual person who is

the subject of consciousness. The subject comes before consciousness. That subject may exist prior to consciousness (as in the case of the human embryo) or during lapses of consciousness (as in sleep or in a coma). But the existing subject is not to be identified with consciousness itself, which is an operation or activity of the subject. The Holy Father rejects what he calls the "hypostatization of the cogito"(the reification of consciousness) precisely because it ignores the fundamental reality of the subject of consciousness—the person—who is also the object of love. "Consciousness itself" is to be regarded "neither as an individual subject nor as an independent faculty."[20]

John Paul II refers to the elevation of consciousness to the equivalent of the person's being as "the great anthropocentric shift in philosophy."[21] What he means by this "shift" is a movement away from existence to a kind of absolutization of consciousness. Referring to St. Thomas Aquinas, the Holy Father reiterates that "it is not thought which determines existence, but existence, 'esse,' which determines thought!"[22]

Singer, by trying to be more broad-minded than is reasonable, has created a philosophy that actually dehumanizes people, reducing them to points of consciousness that are indistinguishable from those of many nonhuman animals. Therefore, what is of primary importance for the Princeton bioethicist is not the existence of the being in question, but its quality of life. But this process of dehumanization leadsdirectly to discrimination against those whose quality of life is not sufficiently developed. Singer has little choice but to divide humanity into those who have a preferred state of life and those who do not. In this way, his broad egalitarianism decays into a narrow preferentialism:

> When we reject belief in God we must give up the idea that life on this planet has some preordained meaning. Life as a whole has no meaning. Life began, as the best available theories tell us, in a chance combination of gasses; it then evolved through random mutation and natural selection. All this just happened; it did not happen to any overall purpose. Now that it has resulted in the existence of beings who prefer some states of affairs to others, however, it may be possible for particular lives to be meaningful. In this sense some atheists can find meaning in life.[23]

Life can be meaningful for an atheist when he is able to spend his life in a "preferred state." The atheistic perspective here does not center on people, however; it centers on happiness. This curious preference for happiness over people engenders a rather chilling logic. It is not human life or the existing human being that is good, but the "preferred state." Human life is not sacrosanct,

but a certain kind of life can be “meaningful.” If one baby is disabled, does it not make sense to kill it and replace it with one who is not and “therefore” has a better chance for happiness? “When the death of the disabled infant,” writes Singer, “will lead to the birth of another infant with better prospects of a happy life, the total amount of happiness will be greater if the disabled infant is killed.”[24]

Singer has a point, though perhaps marginal at best, that all other things being equal, it is better to be more happy than to be less happy. Yet this point hardly forms a basis for ending the life of a person who has less happiness than the hypothetically conceived greater happiness of his possible replacement. Ethics should center on the person, not the quantum of happiness a person may or may not enjoy. It is the subject who exists who has the right to life, and neither Singer nor anyone else who employs a “relative happiness calculator” should expropriate that right.

Having neglected concrete existence, Singer inevitably wanders into abstractions. He is a humanist, one might say, because he wants people to enjoy better and happier states of life. But the more relevant point is that he is not particularly interested in the actual lives of those who are faced with states that he believes to be less than preferable. In contrast, Pope John Paul II stresses that each human life is “inviolable, unrepeatable, and irreplaceable.” In stating this, the Pontiff is implying that our first priority should be loving human beings rather than preferring better states.

Yet Singer believes he shares something important with John Paul II. In a 1995 article in the London Spectator entitled “Killing Babies Isn’t Always Wrong,” Singer said of the Pope, “I sometimes think that he and I at least share the virtue of seeing clearly what is at stake.” The Culture of Life based on the sanctity-of-life ethic is at stake. The Pope and the “Meister Singer” are poles apart. “That day had to come,” states Singer, “when Copernicus proved that the earth is not at the center of the universe. It is ridiculous to pretend that the old ethics make sense when plainly they do not. The notion that human life is sacred just because it’s human is medieval.”

There are a number of things that are “plain.” One is that Copernicus did not “prove” that the earth is not at the center of the universe. He proposed a theory based on the erroneous assumption that planets travel in perfect circles, and hypothesized that the sun is at the center, not of the universe, but of what we now refer to as the solar system. Another is that the sacredness of life is a Judeo-Christian notion, not an arbitrary fabrication of the Middle Ages. Yet another is that it is unethical to kill disabled people just because they are disabled.

At a Princeton forum, Singer remarked that he would have supported the

parents of his disabled protestors if they had sought to kill their disabled offspring in infancy. This is the sort of unkind remark that will ensure that his disabled protestors will continue to protest.[25]

An additional error in Singer's thinking is the assumption he makes that the suffering (or happiness) of individuals can somehow be added to each other and thus create "all this suffering in the world." C. S. Lewis explains that if you have a toothache of intensity x and another person in the room with you also has a toothache of intensity x, "You may, if you choose, say that the total amount of pain in the room is now 2x. But you must remember that no one is suffering 2x."[26] There is no composite pain in anyone's consciousness. There is no such thing as the sum of collective human suffering, because no one suffers it.

Yet another error in Singer's thinking is that philosophy should be built up solely on the basis of rational thinking and that feelings and emotions should be distrusted, if not uprooted. Concerning the infant child, he advises us, in Practical Ethics, to "put aside feelings based on its small, helpless and—sometimes—cute appearance," so we can look at the more ethically relevant aspects, such as its quality of life. This coldly cerebral approach is radically incompatible with our ability to derive any enjoyment whatsoever from life. By "putting feelings aside," we would be putting enjoyment aside. It is not the mind that becomes filled with joy, but the heart. Thus, the man (Singer) who allegedly prizes happiness is eager to deactivate the very faculty that makes happiness possible. Dr. David Gend, who is a general practitioner and secretary of the Queensland, Australia, branch of the World Federation of Doctors Who Respect Human Life, suggests that Singer's announcement of the collapse of the sanctity-of-life ethic is premature:

> Nevertheless, Herod could not slaughter all the innocents, and Singer will not corrupt the love of innocence in every reader. As long as some hearts are softened by the image of an infant stirring in its sleep, or even by their baby's movements on ultrasound at sixteen weeks, Singer's call to "put feelings aside" in killing babies will reek of decay.[27]

Reason and emotion are not antagonistic to each other. This is the assumption intrinsic to Cartesian dualism. In the integrated person, reason and emotion form an indissoluble unity. For a person to set aside his feelings, therefore, in order to view a situation "ethically" is tantamount to setting aside his humanity. It is precisely this utter detachment from one's moral feelings, particularly relevant in the case where an individual experiences no emotions whatsoever while holding an infant, that is suggestive of a moral disorder. Singer

seems to view practical ethics the way one views practical mathematics. But this is to dehumanize ethics. Perceiving the ethical significance of things is not a specialized activity of reason. There are a "moral sense" (James Q. Wilson) and a "wisdom in disgust" (Leon Kass), a "knowledge through connaturality" (Jacques Maritain) and a "co-presence" (Gabriel Marcel), that involve the harmonious integration of reason and emotion.

"The heart has reasons that reason knows nothing of," said Pascal. Neurobiologist Antonio Damasio, author of Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain, finds scientific evidence that "absence of emotion appears to be at least as pernicious for rationality as excessive emotion. . . . Emotion may well be the support system without which the edifice of reason cannot function properly and may even collapse."[28]The ethic that is more likely to "collapse," therefore, is not one that is based on the personal integration of reason and emotion, but the rational approach that is dissociated from emotion and thereby left one-sided, vulnerable, and counterproductive.

Singer underscores the importance of reason, broad-mindedness, and compassion. But his excessive emphasis on reason displaces human feelings. His overenthusiastic advocacy of broad-mindedness causes him to lose sight of the distinctiveness of the human being (he does not object to sexual "relationships" between humans and nonhuman animals). And his sensitivity for compassion is exercised at the expense of failing to understand how suffering can have personal meaning. In the end, his philosophy is one-sided and distorted. It plays into the Culture of Death because it distrusts the province of the heart, fails to discern the true dignity of the human person, and elevates the killing of innocent human beings— young and old—to the level of a social therapeutic.

—D.D.M.

[1] Peter Singer, Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

[2] Derek Humphry, San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 28, 1992.

[3] Wesley J. Smith, Forced Exit; The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder (New York: Times Books, 1997), p. 21.

[4] Arthur Hirsch, "Professor's Views on Bioethics Anger Disabled," Hartford Courant, Nov. 27, 1999, pp. 1, 6.

[5] Quoted by C. H. Freedman, "The Greater of Two Evils," Celebrate Life, Mar./Apr. 2000, p. 26.

[6] Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," Practical Ethics, ed. Peter Singer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 216.

[7] Peter Singer, Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for Our Treatment of Animals (New York: Avon Books, 1992).

[8] Singer, “All Animals,” p. 228.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., p. 221.

[11] Charles Darwin, Life and Letters of Charles Darwin (London: John Murray, 1888), 2:6.

[12] Peter Singer, Practical Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 131-38.

[13] Michael Tooley, Abortion and Infanticide (Oxford: Clarendon-Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 411-12.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Singer, Rethinking, pp. 213-14.

[16] Singer, Practical Ethics, p. 73.

[17] Ibid., p. 75.

[18] Ibid., p. 122.

[19] Ibid., p. 124.

[20] Karol Wojtyla, The Acting Person, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht, Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1979), p. 37.

[21] JohnPaulII, Crossing the Threshold of Hope, trans. Jenny and Martha McPhee (Toronto, Ont.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. 51.

[22] Ibid., p. 38.

[23] Singer, Practical Ethics, p. 331.

[24] Quoted by Freedman, “Greater,” p. 26.

[25] Hirsch, “Professor’s Views,” p. 6.

[26] C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain (New York: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 115-16.

[27] David van Gend, “On the ‘Sanctity of Human Life’,” Quadrant, Sept. 1995, p. 60.

[28] Antonio Damasio, “Descartes’ Error and the Future of Human Life,” Scientific American, Oct. 1994, p. 144.

CONCLUSION: PERSONALISM AND THE CULTURE OF LIFE

In the 1936 film The Man Who Could Work Miracles, sportive gods grant an ordinary man an extraordinary power over inanimate objects. Throughout the movie, based on a story by H. G. Wells, the protagonist repeatedly refers to his unusual gift as "will power." Armed with such "will power," he is able to will any material object to move exactly as he commands. He can transport bodies to any region of the world, relocate buildings, and make things disappear and then reappear solely through the agency of his will.

Unfortunately, he is not blessed with wisdom, and the prolific use of his newfound power ultimately causes such chaos that he renounces it and returns to his former status as an unprepossessing city clerk.

This notion of "will power" (as opposed to the willpower to remain steadfast in moments of temptation) is restricted to fantasy. Although any of us may be tempted to wish for such power, storytellers from time immemorial have repeatedly told us that since we are not particularly wise creatures, we would invariably use it for destructive purposes.

A second notion of the power of the will is what we find in the writings of Nietzsche and other will worshippers, who reduce all moral values to the self who exercises his will. In this case, since it is deemed that there are no values other than the will itself, all acts of the will become self-justifying. Here we move from psychokinesis (the power to move things) to egoism (where the self is believed to be the cosmic center of importance), from "will power" to "willfulness."

Willfulness inevitably leads to an isolation of the self from others. But even more than bringing about an isolation of the self, it casts the self into exile. In addition, it represents a disconnection from all values that exist outside the self. This exile, consequently, results in spiritual impoverishment.

Psychiatrist Leslie Farber has referred to the present epoch as the "age of the disordered will."[1] The will, by turning in on itself, reverses its own natural inclination toward the good of another—what is traditionally understood as love—while reducing itself to mere wish. But wish is not as realistic or as decisive as will. Such a reversal is "disordered" in the sense that it does not operate along its natural outward inclination by which it affirms what is good. Rather, it is tied to the self and operates in a kind of dream world.

Will power leads to destruction, while willfulness brings about exile.

Willingness,in contrast, offers the possibility of realistic collaboration with values that are outside of the will itself. Willingness can be the decision to involve oneself, positively and lovingly, in the lives of others. Strictly speaking, will power belongs to fantasy, and willfulness belongs to psychopathology; but willingness belongs to the world of real values and real people. It is indeed possible to be willing to do the wrong thing, but willingness moves out from the limited realms of fantasy and self-centeredness and enters a world of objective values. The willingness to do what is good represents the fulfillment of the will. Such "willingness" expresses the human being as a person, that is, one who exercises his will in a real world in which collaboration, cooperation, and mutually enriching relationships take place.

The architects of the Culture of Death discussed in this book are, in the main, both atheists and individualists. They do not base their views on the fundamental notion that a human being is a person who willingly cooperates with God and others in order to build, in effect, a Culture of Life. As atheists, they cut themselves off from God. As mere individuals, they alienate themselves from their fellow humans. Freud states in Totem and Taboo that "god at bottom is nothing but an exalted father," while Nietzsche declares, "There is no one among the living or the dead with whom I feel the slightest affinity."[2] These attitudes are characteristic of the architects of the Culture of Death. They represent Figures of Death whose architecture can configure only death.

Man is "the architect of his own misfortunes," writes Nobel laureate Sigrid Undset.[3] The problem is not in the stars or in our genes, but in the human will. When we choose to withdraw from God and from objective values, we do not gain power of any kind. Rather, we poison what we do with "nothingness." Jacques Maritain makes the comment that the words of Christ, "Without Me you can do nothing," have two levels of meaning. The first refers to not being able to do anything that is good (work toward the building of the Culture of Life, for example). The second concerns the line of evil, indicating that you can do "nothingness," that is, "introduce into action and being the nothingness which wounds [others] and constitutes evil."[4] It is in this sense of doing "nothingness"—infecting being with nonbeing and even death—that we find the genesis of the Culture of Death.

The willful individual who is an architect of the Culture of Death disregards both God and neighbor as he exalts his own ego. This is why John Paul II states, in The Gospel of Life, that "in seeking the deepest roots of the struggle between the 'culture of life' and the 'culture of death'.... We have to go to the heart of the tragedy being experienced by modern man: the eclipse of the sense of God and of man."[5]

Here the Personalism of John Paul II allows us to see the anthropological error that undergirds the Culture of Death. We human beings are not islands of solitude, but persons. As such, our nature is not primarily to be self-centered, but to be self-giving:

The person, by the light of reason and the support of virtue, discovers in the body the anticipatory signs, the expression and the promise of the gift of self, in conformity with the wise plan of the Creator. It is in the light of the dignity of the human person—dignity which must be affirmed for its own sake—that reason grasps the specific moral value of certain goods towards which the person is naturally inclined. And since the human person cannot be reduced to a freedom which is self-designing, but entails a particular spiritual and bodily structure, the primordial requirement of loving and respecting the person as an end and never as a mere means also implies, by its very nature, respect for certain fundamental goods, without which one would fall into relativism and arbitrariness.[6]

I-Thouis the indivisible monad that reveals the nature of the person. The radical individual is shut off from others andblind to truth. The person, by contrast, participates in the life of God and neighbor and, by virtue of his own natural capacity, is able to discern the splendor of truth. “Walk as children of light . . .,” the Holy Father advises, “and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful work of darkness (Eph 5:8, 10-11). In our present social context, marked by a dramatic struggle between the ‘culture of life’ and the ‘culture of death,’ there is need to develop a deep critical sense, capable of discerning true values and authentic needs.”[7]

Indeed, this deeper critical sense enables us to see that at the heart of the conflict is the clash between the authentic human being, who, as a person, participates in the life of God and of neighbor, and the inauthentic human being, who, as a willful individual, looks at others in terms not of I-Thou but of I—It relationships.

Sigrid Undset has spoken of “the untold souls who have lived through the ages, each of them imprisoned in the ravelled net of his own self, from which no doctrine can set us free, only God, and He only by dying on a cross.”[8] To make the journey from selfish egoism to loving personhood is the central human drama.

George Weigel, in his definitive biography of John Paul II, Witness to Hope, appraises the Holy Father’s papacy as “a one-act drama” involving “the tension between various false humanisms that degrade the humanity they claim

to defend and exalt, and the true humanism to which the biblical vision of the human person is a powerful witness."[9]

The Fiat of Mary—"Let it be done unto me according to thy word"—perfectly blends together human freedom and the willingness to be a person who labors to build the Culture of Life. Psychiatrist Karl Stern has remarked that Mary's Fiat stands in comparison only to the Fiat of the Creator, "Let there be light": "The stillness in the nod of assent was equaled in freedom only by the original freedom of the creative act."[10]

It is not the issue of freedom that divides the architects of life and death. We are all free to choose. "Pro-choice" versus "pro-life" is a false dichotomy. The heart of the issue is anthropological realism. What is the reality of the human being? What are the real goods we must willingly choose in order to fulfill ourselves as persons? What are the realities of death and evil? "See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. ... I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live." Commenting on this passage from Deuteronomy (30:15, 19), John Paul II states, "This invitation is very appropriate for us who are called day by day to the duty of choosing between the 'culture of life' and the 'culture of death'."[11]

Life and death are surely different. We can rightly judge people by their fruits. But we do not want to wait until we read the final balance sheet before we know whether we have chosen life or death. This is why John Paul II's Personalismis both helpful as well as critical. It shines the spotlight on who we are and what we should do today. We are persons who need to be liberated from whatever degree of solitude or egoism we suffer so that we can personalize, through love, our relationships with others. This is the basis for building aCulture of Life. We do not want to categorize people and eliminate those whom we judge to be weaker. Rather, we affirm all human life and treat everyone as another "I." We are confronted with the choice between alienation and participation. Our primary task as persons is to participate lovingly in each other's lives. This may strike the architects of the Culture of Death as a most unpromising beginning. Yet, because of its inherent realism, it is a truly revolutionary beginning and one that establishes the seedbed for the ultimate flowering of the Culture of Life.

—D.D.M.

[1] Leslie Farber, The Ways of the Will (New York: Basic Books, 1965).

[2] Quoted in Henry Thomas and Dana Lee Thomas, “Friedrich Nietzsche,” Living Biographies of Great Philosophers (North Stratford, N.H.: Ayer Company Publishers, 1977), p. 6.

[3] A. H. Winsnes, Sigrid Undset:A Study in Christian Realism, trans. P. G. Foote (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953), p. 8.

[4] Jacques Maritain, St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil (Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 1942), p. 36.

[5] John Paul II, The Gospel of Life, no. 21.

[6] John Paul II, The Splendor of Truth,no. 48.

[7] John Paul II, Gospel of Life, no. 95.

[8] Winsnes, Sigrid Undset, p. 90.

[9] George Weigel, Witness to Hope (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 334.

[10] Karl Stern, The Flight from Woman (New York: Farar, Straus, and Giroux, 1965), p. 274.

[11] Gospel of Life, no. 28.

Table of Contents