

CHAPTER 8

A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST OF THE THEOLOGICAL MODELS AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MODELS

This concluding chapter will begin with a convergence and divergence study of the theological and psychological models of human needs. In addition, it will consider the metaphysical and moral assumptions held by the psychologists, psychological accounts of theism and theological accounts of nontheism, the role of human needs in the justification of religious belief, the problem of self-interest and self-love, and the differences between immanent and transcendent solutions to human needs.

A Study of the Convergence and Divergence of the Theological and Psychological Models

In a comparative study like this, it is important to avoid reading psychology into theology and theology into psychology. As the next section will discuss, the psychological models are based upon metaphysical and moral assumptions, even though many psychologists are reticent to acknowledge the philosophical rather than scientific status of such assumptions. These presuppositions are often radically different from those held by most theologians, resulting in disparate meanings behind identical terms. Some psychotherapeutically oriented theologians, however, have

succumbed to the temptation to assume ideological congruence based on surface similarities and to draw theological conclusions from current psychological theorizing.¹ These caveats notwithstanding, there are legitimate parallels between the theological and psychological models of human needs. In part, this is to be expected; since both approaches are considering the same subject, overlap in their anthropological inferences is inevitable. In addition, Western civilization and perceptions have been profoundly shaped by Christian thought, and all of the psychologists in this study, including those with a Jewish background, have been influenced by the symbols and institutions of Christendom.

Theological approaches to psychology range along a continuum from one extreme of uncritical acceptance to the opposite extreme of wholesale rejection. Some conservative theologians believe that all psychological theorizing is suspect because of the metaphysical and epistemological foundations upon which it is based, whereas more liberal theologians tend to

¹[I]t is unwise and inadvisable for theologians, apologists or anyone else to build upon a foundation so liable to change or rejection as psychoanalytic theory" (Malcolm Jeeves, "Christian Belief, Experience and Practice in the Light of Expanding Psychological Knowledge" in Jeeves, Behavioural Sciences: A Christian Perspective, p. 19; Gordon W. Allport, The Person in Psychology [Boston: Beacon Press, 1968], pp. 141-54; Thomas C. Oden, Kerygma and Counseling [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978]).

welcome psychological insights on the nature and needs of man. In their attitudes to psychology, Rahner leaned toward the side of distrust and Tillich toward the side of affirmation, but neither went to the respective extremes. As Ernest Becker sought to show, there is a definite relationship between psychiatric and religious perspectives on reality, and this is well illustrated in the work of Kierkegaard, whose analysis of the human condition was post-Freudian, even though he wrote in the 1840's.² The real contribution of psychology to modern culture is its penetration into the archaeology of "the basic psychobiological infrastructure behind our subjectivity."³ Applied correctly, the psychological dimension enriches rather than diminishes theological insights concerning human nature, just as theological awareness deepens psychological acuity; processes in the natural order and God's action in the world should be viewed as both/and rather than either/or. Modern psychology has illuminated the fundamental psychological tendencies and needs that people bring to their experience, and this has provided a vocabulary and comprehension that some theologians have used in an attempt to integrate the theological doctrines of creation and anthropology

²"[T]he best existential analysis of the human condition leads directly into the problems of God and faith, which is exactly what Kierkegaard had argued" (Becker, The Denial of Death, p. 68).

³Don S. Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 161.

with psychological insights. It has been observed, for example, that the human functions of cognition, affect, and conation correspond to creed, cultus, and code, and relate to Tillich's three existential anxieties (meaninglessness, death, and behavior/guilt).⁴ Tillich believed that Jung's distinction between the fixed archetypal potentialities and the variable symbols in which the potentialities present themselves offered a solution to the problem of continuity and change in religious symbols.⁵ Erikson's psychology of identity has been related to Rahner's theology of anonymous faith.⁶ Others have drawn parallels between psychological growth models and personal religious development--Erikson's psychosocial stages model and Maslow's needs hierarchy have been compared with Loevinger's model

⁴Tillich, The Courage to Be; Mary Jo Meadow and Richard D. Kahoe, Psychology of Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 5.

⁵Ann Belford Ulanov, "The Anxiety of Being," in Adams, Pauck, and Shinn, The Thought of Paul Tillich, p. 122; cf. Sister Eileen Dolores Hughes, "The Christian Perspective on Individuation: Psychological and Spiritual Helps for the Journey to Wholeness," The Journal of Pastoral Counseling 22 (1987):24-31.

⁶Neil Pembroke, "God in the Life-Cycle: An Integration of Karl Rahner's Theology of Anonymous Faith and Erik Erikson's Psychology of Identity," Journal of Psychology and Christianity 9:1 (Spring 1990):70-78.

of ego development, the developmental stages outlined by Kohlberg, and Fowler's structural developmental model of faith.⁷ There is some value in this approach, but without a cautious recognition of its assumptions and limitations, it is easily overstated.

The conflict model of personality, with its tensions between the conscious and the unconscious, childhood and selfhood, and self and society, may be a more appropriate model of the personality before conversion than the fulfillment model. Theological anthropology generally associates the

⁷Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral Stages and Moralization: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach" in Thomas Lickona, ed., Moral Development and Behavior (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), pp. 31-53; "Implications of Moral Stages for Adult Education," Religious Education 72 (1977):183-201; Jane Loevinger, Ego Development (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976); James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning (New York: Harper & Row, 1981); Stages of Faith and Religious Development: Implications for Church, Education, and Society (New York: Crossroad, 1991); Meadow and Kahoe, Psychology of Religion, pp. 50-61, 324-25, 398, 415; Peter Homans, ed., Childhood and Selfhood (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1978). Some, however, have challenged these parallels (e.g., Paul C. Vitz, "The Use of Stories in Moral Development," American Psychologist 45:6 [June 1990]:709-20).

fallen state with spiritual, personal, and social alienation; on this account, the conflict is intrapsychic and psychosocial, and it is "theopsychic" as well. By the grace of God, the core of personality can be changed, and thus the fulfillment model may be a more apt description of the personality after conversion.⁸

In this study, the theological models of human needs acknowledge the nature of physical needs and converge in the three essential need areas of forgiveness and grace, love and community, and purpose and hope. The psychological models converge in the four basic need areas of survival needs, identity needs, relational needs, and ideological needs. Despite the differences in presuppositions, vocabulary, and proposed solutions to the satisfaction of these needs, there is a correspondence between the theological models and the psychological models.

Both theologians and psychologists recognize survival needs. Since these needs are physiologically based, they must be gratified to a minimal extent if the organism is to endure. There is a difference of opinion as to the content of these survival needs, in that some theorists like Fromm believe that they extend beyond the level of organic or physical needs to psychic needs such as security (Adler) and safety (Maslow).

The need for forgiveness and grace in the theological models corresponds to the identity needs in the psychological models. From a

⁸Van Leeuwen, The Person in Psychology, pp. 223-29.

theological perspective, the human condition is characterized by alienation, estrangement, volitional bondage, and personal guilt caused by the pursuit of finite and temporal concerns above the ultimate and eternal concern of communion with the infinite Creator. The way of forgiveness and restoration of the divine image was initiated by God's grace in the redemptive work of Christ and must be appropriated in the personal response of repentance and faith. Those who respond in this way to the grace of God become a part of the new creation with a new identity and destiny as members of God's family. They are no longer defined by the temporal and immanent order but by the eternal and transcendent, and this new identity as people who have been forgiven and enjoy peace with God is the source of substantial healing of relationships with others.

The psychological models also confront the experience of guilt and estrangement in light of the quest for identity, but they define these words in different ways than the theological models and propose alternative methods of overcoming the problem of alienation. As discussed earlier, some psychologists view identity in terms of individuation, while others see identity in terms of self-actualization. The conflict model approaches identity as the product of psychosocial or intrapsychic adaptation, while the fulfillment model stresses the actualization of human potential through the acceptance of one's intrinsic nature. But both psychological models see guilt as a product of cognitive dysfunction or tension with social mores.

The need for love and community in the theological models corresponds to the relational needs in the psychological models. The theological models approach this need on the vertical as well as the horizontal dimensions, the former providing the foundation for the latter. The unconditional love and acceptance of God in Christ is the foundation of the security, freedom, and significance of those who respond to him in faith, and this relationship should be tangibly expressed in fellowship and community with others that is characterized by mutual love, acceptance, and servanthood.

In the psychological models, both conflict and fulfillment theorists acknowledge relational needs in view of the reality of a social and cultural context in which each individual must cope. In general, the conflict theorists stress the process of becoming a fully functioning individual within the given contingencies of social embeddedness, while the fulfillment theorists emphasize the centrality of love, affection, empathy, and uncritical acceptance, arguing that basic needs can only be satisfied interpersonally.⁹

The need for purpose and hope in the theological models corresponds to the ideological needs in the psychological models. Temporal existence is enriched and enlarged by the hope of unending life in the presence of God and in continual fellowship with the community of the redeemed. Resurrected life is the answer to the apparent meaninglessness caused by

⁹Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. 92-107.

death, and finite concerns take on a new perspective when one embraces the promise of an eternal destiny in communion with the Supreme Good for which the soul was created and without which it can never find true satisfaction or rest.

The psychological models relate ideological needs to the pursuit of meaning and purpose in life. They generally agree that people need a philosophy or a religious ideology that will provide them with a sense of faith, purpose, and hope in spite of the fact that such religious or cultural beliefs are essentially irrational and illusory. Most of the psychologists observe that more scientific and secular ideologies are replacing the function served by the great religions since the latter are losing their hold on contemporary culture. Rank and Jung were less optimistic than the others about the potential of the new soul-denying cognitive systems to provide an adequate foundation for meaning and purpose in view of the certainty of finitude and death.¹⁰

Thus, there is a general correspondence between the need areas recognized by the theological models and those recognized by the

¹⁰In his criticisms of the one-sidedness of Freudian and Adlerian theories that are based upon drives and overlook the spiritual needs or aspirations, Jung concluded that certain religious convictions not founded on reason are a necessity of life for many persons (Modern Man in Search of a Soul, pp. 224, 259, 261, 264, 266, 277-80).

psychological models. But there are significant areas of divergence between the theologians and psychologists, including their views of human nature, guilt, morality, the meaning and purpose of life, and human destiny. The theologians stress that humans are more than biological or psychological beings, and that they cannot be reduced to products of genetics, environment, and historical/social conditions. There is also a transcendent and spiritual dimension to human nature which is systematically overlooked or rationalized by immanentist modes of explanation. Some psychologists like Frankl acknowledge that in view of the fear of non-being, "spiritual aspirations . . . should be taken at face value and should not be tranquilized or analyzed away,"¹¹ but most regard these aspirations as illusory. While the theologians would acknowledge that human existence is shaped by genetic, physiological, social, and behavioral factors, they would add spiritual factors to the list and argue that humans cannot be accounted for in terms of isolated elements, but must be seen from a whole-person perspective. Psychologists have a tendency to so emphasize present reality that they minimize the quest for an ultimate meaning in view of the finality of death; theologians are more

¹¹Viktor E. Frankl, from "Address before the Third Annual Meeting of the Academy of Religion and Mental Health, 1962" in Frank T. Severin, ed., Discovering Man in Psychology: A Humanistic Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), pp. 132-33.

subject to the opposite tendency of so focusing on the final end of man that they underplay present reality.¹²

In general, the theologians in this study approach human nature from a radically different standpoint than that of the psychologists; many of the latter, particularly the humanistic psychologists, assume an inherent goodness in man and blame undesirable behavior on environmental and social conditions or on a failure to actualize one's inner potentialities. Most psychoanalysts deny the theological account of the human condition in their approach to estrangement, anxiety, and guilt as illnesses that can be cured rather than objective states of alienation, and their denial of the actual existence of personal and moral guilt.

Tillich engaged in extensive dialogue with therapists like Erikson, Rogers, Fromm, Hobart Mowrer, and Rollo May, and believed that the movements of existentialism and depth psychology are of great value for theology because of their revelation of hidden levels of reality in human existence. But he was critical of psychology on a number of points and maintained that psychoanalysis may be able to cure people of special difficulties, but it cannot cure them of guilt, emptiness, meaninglessness, or

¹²Meyer, The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 210; Peter Homans, ed., The Dialogue Between Psychology and Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

the terror of life and death.¹³ It is religion, not psychology, that must show a final way to those who must decide about the meaning and aim of their existence.¹⁴ Tillich also criticized Freud's pain-pleasure principle and doctrine of libido as an inadequate reinterpretation of the theological account of concupiscence.¹⁵ The Freudian exposition of human creatureliness combines genuine insight on man's existential predicament with a fallacious theory of his essential nature.¹⁶ Tillich also took issue with existential psychology for attempting to reduce the essence of humans to their existence, and questioned the predominantly individualistic perspectives of the personality theorists.

Rahner argued that while psychology offers many insights on what it is to be human, it cannot define the human person; the mystery of what it is to be a person cannot be reduced to refined psychological concepts.¹⁷ Rahner criticized psychological attempts to explain away guilt, affirming that while

¹³Tillich, Theology of Culture, pp. 120-23; Peter Homans, Theology after Freud (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 66-90.

¹⁴Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 143.

¹⁵Idem, Love, Power, and Justice, pp. 29-30, 116-17.

¹⁶Idem, Systematic Theology, 2:53-54.

¹⁷Rahner, TI, VIII:191; Karl Rahner in Dialogue, p. 222.

psychoanalysis can cure a measure of sickness and suffering, it is only through God that people can be delivered from guilt. People cannot liberate themselves by means of their own resources; if guilt is removed, it must be because of divine forgiveness.¹⁸

Although modern psychology has made a significant contribution to a deeper understanding of human drives, cognition, emotion, behavior, and willing, theologians like Augustine, Aquinas, Edwards, and Kierkegaard understood many of these implications and, like Tillich and Rahner, would have recognized areas of convergence and divergence between psychological and theological anthropology.

Metaphysical and Moral Assumptions
in the Psychological Models

Psychologists generally claim that their systems are scientific because they are derived from empirical data, whereas theologians begin with a commitment to a religious philosophy of life. But as Browning, Vitz, and others have observed, psychologists frequently shift categories from the scientific to the philosophical and the normative in their use of metaphors of ultimacy and theories of moral obligation.¹⁹ By blurring the conceptual

¹⁸Idem, TI, II:278-79; XIII:135.

¹⁹Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies; Vitz, Psychology as Religion; Becker, The Denial of Death; Escape from Evil (New

boundaries between science and broader world view considerations, psychologists are often unaware of their own metaphysical and moral presuppositions as they invoke the authority of science to authenticate their opinions.

York: Free Press, 1975); Richard W. Coan, Hero, Artist, Sage, or Saint? (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979); Thomas Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Malcolm Jeeves, Psychology and Christianity (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1976); David Myers, The Human Puzzle (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); Ronald L. Kotenskey, Psychology from a Christian Perspective (Nashville: Abindgon, 1980); Martin L. Gross, The Psychological Society (New York: Random House, 1978); William Kirk Kilpatrick, Psychological Seduction (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983); The Emperor's New Clothes (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985); Van Leeuwen, The Person in Psychology; The Sorcerer's Apprentice: A Christian Looks at the Changing Face of Psychology (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1982); Martin and Deidre Bobgan, The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1979); MacKay, Human Science and Human Dignity; Brains, Machines and Persons (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980).

The work of each of the psychologists in this study was shaped by metaphysical and moral assumptions. Freud developed a mechanistic and naturalistic model of instinctual tension-reduction that drew upon images from electronics, hydraulics, and organic evolution.²⁰ While Ricoeur argued that Freud held an intersubjective as well as a mechanistic model of the mind, the former consistently drifted toward the latter.²¹ Freud's life and death instincts were metaphors of ultimacy that served as a metaphysical substitute for a religious cosmology and reflected his rationalistic materialism.²² His view of moral obligation was an ethical egoism of civilized detachment.²³

²⁰Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, pp. 35-40.

²¹Paul Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

²²Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, pp. 41-44.

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 30, 47-52; Philip Reiff, Freud: The Mind of the Moralist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); *idem*, The Triumph of the Therapeutic (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). Nevertheless, the content of Freud's ethical requirements coincided with the Mosaic decalogue, though he thought he could substantiate them on a rational rather than a religious basis

Erikson asserted that he left metapsychological questions to experts in these areas,²⁴ but his own discussions on religion and ethics refute this claim. In his own commitment to a humanist world view, he believed that human potentialities are clouded by the archaic fears associated with religious dogma and traditions.²⁵ Erikson thought that such "systems of superstition and exploitation" caused people to look for ultimate concerns in the transcendent when they would be better served by a perspective that looks for such concerns in the sphere of the immanent and immediate.²⁶ Erikson was committed to a generative ethics that related mental health to the capacity to care for succeeding generations. He believed that his ethic of mutuality was based on a more universal standard of perfection and would "mediate more realistically between man's inner and outer worlds than did the compromises resulting from the reign of moral absolutes"²⁷ Thus, he

(Hans Küng, Freud and the Problem of God, trans. Edward Quinn [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979], p. 87).

²⁴Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle, pp. 9, 66-67.

²⁵Idem, Identity: Youth and Crisis, p. 70.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 293-94; Childhood and Society, pp. 417-18.

²⁷Idem, Insight and Responsibility, pp. 157, 221-28; Identity: Youth and Crisis, pp. 140-41.

sought to replace past systems of absolutist ethics with an ethical relativism based on world maintenance through the generational sequence.

Jung's writings are dotted with religious and ethical judgments, but he was more conscious than most psychologists of the metaphysical and moral metaphors and assumptions that necessarily undergird psychological theorizing. In his quest to capture the power of spiritual symbols and make them available to psychological analysis, he rejected traditional Christianity but attempted to reinterpret religious symbols in a nonauthoritarian way for use in the individuation process. Although he sought to avoid metaphysical assertions, his psychological model incorporated metaphors of ultimacy that relate to the ontological dualism of good and evil, the self as the god within man, and the meaning of life.²⁸ He also espoused a theory of obligation that could be called a nonhedonistic ethical egoism: "the actualization of one's unique archetypal ground plan and its epigenetic timetable."²⁹ But this self-realization of archetypal potentialities is inconsistent with his view of the duality of good and evil in human beings, and Jung does not specify the means by which the individuation process of the self could be coordinated with the archetypal needs of others.

Humanistic psychologists like Maslow and Rogers held a far less complicated view of the process of personal growth than did Jung or Rank.

²⁸Jung, Psychology and Religion: West and East, pp. 81-96.

²⁹Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, p. 182.

Instead of the conflicts of polar ambivalence, they adopted the metaphor of ultimate harmony of potentialities in a single actualizing force. In their eudaemonistic ethical egoism, fulfillment is gained when people are true to their own deepest selves, and individual fulfillment is, in turn, complementary to the self-actualization of others. The organismic self-actualization tendency becomes a moral imperative in this psychological model because it replaces external systems of moral judgment, especially those making absolutist claims, with the inner actualizing tendency as the most reliable guide to decision making and the enhancement of life.³⁰

As their careers progressed, Maslow and Rogers came to regard their psychological models as part of a larger philosophy of life which became increasingly monistic in character.³¹ Fromm's secular faith of humanistic religion was also nontheistic and vigorously opposed to traditional, institutionalized religion, but his was more of a secular/scientific humanism than a cosmic humanism. Fromm also developed a very definite agenda for the transformation of society into a humanistic socialism through a

³⁰Rogers, On Becoming a Person, pp. 22-24; A Way of Being, p. 118; Client-Centered Therapy, p. 157.

³¹"A glance at the careers of the most prominent humanistic psychologists shows an almost invariable progression from subjectivist principles to an embrace with Eastern and immanentist modes of thought" (Kilpatrick, The Emperor's New Clothes, p. 47).

humanitarian rather than authoritarian ethical system that is based upon a "science" of human welfare.³²

The psychologists' views of human nature range from the pessimism of Freud to the ambivalence of Jung and Rank to the guarded optimism of Erikson, Adler, and Fromm to the unbounded optimism of Maslow and Rogers. Each of the psychologists claims that his work is founded on empirical observation and scientific research, yet it is evident that their conclusions are profoundly influenced by philosophical and ethical considerations that are not scientifically supportable. It is self-deceptive, even for a scientist, to believe that one is epistemologically, metaphysically, or morally neutral; as Storr noted, "It is impossible to make observations of any kind without an assumed framework."³³ Like other disciplines, psychology is fraught with presuppositions, and to assume a posture of scientific objectivity that ignores these presuppositions is to invite obfuscation, misconception, and delusion.

³²Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 5, 12-13, 21-37.

³³Anthony Storr, The Integrity of the Personality (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1960), pp. 12, 15. "Amongst historians, as in other fields, the blindest of all the blind are those who are unable to examine their own presuppositions, and blithely imagine therefore that they do not possess any" (Herbert Butterfield, Christianity and History [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949], p. 46).

The psychologies in this study have become secular alternatives to the Judeo-Christian world view and often serve as religious surrogates for the psychotherapists who embrace them as well as their patients.³⁴ They are marked by a consummate refusal to consider the option that religious claims could have any real, objective truth. It is not surprising, then, that most psychology texts virtually ignore the philosophical, moral, and religious implications of personality theory.³⁵ Maddi's comprehensive graduate text on personality theory completely omits reference to religious motivation in his discussion of both the core and the periphery of personality. Even when psychologists (whether atheists or believers) study religious conversion, they generally ignore the possibility that God may have had anything to do with the process.³⁶ In part, this assumption stems from a methodological approach

³⁴Paul C. Vitz, "Secular Personality Theories: A Critical Analysis," in Man and Mind: A Christian Theory of Personality, ed. Thomas J. Burke (Hillsdale, Michigan: Hillsdale College Press, 1987), p. 75.

³⁵Idem, "A Covenant Theory of Personality: A Theoretical Introduction," in The Christian Vision: Man in Society, ed. Lynne Morris (Hillsdale, Michigan: Hillsdale College Press, 1984), pp. 77-79.

³⁶James R. Scroggs and William G. T. Douglas, "Issues in the Psychology of Religious Conversion," in Current Perspectives in the

that assumes that a "scientific" method is the only valid avenue of psychological inquiry. But this is to don an epistemological straitjacket that overlooks other forms of knowledge such as philosophical, historical, moral, personal, and religious knowledge, each having its own contributions, limitations, and appropriate means of investigation.³⁷ This inevitably leads to a vicious circle between method and metaphysics.

The very nature of psychological interpretation is such that it "cannot penetrate to the absolutely final or first reality."³⁸ When psychology transcends its limitations and assumes the shape of a world view with its own metaphysical and moral stance, it unavoidably formulates its own orienting

Psychology of Religion, ed. H. Newton Malony (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), p. 262.

³⁷Arthur F. Holmes, Faith Seeks Understanding (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971); idem, Contours of a World View (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983); J. P. Moreland, Christianity and the Nature of Science (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989). When psychology is elevated into a complete explanation of reality, methodological nontheism has been transformed into ideological nontheism.

³⁸Küng, Freud and the Problem of God, p. 80.

mythology.³⁹ Under the cover of ordinary knowledge, it challenges theology by discussing matters of ultimate concern, but framing them within the mystique of "an eschatology of immanence in which the insides of nature will erupt into a new being."⁴⁰ Building on the assumption that God is in eclipse in modern culture, the new psychological belief system replaced the absolute mystery of the transcendent with the relative mystery of the immanent.⁴¹

Psychological Accounts of Theism and

Theological Accounts of Nontheism

The metaphysical presuppositions held by the psychologists in this study are particularly evident in their accounts of religious behavior and

³⁹Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 23-26; Ian Barbour, Myths, Models and Paradigms, (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 49.

⁴⁰Becker, The Denial of Death, p. 276; Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:130-31.

⁴¹"We are living in a world in which depth-psychology is discovering in man abysses which, on the one hand, it seeks to control, not through an appeal to the rational freedom of the subject, but through psychotechnics conceived in terms of natural science and, on the other hand, undertakes to resolve man into the anonymous forces of his biological and social origin" (Rahner, The Practice of Faith, pp. 29-30).

experience. Freud's assessment of religion in Totem and Taboo and The Future of an Illusion, summarized in Chapter 4, exerted a profound influence on subsequent psychoanalytic theory. In Freud's thought, religion serves the important functions of maintaining a sense of control over the forces of nature by personifying those forces and justifying the cost of civilization's diminishment of instinctual gratification by sanctioning social institutions and offering the promise of future compensation. It also provides a cosmic father figure, created in the image of man, that can reduce anxiety and satisfy basic human needs such as provision and security.⁴² Religion creates a sense of purpose in life, but it is an illusion based on human wish-fulfillment that keeps people in a socially infantile state. It is a collective neurosis that once served an important purpose, but must now be superseded in the modern era by a more reasonable foundation for civilization. Freud did not reject religion because it fulfills psychological needs, but because of his belief that it has no rational foundation. Many of his followers, however, went beyond him in

⁴²Many aspects of human behavior contain elements of projection, but this does not mean that the objects of projection do not exist. Similarly, children's attitudes to their fathers may influence their view of God, but this has no bearing on God's existence or character (Küng, Freud and the Problem of God, pp. 77-78).

denying religious truth claims because of their assessment of these claims as the product of the unconscious wishes of those who hold them.⁴³

Erikson viewed organized religion as a social institution that offers a collective reassurance to those whose anxieties accrue from their infantile past. This institution relates to the need for trust and a sense of goodness that develops in its more mature form into a faith in a coherent world-image. Religion "has shrewdly played into man's most child-like needs, not only by offering eternal guarantees for an omniscient power's benevolence (if properly appeased) but also by magic words and significant gestures, soothing sounds and soporific smells--an infant's world" ⁴⁴ Like Freud, Erikson divorced religion from evidence and reason.

Jung held a more positive attitude toward religion than Freud or Erikson and believed that spiritual concerns are necessary to the quest for selfhood. The numinous symbols of religion facilitate the synthesis of conscious and unconscious in the individuation process because of their

⁴³Robert H. Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 74-76; Meadow and Kahoe, Psychology of Religion, pp. 7-11. Freud derived his theory of culture and religion from his general theory of psychology, and this in turn was generalized from his clinical treatment of neurosis.

⁴⁴Erikson, Insight and Responsibility, pp. 153-55; Identity: Youth and Crisis, pp. 82-84.

archetypal significance. However, in his psychological reinterpretation of religion, Jung repudiated the institutions and doctrines of traditional Christianity, arguing that Christian mythology should be interpreted symbolically. Since archetypes like God are derived from the collective unconscious and reflect the spiritual evolution of humanity, it is through them that spiritual experience is gained. Jung's view that the archetypes are synonyms for the unconscious did not cause him to assume the nonexistence of God, but he believed that the existence of an objective reality behind religious experience is beyond the boundaries of human discernment.

In Rank's account of religion, God evolved as the personification of the creative will, and spiritual belief in the soul gradually developed as part of a mythology that assures collective or individual survival and permanence through the denial of death. The need for immortality in view of the finality of death reached its fullest expression in Christianity which replaced both biological and social fatherhood by spiritual fatherhood and gave the ancient Oriental mother-cult a new meaning, leading to a "timeless and stateless spiritual philosophy of two ever-opposed principles."⁴⁵

Maslow and Rogers were interested in substituting a secular and immanentistic philosophy of life for traditional religion, believing that external judgment and authority should be replaced by trust in the

⁴⁵Rank, Beyond Psychology, p. 142; cf. pp. 102-4, 147, 159-67, 181, 224, 235, 240; Psychology and the Soul, pp. 73-79, 92, 153-54.

actualization tendency. In their vision of a secular religion, the realization of human potential is part of a greater transpersonal formative tendency at work in the universe.

Adler viewed the idea of God as a culturally evolved expression of the concept of perfection and superiority, a corporate fiction that provides a goal of harmonious social interest. Like Freud, he believed that the modern world requires a more scientifically enlightened substitute for religion. Fromm saw the need for a frame of orientation and devotion as a religious issue and believed that it could be satisfied by either a rational or an irrational faith. He criticized traditional religious expressions as irrational and authoritarian in contrast to the rational and humanistic religion of secular faith in human strength. Fromm associated authoritarian religion, particularly Protestantism, with herd conformity, humiliating submission, infantile attitudes, and feelings of insignificance and guilt.⁴⁶

In general, then, the psychological accounts of religious belief, particularly Christian theism, include the following: religion evolved as a human response to the fear of nature and death, personifies these forces in an attempt to control and placate them, involves infantile wish-projection, offers relief from guilt and anxiety, provides a sense of purpose and hope of

⁴⁶Fromm, The Fear of Freedom, pp. 82, 86-87; Man for Himself, pp. 197-209; The Dogma of Christ, p. 12; Psychoanalysis and Religion, pp. 17, 44-56, 82-98.

immortality, and creates a communal ideology that sanctions social institutions. This explanation has much in common with functionalist accounts of religion (such as that of Emile Durkheim) that religion developed in response to the need for social stability and legitimizes corporate structures through a common mythology.⁴⁷ The functionalist analysis acknowledges the sociological function that religion serves and is more positive than psychological accounts that reduce religion to an oppressive atavism from primitive tribalism.

The ascendancy of psychology was proportionate to the sociocultural decline of religious ideology. The meaning vacuum left by the secularization of modern culture had to be filled by a religious surrogate, and psychology has often attempted to fill this epistemological gap.⁴⁸ Theologians have responded to this challenge on a number of levels, including that of turning the tables by arguing that if there is a psychology of theism, there is also a psychology of nontheism.

When the questions of the existence of God and the ontological status of religious claims are reduced to an issue of practical meaningfulness in the

⁴⁷Susan Budd, Sociologists and Religion (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1973), pp. 42-43; Jerry H. Gill, Faith in Dialogue (Waco, Texas: Jarrell [Word Books], 1985), pp. 51-55.

⁴⁸Homans, Jung in Context, pp. 8-9, 194. Theissen, Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology, pp. 11-28.

lives of adherents, theologians and philosophers of religion respond that subjective meaning cannot decide the question of objective reality. Some psychologists are guilty of committing the genetic fallacy when they assert that their accounts of religious origins are tantamount to a refutation of religious beliefs. These beliefs satisfy deep psychological needs, but this proves nothing about the validity or falsehood of their truth claims, nor does it affirm that they are ultimately based on these needs. And even if any of the psychological accounts fully explained the origin of religion, it would be a daunting task to establish that it in fact originated in this way, since this is a matter of history rather than philosophy or psychology. The real issue is not why people fear the contingencies of their existence, but why there are beings in a contingent universe who are concerned with problems of contingency.⁴⁹ Historical religions confront the problem of how to bear the end of life, and if they lose their grip on people's lives, Becker (who sought to integrate insights from Freud and Kierkegaard) argues that people still need what classical

⁴⁹R. C. Sproul, The Psychology of Atheism (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1974), pp. 48-50. The Freudian argument that religious belief evolved from an infantile need for a universal father figure overlooks the fact that belief in God, especially as a father, is not a part of the most primitive religions (Ralph W. Clark, "The Evidential Value of Religious Experiences," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 16 [1984]:200).

religions have provided, i.e., a lived creative illusion that does not lie about the genuine experience of guilt and the existential terror of life and death.⁵⁰

While the correlation method in theology sees Christianity as the answer to the questions surfaced in the deepest moments in human experience, theologians argue that the God of Christian theism is not merely a job description, shaped to solve and placate the problems of human existence. They contend that God is not an anthropomorphic projection; humanity is defined by the God of creation and revelation, not the other way around, and he must be sought for himself, not for his gifts. Prayer is not a matter of auto-suggestion, and "the word 'father' is not the projection into the infinite of childish, subjective concepts which aim at a prerational domination of his existence, but is authorised by a God who, working in everything, liberated his creatures to his own freedom and love"⁵¹ Rahner claims that Christians are the only people who do not need to reach for an opiate or an analgesic, because they can be "willing to drink the chalice of the death of this existence with Jesus Christ" since they understand that in Christ this earthly existence passes through death into life.⁵²

⁵⁰Becker, The Denial of Death, pp. 11-12, 190-91, 200-204, 275.

⁵¹Rahner, The Practice of Faith, p. 40.

⁵²Idem, Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 404.

The reductionism of psychological and sociological interpretations of religious belief is a sword that can cut both ways; just as theism may satisfy deeply felt longings, so atheism may appeal to the human quest for autonomy, the illusion of control, and the fear of moral accountability before a personal Creator. Theologians have observed that the infinite-personal God of Judeo-Christian theism is not the comforting and reassuring kind of being that people would want to invent. Personal encounter with the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, holy, and awesome mysterium tremendum can be an overpowering and profoundly traumatic ordeal of disintegration and nakedness as the experiences of Job, Habakkuk, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, and others testify.⁵³ Exposure to and by the numinous gaze of God is an unsettling encounter that can lead to repentance, but the threat of God's moral excellence and sovereignty also produces the response of rebellion. Edwards' assessment of the human condition is that "men naturally are God's enemies."⁵⁴ This is consistent with the account of human rebellion in Romans 1 which could be described in psychological terms as the trauma of divine holiness ("For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men"), the response of repression ("who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is

⁵³Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950 [1917]).

⁵⁴Edwards, Men Naturally Are God's Enemies, 2:130-41.

plain to them, because God has shown it to them"), and the substitution of religious surrogates that reshape and distort the threat of God with images that are more palatable to human wishes.⁵⁵

Thus, both predispositional and presuppositional issues are involved in religious and secular belief systems, and the question of the rationality of religious versus secular belief cannot be settled by psychodynamic

⁵⁵Sproul, The Psychology of Atheism, pp. 56-155; Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, pp. 75-76; C. Stephen Evans, Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1985), p. 130. "Religion is explained away in the cognitive realm as being derived from psychological or sociological forces and is considered as illusion or ideology, while in the aesthetic realm, religious symbols are replaced by finite objects in the different naturalistic styles, especially in critical naturalism and some types of non-objective art. . . . Within large sections of contemporary mankind, this reductive way of profanizing religion, reduction by annihilation, is tremendously successful Religion can be secularized and finally dissolved into secular forms only because it has the ambiguity of self-transcendence" (Tillich, Systematic Theology, 3:101).

considerations.⁵⁶ If the psychologists' position that religious belief is based solely on need fulfillment is true, this would indeed pose a serious challenge to the plausibility of theological truth claims. But the fiat dismissal by psychologists of the rationality of religious belief is based on the unfounded assumption that there is no weight to the evidential and rational arguments that have been refined for centuries by theologians, apologists, and philosophers of religion. It is true that some theologians (e.g., Kierkegaard and Barth) have taken a more fideistic approach to theism than others, but this does not diminish the abundance of rational evidence that has been offered in defense of the Christian world view.

The Role of Human Needs in the
Justification of Religious Belief

As the perception that religion has become rationally and culturally deficient grows in the modern era, it becomes increasingly difficult for people to commit themselves to an ideology based upon the transcendent and invisible. Christian apologetics addresses this popular conception, and an effort of unprecedented proportion and sophistication has been underway in recent years by apologists and philosophers of religion to challenge this perception and to demonstrate the superior credibility, coherence, and

⁵⁶Rahner, TL, VII:12; Gill, Faith in Dialogue, pp. 53-55; C. Stephen Evans, Preserving the Person (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1977), pp. 42, 78.

comprehensiveness of the theistic world view in the pluralistic marketplace of competing explanatory constructs.⁵⁷ In the past several decades, Christian apologists have developed a variety of evidential, rational, presuppositional, and subjective arguments in defense of the faith, and there has been a growth in combinatorialist apologetics that synthesizes many lines of argument. The phenomenological argument for the justification of religious belief from the nature of human needs may not be convincing on its own, but it can supplement a combinatorialist apologetic. While it is beyond the scope of this section to develop this argument, a cursory sketch of some of its prominent features will be made.

Psychological Factors in Belief

Acquisition and Validation

⁵⁷Prominent titles in this vast literature include Norman Geisler, Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976); Peter Kreeft, Fundamentals of the Faith (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988); J. P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987); Alvin Plantinga, God and Other Minds (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967); The Nature of Necessity (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974); God, Freedom, and Evil (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974); Richard Swinburne, The Coherence of Theism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); The Existence of God (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

1. An excessive disjunction between rational inquiry and personal faith overlooks the fact that the mind/heart distinction is slippery. The dichotomy between an algorithm and an irrational leap falsely assumes that cognition and affection are entirely separate domains of mental life, when in reality, every emotional state has a component of knowledge and every cognitive state has a component of feeling.⁵⁸ This cognitive-affective fusion means that cumulative reasoning is person-relative; there is a personal participation of the knower in all acts of understanding.⁵⁹ To build up the case for any proposition, informal evidences must be trusted, since "the rationality of holding a belief is not entirely a matter of its epistemic justification."⁶⁰ Classical evidentialism neglects the critical role that personal values and psychological factors play in belief acquisition. But personal

⁵⁸Gordon W. Allport, The Individual and His Religion (New York: Macmillan Company, 1950), pp. 18, 83, 160; Evans, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 164-71.

⁵⁹Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. vii, 17; Louis P. Pojman, Religious Belief and the Will (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 86.

⁶⁰Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright, eds., Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 10.

knowledge does not rule out rational inquiry; a comprehensive approach to knowing integrates rather than dichotomizes personal experience and rational reflection.⁶¹ Different modes of validation such as reason, personal experience, and practicality can be mutually supportive in a whole-person approach that includes the analytic and the intuitive modes and allows for tacit as well as explicit knowing.⁶²

2. Faith is a universal experience that involves the risk of commitment beyond knowledge. All people, including the atheist and the scientist, are committed to some kind of world view (whether articulated or not) in a way that is incommensurate with rational proof. But the component of faith need not eliminate a quest for rationality, since both can be present. Faith and rationality can be viewed as a dialectical process in which faith seeks understanding and leads to it, while understanding generates faith and

⁶¹Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, pp. 17-18; Meadow and Kahoe, Psychology of Religion, p. 10; Pojman, Religious Belief and the Will, pp. 183-87; John A. Clippinger, "Toward a Human Psychology of Personality," in Malony, Current Perspectives in the Psychology of Religion, p. 312; Gary Gutting, Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), pp. 141-76.

⁶²Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1966); Milton Rokeach, The Open and Closed Mind (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960).

deepens it.⁶³ Pojman notes that from a biblical perspective, "there is just enough evidence for a person passionately concerned but not enough to produce a comfortable proof."⁶⁴ Religious belief requires decisive rather than interim assent because it involves not merely belief about, but belief in; the object of the former is a proposition, but the object of the latter is a person.⁶⁵ There is a qualitative difference in believing a person that includes deeper levels of trust and hope. In the absence of apodictic certainty, mature faith is forged in a context of doubt, particularly since religious belief entails the commitment to temporal risk for eternal gain.⁶⁶

3. Religious belief and behavior is motivationally overdetermined in that multiple factors, including human needs, are involved in the processes of

⁶³Evans, Preserving the Person, p. 141; Richard Swinburne, Faith and Reason (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds., Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

⁶⁴Pojman, Religious Belief and the Will, pp. 198-200, 209-10.

⁶⁵J. Kellenberger, "Three Models of Faith," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 12 (1981):218-31.

⁶⁶Gutting, Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism, pp. 106-8; Robert C. Roberts, "Thinking Subjectively," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 11 (1980):83-86, 91.

conversion and growth in faith. Psychological categories and interpretations cannot account for the complexion of subjective experience involved in religious belief and practice.⁶⁷ The huge constellation of diverse psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence religious belief render each case unique and unpredictable. These factors include: socio-economic status; personal values; temperament and personality mode; mental capacity; response to cultural influences; socially shared set of meanings; levels of conflict; suggestibility; religious background; level of cognitive dissonance; cultural belief system; extent of self-esteem; sense of security; psychological adjustment; strategies of accommodation; exposure to manipulation, exploitation, and coercion; psychogenic interests; attitude toward authority; and unsatisfied survival, identity, relational, and ideological needs.⁶⁸ In view

⁶⁷Michael Argyle and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, The Social Psychology of Religion (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 26, 77-79, 99-100, 124-30, 179-207; Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, pp. 15-17.

⁶⁸Walter Houston Clark, The Psychology of Religion (New York: Macmillan Company, 1958), pp. 387-408; Allport, The Individual and His Religion, pp. 9-10; Meadow and Kahoe, Psychology of Religion, pp. 40-43, 97-102; Malony, Current Perspectives in the Psychology of Religion, pp. 173-87, 201-23, 246, 262; Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, pp. 20-25, 58-63.

of this, group comparisons and correlational statistics should be supplemented by N=1 (single case) methodology.⁶⁹ While functionalist reasons (e.g., personality integration, guilt and fear reduction) may be involved in religious belief, they do not wholly account for it.

4. The whole complex of people's belief structure strongly influences the way in which they devise and weigh theories; their analysis of arguments for or against religious belief is affected by the subjective commitments they bring with them.⁷⁰ The extremes of nonperspectivism (evaluation of evidence is uninfluenced by one's conceptual framework) and hard perspectivism (reason can only have intramural significance, since different fiduciary frameworks make interchange between world views impossible) can be avoided by the more realistic course of soft perspectivism that recognizes the role of conceptual frameworks in evidential evaluation but still allows communication between frameworks because of shared rules of inference,

⁶⁹H. Newton Malony, "N=1 Methodology in the Psychology of Religion," in Malony, Current Perspectives in the Psychology of Religion, pp. 352-67.

⁷⁰Nicholas Wolterstorff, Reason Within the Bounds of Religion (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 11-16, 62-66; Evans, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 58-78, 139, 161-63.

basic beliefs, and sympathetic imagination.⁷¹ Thus, one's evaluation of the rational merit of theistic arguments depends on one's personal experiences and cognitive framework; the teleological argument may be persuasive to person A, mildly compelling to person B, and unconvincing to person C.⁷² Each person has a distinctive noetic structure that involves complex valuational attachments to beliefs depending upon depth of ingress or centrality in the personality. The greater the ingress of belief, the more difficult it is to dislodge it.

5. There is a reciprocal relationship between belief and behavior, attitude and action, thought and experience. The simultaneous dynamics of living necessitate a circularity that has no beginning. Thus, faith is both a source of action and a consequence of action; acts of obedience and worship influence belief, and belief properly leads to behavioral response. Kierkegaard's radical volitionalism stresses active risking in hope more than knowledge and creedal affirmation; for him, objectivity without subjective response is an enemy of Christian faith. Most philosophers of religion affirm that religious beliefs are more than propositions, since they involve how

⁷¹Pojman, Religious Belief and the Will, pp. 197-98; 246; Gill, Faith in Dialogue, pp. 101-2.

⁷²Norman Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," in The Existence of God, ed. John Hick (New York: Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 67; Pojman, Religious Belief and the Will, p. 153.

people think and how they live. The biblical mutuality of faith and works stresses that faith is not merely a matter of mental assent or rational reflection, but a way of life. Christian faith is relational in that it involves trust and commitment to a personal being.

The Relevance of Human Needs to the Rationality of Religious Belief

1. While theistic apologetics is usually concerned with objective and rational evidence, arguments for religious belief can also be based on the affective dimension of human existence, including aspirations for more than this world can offer, and the quest for meaning and purpose. The argument from human needs offers subjective evidence that functions as an important component in a cumulative case for religious belief built on human experience.⁷³ Other strands of subjective evidence that can be woven together

⁷³Philosophers have distinguished two general types of justification for religious beliefs. If there is sufficient reason for thinking that belief in a proposition or in a person will have beneficial consequences for the believer, one has utilitarian justification for the belief (e.g., Pascal's Wager). If there is sufficient reason for thinking that a belief is true, one has evidential justification for the belief. Some philosophers argue that the satisfaction of human needs through religious belief has utilitarian but not evidential justification (Diogenes Allen, The Reasonableness of Faith [Washington: Corpus Books, 1968]; "Motives, Rationales, and Religious Beliefs," American

into a strong cumulative and multidimensional argument include the experience of conflict between good and evil in human nature, mystical experiences of a numinous nature, experiences of spiritual immanence, correlations between mental health and adjustment to spiritual reality, and the facts of psychical research.⁷⁴

2. The argument from human needs is not postulating the existence of God on the grounds of human needs, since this would reduce God to an anthropomorphic projection. As Rahner observed,

that approach in which we invoke the idea that we cannot manage either at the individual or the social level without the idea of God has to be viewed with the utmost caution and critical realism. . . . When

Philosophical Quarterly 3 [1966]:111-27; William Lad Sessions, "Religious Faith and Rational Justification," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 13 [1982]:143-56). Others contend that there is evidential justification for religious beliefs based on the satisfaction of human needs (C. Stephen Evans, Subjectivity and Religious Belief [Washington: University Press of America, 1982]; Paul Helm, The Varieties of Belief [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973]; Robert Holyer, "Human Needs and the Justification of Religious Belief," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 17 [1985]:29-40). The position taken here is that satisfaction of needs in the lives of believers provides subjective evidence for their beliefs.

⁷⁴Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, pp. 146-47; Gutting, Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism, pp. 110-11.

theism is invoked as a postulate for shaping the world in a way that makes the course of human life in it reasonably humane and tolerable, it almost inevitably arouses the suspicion in the mind of modern man of being a fictitious ideology. It is quite useful, but for that very reason incurs the suspicion of being a mere fiction. The question of whether we believe in God certainly has some importance too for human living in its fully concrete reality. But if we attempt to persuade either ourselves or another to believe in God precisely in order that these very real advantages ensuing from belief in God may be gained, then in the majority of cases today the psychological mechanism which we seek to set in motion in this way will fail to function in view of the fact that the world as we experience it is so terrible.⁷⁵

Instead, the argument states that the satisfaction of human needs in the lives of those whose trust and hope are in God constitutes legitimate subjective evidence that reinforces the religious commitment they already have. It is not that God exists as a cosmic satisfier of human needs, but that human needs are part of God's created order, and by their nature can only be fully met when humans are rightly related to their Creator.

3. If it is claimed that the satisfaction of human needs offers evidential justification for religious beliefs, it is necessary to examine religious experience to discern the extent to which needs are satisfied in the lives of believers relative to unbelievers. Along these lines, it is relevant to note that most of the psychologists in this study acknowledge the role and importance of some form of religious belief or at least a secular surrogate for religious belief. At the same time, it is also necessary to give an account of counter instances in which religious belief, far from satisfying psychological needs, actually appears to stifle and narrow the personality. There are many

⁷⁵Rahner, II, XI:174-75. (Italics his.)

religious believers whose lives appear to be joyless and legalistic and whose personalities are characterized by a hard carapace of defensive strategies. Since the inception of Christianity, believers have been aware of the problems of hypocrisy, legalism, and dead orthodoxy, but they maintain that these distortions do not diminish the fact that, on the whole, religious belief makes a significant difference in the need areas of faith, hope, and love.

4. Theism offers a better solution to the basic identity needs, relational needs, and ideological needs of humans than secular and religious alternatives. It provides an ultimate and personal foundation for identity and morality as well as a cure to the problem of personal guilt through divine forgiveness. It answers the relational need for love and community through restoration of man's broken relationship with God which in turn makes the agape of God available for the restoration of relationships and community with others. And it meets the ideological need by opening "a horizon of expectation" to those who have staked their final purpose and hope on the character and promises of God.⁷⁶ In contrast, secular alternatives like scientism and humanism offer only finite meanings and temporal purposes; man is reduced to a sociobiological vehicle programmed to preserve its selfish genes; the universe becomes a closed system in an irrational and impersonal universe that will ultimately undergo entropic dissolution; values

⁷⁶Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope (London: SCM Press, Ltd, 1967), pp. 91, 337-38.

are at best subjective and relative; humanity is subject to the idolatry of chance that allows no room for the transcendent; and the vision for the future wavers between the extreme of presumption in an illusory hope of the self-mastery of the human race in a secular eschatology of progress through linear time and the opposite extreme of despair (e.g., the hopelessness of existentialism).⁷⁷ Religious alternatives to theism in which ultimate reality is personal but not infinite (e.g., polytheism, Mahayana Buddhism) or infinite but not personal (e.g., monism, Theravada Buddhism, the New Age Movement) are also unable to fully satisfy human needs. Beyond survival needs, human needs in the final analysis are relational (identity needs and ideological needs cannot be satisfied in a relational vacuum).⁷⁸ And the only

⁷⁷A. R. Peacocke, Creation and the World of Science (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 164, 329-37; Richard Dawkins, The Selfish Gene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); The Blind Watchmaker (Harlow, Essex: Longman Scientific & Technical, 1986); David L. Edwards, A Reason to Hope (London: Collins, 1978), p. 201; Don Cupitt, The Worlds of Science and Religion (London: Sheldon Press, 1976), p. 107.

⁷⁸This argument must deal with the problem of circularity in defining the needs of humans in such a way that Christian theism will meet them. In Western culture, affected as it is by Christianity, fulfillment is thought of in terms of developing active potentialities and deepening personal relationships. But a self-emptying ideology with little emphasis on personal

sure foundation for unlimited meaning and security of hope in a contingent universe is an absolute, infinite, and sovereign being. Theism, with its belief in a God who is both personal and infinite, can best meet human needs because it corresponds to the deepest human aspirations of unending existence in a creative personal context.

5. The argument from desire or Sehnsucht mentioned in C. S. Lewis and developed by Peter Kreeft is also relevant to the issue of human needs since it relates to the lack of perfect contentment in this life and the longing for a joy that transcends any earthbound experience or comprehension.⁷⁹ As Kreeft outlines the argument,

The major premise of the argument is that every natural or innate desire in us bespeaks a corresponding real object that can satisfy the desire.

The minor premise is that there exists in us a desire which nothing in time, nothing on earth, no creature, can satisfy.

relationships is characteristic of forms of Eastern religion. On the other hand, one can argue that very few people in Eastern societies live as though relational disinterest is desirable.

⁷⁹C. S. Lewis, The Pilgrim's Regress (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1933, 1958), p. 10; Mere Christianity (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1943, 1945, 1952), pp. 118-21; Peter Kreeft, Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), pp. 201-32.

The conclusion is that there exists something outside of time, earth, and creatures which can satisfy this desire.⁸⁰ The defense of this argument is beyond the compass of this study, but the concept is reminiscent of the Augustinian "vision of human life as a quest for infinite satisfaction, fueled by a torrent of desire that cannot rest in anything less"⁸¹ as well as Tillich's apologetic strategy of exposing existential questions to which Christianity provides an answer.

The Problem of Self-interest and Self-love

An extended discussion of human needs raises the problem of self-interest and self-love; is it wrongfully self-centered to be concerned with the satisfaction of one's psychological needs? The answers to this question range along a continuum from the pole of absolute detachment from the interests of self in complete ascetic abandon, to the opposite pole of egocentricity and idolatry of the self. The former has an anti-creation orientation along the lines of Manichaeism, while the latter is a case of autonomous self-worship. Both theologians and Christian psychologists have criticized humanistic psychology for moving toward the second extreme. They charge that psychologists have placed such an emphasis on becoming an independent

⁸⁰Kreeft, Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing, pp. 201-2. (Italics his.)

⁸¹Robert Merrihew Adams, "The Problem of Total Devotion," in Audi and Wainwright, Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment, p. 173.

self-actualizing individual that they have lost sight of what it means to be a person in relation. Adler's Individual Psychology, Jung's individuation process, Rank's creative individual, and Fromm's man for himself find their epitome in the Maslow/Rogers vision of self-esteem and actualization of human potential.⁸² Since the self with its unlimited potential is virtually a god, the sacrament in Rogers' secular invitation to be born again is self-actualization, and the purpose of life is one's own personal development.⁸³ It is not surprising, then, that humanistic psychologists regard the Christian

⁸²Drawing on the philosophical distinction between the autonomous individual and the person who exists in covenant and connection with others (e.g., Jacques Maritain, The Person and the Common Good [Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1966]), Vitz asserts that due to Rogers' psychological agenda, his book, On Becoming a Person would more aptly be titled, On Becoming an Individual ("A Covenant Theory of Personality," pp. 95-96).

⁸³Kilpatrick, The Emperor's New Clothes, pp. 148-51. If self-esteem or self-actualization is perceived as one's deepest need, it would be more appropriate for one to turn to Rogers and Maslow than to the New Testament. Humanistic psychology focuses on self-worth coram hominibus (before humans); the New Testament deals with the issue of moral worth coram Deo (before God); cf. Michael Scott Horton, ed., Power Religion (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), pp. 245-61.

practice of self-denial and sacrificial service as obstacles rather than agents of personal growth. On their account, fulfillment is attained through the realization of wants and is blocked by conformity and obedience to the will of another (whether God or man). Thus, Fromm criticizes what he takes to be the Protestant view that self-love is synonymous with selfishness, claiming that they are in fact opposites, since those who do not love themselves cannot love others.⁸⁴ Maslow, Rogers, and Fromm dispute any bifurcation between individualism and altruism because they believe that "self-actualizing people are simultaneously the most individualistic and the most altruistic and social and loving of all human beings."⁸⁵

One of the fundamental differences between the psychologists and the theologians in this study is that the latter believe that human love at its best and most profound must be a reflection of divine love; the natural loves of affection, friendship, and eros are incomplete and inadequate unless they are empowered by the divine love of agape.⁸⁶ While agape involves self-sacrifice for the good of others, it need not eliminate personal benefit or fulfillment,

⁸⁴Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 119-40.

⁸⁵Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 156.

⁸⁶C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1960).

because it is expressed through the mutuality of natural human loves in such a way that the outcome is both divine and human.⁸⁷

One's concept and evaluation of self-love depends on one's view of human nature. Those who hold a negative view (Freud) will see self-love in narcissistic terms; those with an ambivalent view (Jung and Rank) see it in ambiguous terms; those with a positive view (Erikson, Adler, and Fromm) see it as beneficial; and those with a completely optimistic view (Maslow and Rogers) see it terms of actualization and altruism. While the psychologists in this study deny an absolute foundation for objective truth and morality, the theologians see both the dignity and depravity of humanity since they relate man to God as the ultimate ground of the true, the beautiful, and the good. As Pascal observed, the grandeur of man is in his creation in the image of God, but the degradation of man is in his moral and spiritual rebellion against his Creator; thus, there is no place for despair or room for pride for those who repent of their sin and receive God's grace in forgiveness. When

⁸⁷Agape and eros are not entirely separate, pace Nygren and Bultmann; instead, divine love completes the human loves (Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, 2 vols. [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941], 2:84; Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953]; M. C. D'Arcy, The Mind and Heart of Love [New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947]; Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, p. 57).

founded on the love of God, loving oneself as a creature is appropriate, but self-love is misappropriated when it is elevated above the love and claims of God, for then it idolatrously usurps divine authority.

The theologians agree that God must be loved for himself and not for his benefits, but they also affirm that when the Supreme Good is loved above all other goods, one is delivered from the devouring egoism which distorts self-love without losing the desire for joy. Only when this desire is subordinated to the desire for God does it find its own fulfillment as well.⁸⁸ "The human being attains his or her fulfillment in one single, total act of his or her existence: in the love of God for his own sake. But this fulfillment is, precisely, only reached when not it but God is sought."⁸⁹ Thus, Bernard of Clairvaux distinguished four degrees of love: man loves himself for his own sake, loves God for man's own blessing, loves God for God's own sake, and loves himself for God's sake.⁹⁰ It is in this way that one finds life by losing it for Christ's sake.⁹¹ In the New Testament, self-denial is not an end in itself,

⁸⁸Maritain, Moral Philosophy, pp. 78-79.

⁸⁹Rahner, The Practice of Faith, p. 135.

⁹⁰Bernard of Clairvaux, The Love of God, ed. James M. Houston (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1983), pp. 154-60.

⁹¹In a discussion on Kierkegaard, Becker writes, "The self must be destroyed, brought down to nothing, in order for self-transcendence to begin.

but the means of weaning the human heart from the pursuit of lesser goods to the Supreme Good for which it was created.⁹² But it requires a miracle of grace for one to surrender selflessly to God in faith, hope and love.⁹³

Western Christianity since Augustine has been criticized by some observers as being excessively concerned with individual issues such as the introspective conscience and how God works redemption on the personal

Then the self can begin to relate itself to powers beyond itself. It has to thrash around in its finitude, it has to 'die,' in order to question that finitude, in order to see beyond it to infinitude, to absolute transcendence, to the Ultimate Power of Creation which made finite creatures" (The Denial of Death, p. 89).

⁹²"[I]f we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased" (C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," in The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949], pp. 1-2).

⁹³Rahner, The Religious Life Today, pp. 48-49.

rather than corporate level.⁹⁴ Yet the biblical picture is not distorted by concern on the personal level, but when the personal is separated from the communal in such a way that people are seen as autonomous centers of knowing and judging rather than persons whose humanity is manifested in relatedness and mutual dependence on others.⁹⁵ It is through bonds of commitment to others that people become fully human, and the true source of unconditional commitment in self-giving love is not the organismic self-actualization tendency, but the unconditional love, acceptance, and

⁹⁴Stendahl argues that "the introspective conscience reached its theological climax and explosion in the Reformation, and its secular climax and explosion in Sigmund Freud" (Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, pp. 16-17).

⁹⁵Alistair I. McFadyen, The Call to Personhood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 17-66; Lesslie Newbigin, The Other Side of 1984 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), pp. 56-57. "We are all equal in our basic need for survival; this is the need we share with the animals. But to be human means to need other things--respect, honor, love. These needs, social rather than merely biological, call precisely for differentiation rather than for equality. . . . It is only within a shared community of mutual respect, honor, and love freely given that needs are acknowledged as the ground for claims of right" (Lesslie Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks [London: SPCK, 1986], pp. 120-21).

forgiveness of God.⁹⁶ When people love God completely (above all other loves, and for himself, not for his gifts), they become capable of loving themselves correctly (seeing themselves as God sees them--forgiven, beloved of God, children of light) and loving others compassionately (with selfless caritas). The more clearly they discover that their needs for identity, love, and hope are met in Christ, the freer they are to love and serve others unconditionally.⁹⁷ They are no longer bound to manipulate relationships in the quest for need fulfillment, since it is their Creator and Redeemer who satisfies their needs for security and significance.⁹⁸

Immanent Versus Transcendent

Solutions to Human Needs

⁹⁶Vitz, Psychology as Religion, pp. 91-105; "A Covenant Theory of Personality," p. 93; Storr, The Integrity of the Personality, pp. 31-37, 44, 145; Mark P. Cosgrove, Psychology Gone Awry (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), pp. 123-37.

⁹⁷Gordon Stanley, "Sensitization Techniques and Interpersonal Relations," in Jeeves, Behavioural Sciences: A Christian Perspective, p. 200; Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, pp. 140-59.

⁹⁸Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975); Effective Biblical Counseling (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977).

One's view of needs, particularly the solution to how they can best be fulfilled, depends on one's view of reality, i.e., the nature and destiny of human beings and the universe in which they live. As discussed earlier in this chapter, world views are unavoidable, and each person, whether a scientist, a psychologist, or a theologian, must account for the universality of moral and mystical experience in terms of the metaphysical and axiological presuppositions he brings to the evidence. The atheist claims that moral and religious experience should be seen as being "taken out of oneself" rather than originating from beyond oneself, while the theist holds that this experience points to God's action in the world.⁹⁹ The former may think he is applying Occam's razor to the phenomenological evidence, while the latter would criticize this approach as reductionistic. When scientific naturalism eliminated teleology as a heuristic construct, methodological reductionism spread to other disciplines such as ethics, philosophy, theology, and psychology.¹⁰⁰ Psychologists who disavow the spiritual realm must eliminate the spiritual or frame it in terms of the psychological, and this reductionistic method assumes ab initio that reports of the existence of a dimension beyond

⁹⁹David Brown, The Divine Trinity (London: Duckworth, 1985), pp. 16-18.

¹⁰⁰Del Ratzsch, Philosophy of Science (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986), pp. 100-104; Moreland, Christianity and the Nature of Science, pp. 103-38.

the space-time continuum must be spurious or misguided. This results in a conceptual flatness, as Browning observes in his comparison of the basic metaphors of the Christian faith with the metaphors of ultimacy of the modern psychologies. In contrast with the richness and multidimensionality of the former, "The deep metaphors of the modern psychologies--life or death, harmony, natural selection, etc.--tend to be singular and one dimensional."¹⁰¹ When psychology eliminates the transcendent, "the soul's center of gravity may be transferred from the center--from the point of personal responsibility in the presence of the Unconditioned--to the impersonal, unconscious, purely natural sphere."¹⁰²

It is helpful to recognize multiple levels of description when seeking to account for human behavior, just as a poem can be viewed on many levels such as markings of ink on paper, alphabetical letters, words, grammar and syntax, or an aesthetic creation.¹⁰³ Each of these levels yields truth about the poem, but none of them are exhaustive of the whole. Thus, religious

¹⁰¹Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies; p. 137.

¹⁰²Tillich, The Religious Situation, p. 140.

¹⁰³Evans, Preserving the Person, pp. 110-12, 150-51; Jeeves, "Christian Belief, Experience and Practice in the Light of Expanding Psychological Knowledge," pp. 27-30; David G. Myers and Malcolm A. Jeeves, Psychology through the Eyes of Faith (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), pp. 5-10.

conversion can be interpreted in terms of sociocultural influences, but this level of description does not exclude higher or lower levels. Clearly, there is an asymmetry about these levels of description, since the more comprehensive levels can account for the lower, but the lower levels cannot account for the higher without distorting or debunking them. Another way of viewing this is to think of reality as "comprised of simultaneously interpenetrating dimensions arranged according to a hierarchy of richness and comprehensiveness" so that the spiritual realm is "contiguous with the rest of experience without its being reducible to it."¹⁰⁴

Post-Enlightenment society has been increasingly characterized by the cultural phenomena of secularization, privatization, and pluralization.¹⁰⁵ In the modern pluralistic context of competing ideologies, three major world views have become prominent: scientific (secular) humanism, cosmic humanism (monism/pantheism), and theism. When theism is abandoned, as it was by each of the psychologists in this study, the dominant remaining options are scientific humanism (Freud, Adler, Rank, Erikson) and cosmic

¹⁰⁴Gill, Faith in Dialogue, pp. 116-19.

¹⁰⁵Peter L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967); A Rumor of Angels (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1969); Martin E. Marty, The Modern Schism (London: SCM Press, 1969); Os Guinness, The Gravedigger File (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1983).

humanism (Jung, Maslow, Rogers, and Fromm moved in this direction). The conflict theorists tended toward the scientific version of humanism, while the fulfillment theorists tended toward the cosmic version.

The rapid territorial expansion of scientific humanism in cultural ideology was aided by the claim that modern science "destroyed the old public, objective and cosmological kind of religion" so that religious beliefs and values no longer fit with a scientifically coherent picture of the world.¹⁰⁶ From the point of view of the modern scientific consciousness, Judeo-Christianity seems preposterous, and the idea of the supernatural should be jettisoned; there is "no room in the Cosmos for an absolutely transcending objective mind and an absolutely transcending God."¹⁰⁷ This

¹⁰⁶Cupitt, The Worlds of Science and Religion, pp. 105-6; Hanbury Brown, The Wisdom of Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 143-77.

¹⁰⁷Walker Percy, Lost in the Cosmos (New York: Washington Square Press, 1983), p. 166; cf. pp. 165, 246-48. Peacocke argues that much of the implausibility to the modern mind of traditional Christian formulations "arises not from any basic inadequacy in their analysis of man's predicament . . . but through the traditional static images not really relating at all to the world of dynamic process that the sciences now show it to be. . . . We have had to learn that God is not in the gaps in the nexus of events but is somehow

epistemologically reductionistic attitude that science is the only trustworthy form of knowledge has created its own mythology and value system in which the evolution and continuance of the human species has become a substitute for personal immortality. But the materialistic world view of scientism, despite its evolutionary and technical optimism, diminishes the cosmos to the impersonal plus time and chance, and offers no solutions to the human predicament and its existential estrangement.¹⁰⁸ In view of the need for a unifying philosophy of life and the "unsuppressible and unquenchable thirst for religious myth and moral order," humans cannot live consistently with the logical implications of scientific presuppositions, since they offer no realizable metaphysic of personal hope.¹⁰⁹ It is therefore no wonder that the scientifically oriented psychologists project these meanings into their work. Nor is it any surprise that several of the psychologists moved through a transition from scientific toward cosmic humanism during the course of their

in the whole process" (Creation and the World of Science, pp. 48, 1-4-6, 132, 203, 210).

¹⁰⁸"Without self-transcendence the demand of humanist fulfilment becomes a law and falls under the ambiguities of the law. Humanism itself leads to the question of culture transcending itself" (Tillich, Systematic Theology, 3:86).

¹⁰⁹Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, pp. 117-25; Kilpatrick, Psychological Seduction, pp. 144-60.

careers, since this offers the attractive ideology of being part of a cosmic evolutionary process and the semantic mysticism of transcendence without any personal responsibility or accountability.

While most philosophers of ethics criticize the naturalistic fallacy of generating ethical values from science by deducing what ought to be from what is, this has not deterred a host of scientists and psychologists from developing elaborate value systems, often "open-ended," from an immanentistic rather than Archimedian vantage point.¹¹⁰ Some of these values are smuggled in from the residue of convictions derived from Christianity that have shaped Western civilization,¹¹¹ but others are diametrically opposed to a theistic value system. For example, in theism, personal identity is eternal and derived from the divine; one's relationship with God defines self-worth. But in the clinical-humanistic approach, identity

¹¹⁰W. D. Hudson, ed., The Is-Ought Question (London: Macmillan, 1969); Jonathan Glover, What Sort of People Should There Be? (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 174-81; Brown, The Wisdom of Science, pp. 133-35; Peacocke, Creation and the World of Science, p. 176.

¹¹¹These include "the basic beliefs that life has a meaning; that history has a progressive pattern; that within that pattern every human person is very precious; that the State exists to serve that person; that freedom is necessary for the person's fulfillment; that interpersonal love rather than force ought to, and will, prevail ultimately" (Edwards, A Reason to Hope, p. 182).

is ephemeral and mortal; relationships with self and others define self-worth. In the former, love, affection, and self-transcendence are primary, and service and self-sacrifice are central to personal growth. In the latter, personal needs and self-actualization are primary, and self-satisfaction is central to personal growth.¹¹² Theonomous and autonomous accounts of personal fulfillment are radically different, not only in their solutions to human needs, but also in cognate areas like the human condition, the purpose of life, and meaning in view of death.

There are different ways of reacting to the problem of human finitude: one can hide from limitation and death, deny it, or accept it in meaning or despair.¹¹³ Becker observes that the widespread problem of neurosis in modern life relates to "the failure of all traditional immortality ideologies to absorb and quicken man's hunger for self-perpetuation and heroism."¹¹⁴ With the "disappearance of convincing dramas of heroic apotheosis," modern man "became psychological because he became isolated from protective collective

¹¹²Allen E. Bergin, "Psychotherapy and Religious Values," Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 48 (1980):100; Tillich, Systematic Theology, 3:271.

¹¹³Meadow and Kahoe, Psychology of Religion, pp. 12-15.

¹¹⁴Becker, The Denial of Death, p. 190.

ideologies."¹¹⁵ Few people can find contentment with a conscious awareness of ultimate irrationality and meaninglessness as Sartre, Gide, Beckett, Camus, Ionesco, Kafka and other creators of literature of the absurd would attest. Mascall argued that "if you try to find the ultimate meaning of the world simply within it you will fail, and then, if you refuse to look for it anywhere else, you will say that the world does not make sense. If you develop a neurosis as a result, this will be the effect of your conclusion rather than its cause."¹¹⁶ The futility of Sisyphus resonates with the human condition of longing for one's life to have made a cosmic difference in a universe that is utterly indifferent. People cannot live without some kind of hope that there is abiding value in their lives or that it will turn out well in the end; but when everything is reduced to the sphere of immanence, to matter in interaction in a mechanistic and self-contained system of cause and effect, there is no ultimate and abiding ground of hope that corresponds to this human aspiration.¹¹⁷ This is why terms like "peak experiences," "being cognition," "self-actualized individuals," "fully functioning person," "person of

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 190-91.

¹¹⁶E. L. Mascall, The Christian Universe (New York: Morehouse-Barlow Co., 1966), pp. 34-35.

¹¹⁷Pieper, On Hope, pp. 49-50; Moltmann, Theology of Hope, pp. 32, 69, 92.

tomorrow," "rational faith," and "productive love and thinking" have a dishonest ring to them; they do not authentically deal with the universal fear of non-being or the painful question of meaning that plagues those who have not opted for the hedonism of escapism.¹¹⁸ To avoid the Scylla of despair and hopelessness, psychologists often fall into the Charybdis of personal or futuristic presumption. But in the absence of the absolute Mystery that humans need,

All the analysis in the world doesn't allow the person to find out who he is and why he is here on earth, why he has to die, and how he can make his life a triumph. It is when psychology pretends to do this, when it offers itself as a full explanation of human unhappiness, that it becomes a fraud that makes the situation of modern man an impasse from which he cannot escape. . . . Modern man needs a "thou" to whom to turn for spiritual and moral dependence, and as God was in eclipse, the therapist has had to replace Him--just as the lover and the parents did.¹¹⁹

This psychological dishonesty is not limited to concerns of meaning and mortality, but extends to a rationalization and shallow reinterpretation of the profound and ubiquitous experience of guilt. The problem of guilt cannot be reduced to neurotic infantile fantasy, to the fear of life, or to violation of arbitrary social conventions. Psychotherapy can indeed address the problem

¹¹⁸Becker, The Denial of Death, pp. 264-74. The terror of death can be repressed but it cannot be eliminated; "a full apprehension of man's condition would drive him insane . . . everything that man does in his symbolic world is an attempt to deny and overcome his grotesque fate" (ibid., p. 27).

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 193-94. (Italics his.)

of neurotic guilt, but it cannot eliminate the residue of existential guilt manifested in the symptoms of alienation and relational estrangement.¹²⁰ This alienation is rooted in freedom, not determinism, and it cannot be cured without personal acknowledgement of responsibility and the forgiveness of others. Humans are powerless to overcome the gap between what they are and what they would be, but this impotence does not eliminate the problem of personal culpability.

In the absence of a transcendent metaphysic, psychologists are left with immanentistic solutions in their attempt to respond to the tragic vision of Freud. But their solutions are hardly different from the usual bromides about the self-mastery of the human race: we must take charge of our own fate, rise above ourselves, and rule our environment and our destiny. Freud hoped that scientific discoveries would lead to a greater mastery of nature and an improved social context. In the interim, it is the task of psychoanalysis to cure neurotic misery so that people need only experience the common misery of reality. The best one can do is to work and to love. Erikson stressed the importance of attaining trust and identity as well as integrity, i.e., the willingness to accept the ultimacy of one's only life cycle. People should experience the joys and sorrows of fate as something they have

¹²⁰C. Stephen Evans, Existentialism: The Philosophy of Despair and the Quest for Hope (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), pp. 90-95.

actively chosen and accept the responsibilities of nurturing the next generation. Jung believed that humans must attain selfhood through the individuation process of uniting the opposite forces of the conscious and the unconscious. Through the symbolic structure of the great mythologies and religions, the archetypes can guide the personality in the quest for the integration of the self. Rank supported the individual striving for self-realization through the exercise of conscious will and acceptance of the ambivalence in the personality between individuation and generation. He advocated a creative will expression that diminishes the life and death fears through the integration of union and separation. Individuals should accept the pain of life as unavoidable and try to overcome it through animating personal experience. Maslow believed in the essential goodness of human nature and encouraged its expression and actualization. People's basic or deficiency needs must be satisfied so that they can be dominated by growth need or metaneed motivation. This self-actualization tendency can lead to peak experiences and a new form of cognition. Rogers held that the core of personality is positive, and that when people experience unconditional positive regard, they learn to listen to themselves and to accept their attitudes and feelings as they are. People become fully functioning self-actualizers when they experience self-regard and enhanced cooperation with others. According to Adler, humans need security as well as a sense of significance through their social contribution to the lives of others. Since everyone strives for superiority and perfection, they need fictional goals that will enable them

to overcome inferiority and attain a sense of social worth. Fromm asserted that the problem of finitude and mortality can be overcome through productive loving and thinking (shifting to a being mode from a having mode). When people acknowledge the reality of their aloneness in the universe, they can find meaning in their lives by accepting responsibility for themselves, believing in themselves, and giving birth to the potential that is within them.

These solutions essentially distill down to the following advice: we should accept life with all its hardships, ambiguities, and joys; we should accept ourselves as we are and others as they are; at the same time, we should try to become whole, integrated, creative, and productive people; and we should accept the fact of our mortality and make the most out of life. These simplistic solutions to the complexities and depths of the human condition are reminiscent of Aldous Huxley's admission near the end of his life: "It is a bit embarrassing to have been concerned with the human problem all one's life and find at the end that one has no more to offer by way of advice than 'Try to be a little kinder.'"¹²¹ With the crumbling of communal ideologies of

¹²¹Clifton Fadiman, ed. The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), pp. 295-96. It is arguable that this ironic observation by Woody Allen reveals a deeper grasp of existential angst than many of these psychologists: "More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The

heroism, dignity, vision, and hope, these psychologists have sought to validate the self through their own creative illusions and causa-sui projects in an attempt to overcome the threats and vulnerabilities of reality.¹²² But illusions that have no metaphysical grounding are only therapeutic through a course of self-deception; those who become aware of what they are find them unsatisfying, since people cannot consciously live and die for what they know to be a hoax.

This is not to deny the important and sometimes acute perceptions these personality theorists had concerning human traits and behavior. The problem is that when these true insights are embedded in a reductionistic world view, the solutions the psychologists offer become superficial. Emancipation from belief in the transcendent does not bring happiness; it brings either despair or denial of creatureliness. Without God, people are limited to finite meanings and substitute ends in a milieu of resignation, escapism, or futile attempts to create absolutes within a bounded condition. But the ineradicable longing for mystery, majesty, dignity, hope, and transcendent power cannot be found in the identities, relationships, and secular ideologies of the world. The yearning for ecstasy and awe remain and can only be satisfied in an unbounded personal context of faith, hope, and

other to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

¹²²Becker, The Denial of Death, pp. 107-24, 284-85.

love. In the Christian vision, death is not extinction, but the birth canal into a larger world in which the whole person--body, soul, and spirit--will be transformed and completed in an unlimited future of unending felicity. Because of the image of God, humans manifest a transcendence within immanence which no earthbound source of identity, purpose, or hope can fully satisfy. As some of the psychologists observed, being is indeed more fundamental than doing; but one's sense of being, identity, and personhood must be defined by God and not the world. Human destiny is bound up in God, or as Dante expressed it in the conclusion of The Divine Comedy, "the love that moves the sun and the other stars." Those whose faith and hope are in God understand that their "life cycle" does not end with death, and that this temporal existence is the sojourn of a pilgrim who awaits the inexhaustible satisfaction of the vision of the infinite-personal source of all that is true, beautiful, and good.¹²³ It will not be "the self-actualized individual" or "the man for himself" who beholds the divine vision, but it will

¹²³"Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present" (Moltmann, Theology of Hope, p. 21).

be persons in community with God and with one another who share the corporate joy of heaven.¹²⁴

Rank understood, as did Kierkegaard before him, that humans are religious and not merely biological beings, and that psychology must give way to theology.¹²⁵ No one can simultaneously embrace a reductionistic and a theistic world view; a choice must be made, since there is no neutral ground between autonomy and theonomy. God has uses the pulley of unfulfilled longing to draw people away from idolatrous attachment to the created order to the beatific vision that will satisfy every human need.

The Pulley

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
"Let us" (said he) "pour on him all we can;
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,
Contract into a span."

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure.
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure

¹²⁴"We can believe . . . that the joy of heaven is not solitary, and that heavenly beatitude is accompanied by the vision which the blessed have of one another's joy, and that it is embellished with eternal friendships" (Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 356; Meyer, The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, pp. 200, 443-45).

¹²⁵Becker, The Denial of Death, pp. 173-75, 196.

Rest in the bottom lay.

"For if I should" (said he)
"Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

"Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast."

George Herbert (1593-1633)