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“The way of man is not in himself”: Reflections on Humanistic Psychology, Same-Sex Attraction, and Safe Spaces

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In their paper *Reflections on Humanistic Psychology*, Ed Gantt and Jeffrey Thayne have accomplished a number of important things. Various aspects of the piece, and the arguments Gantt and Thayne make, have real potential for positive influence on our understanding of contemporary culture and the self-understanding it affords us—nearly always without our awareness or assent. It certainly stands as an example of thoughtful and civil discourse in an area saturated with polarization and politicization. This in itself is a genuine contribution. I found nothing in it to give offense, although I would not be shocked to learn that some will have found fuel for some fire of offense. It could hardly be otherwise if the very analysis that Gantt and Thayne make regarding the Rogerian

humanistic perspective is true. For contemporary adherents to the perspective that Gantt and Thayne critique, all scholarship, like all other human endeavors, has become a zero-sum game—complete validation or complete repudiation of the “insatiable self” (Williams, 1992) and, therefore, of persons who understand themselves in ways consistent with being insatiable selves.

I have described elsewhere (Williams, 2015) the modern self-concept that Gantt and Thayne describe:

the term “insatiable self” . . . describe[s] the self-concept and self-understanding that have emerged and taken root in a fairly short span of time, within a generation [or so]. Such a self-concept arises when one’s own personal and individual needs, desires, and

claims become the core of one's self. The pursuit of all things essential to the self then takes on a species of primal legitimacy.

The analysis of Rogerian theory that Gantt and Thayne provide illustrates well how small a step it really is from the proposition that every person has within a unique nature that strives toward actualization to the assurance that such actualization, and thus the development of that inner nature, is a positive thing and necessary for health and happiness. The next step is also a small one, to the realization that such unique actualization and the happiness it provides constitute an entitlement for each individual, and the standard by which the facticity of the world is judged as fair and adequate on one hand or lacking and unfair on the other. And finally, that inner happiness and fulfillment become the standard by which one's life, one's actions, and even other people are to be judged as morally acceptable or not. This summary is too fast, but it is adequate for the purposes of this essay, and the fuller analysis is available from Gantt and Thayne. What is, perhaps, clearest in all of this is that Rogers's work is a cultural biography of the last half of the 20th century—from a broadly psychological perspective.

It might be debated whether Rogers's work should be seen more as creating or merely as reflecting the spirit of that age. Certainly, a cultural historian could track the influence of this Rogerian humanism, or, more accurately, the cultural forces and attitudes reflected in it, on the generation of baby boomers, affecting the way they (or, perhaps, many of their cohort) were reared, parented, and educated, and thus, how parenting and education have been perceived and pursued across successive generations. The end of this extended cultural biography is still being written, and much social commentary has already been written on the topic, the body of which cannot be fully catalogued here. The "attitude" (for want of a better term) informing our contemporary experience and understanding of ourselves, our purposes, our sense of morality, our sense of mortality, and even our aesthetics, which Gantt and Thayne so well describe, is part of a much larger set of cultural and psychological realities and an accompanying largely wariness concerning them, although the wariness is largely inchoate in the general population. The philosopher Charles Taylor (1991)

coined the term "malaises of modernity" to refer to this body of understandings of self, culture, and ethics that have emerged in tandem with, and as context for, the more specifically psychological self-understanding inherent in Carl Rogers's work. As a sample of the cultural scope of the problem I am referring to here, I can cite only a few expressions of it. The literature in this area is very large and rich in both description and implications. The works dealt with here are some of the better-known expressions. Charles Taylor himself cites Allan Bloom's 1987 book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, as a good analysis of the rise of individualism and moral relativism grounded in the consummate importance given to every individual's own values, in the then rising generation.

In his own influential work on the issue of human agency, Taylor (1985) described our innate capacity as human beings to exercise our powers of rationality in evaluating the elements, or expressions, of our lived world. He distinguished (see Taylor, 1985, chapter 1), however, between "weak" and "strong" evaluations. By "weak evaluation," Taylor meant that we do have a capacity by our very rational nature to assess, that is, to attach value and importance to things, actions, and states of affairs. "Strong evaluation," on the other hand is the capacity by which we not only attach meaning and value to the things of our lives, but by which we judge some things to be worthy of making, adopting, or pursuing. This process requires that we have not only evaluations, but also *grounds* for those evaluations and reasons for privileging some over others as more worthy, or better. Part of the modern predicament is that, for a host of reasons having to do with the complex of meanings and understandings that constitute modern life, including a focus on individualism, a focus on fulfillment as a good in itself, and a reluctance to make moral judgments. For these reasons, among others, we find ourselves with a significantly diminished ability to make strong evaluations. This means that we have, in a sense, lost our way in regard to knowing and choosing what is true and good, what is to be affirmed and cherished—thus there is a leveling off of value and moral worth, and all can easily seem morally relative and morally indistinct. This same point is at the heart of a slightly earlier analysis by the sociologist Philip Rieff (1966/2006). Rieff concentrates on the work of

Sigmund Freud as the basis of his critique of modern psychology and its analysis of the psyche; however, his analysis is apropos to the Rogerian psyche as well. He (p. 79) summarizes the predicament brought about by the self-understanding offered in all species of modernism as "[the] absurdity of being free to choose and then having no choice worth making."

This malaise, identified by Rieff and by Taylor maps rather neatly onto the Rogerian view of life and world in which there are few objective standards for judging value and worth,¹ so that one is free to pursue one's own sense of value and worth. However, a moment's thought is sufficient to notice that if one cannot make strong evaluations about value and worth in the external world, one will also lack any grounds for making strong evaluations about one's own personal values—the internal world. Thus a Rogerian psyche both requires and cannot (with confidence) produce unconditional positive regard for oneself, nor can one trust what one might receive from another because there is no reason to suppose that any other person has any greater capacity for making strong evaluations than the person him or herself. There is no rest for the Rogerian psyche because in the modern world there is no *grounded* or *sure* positive regard. The very term "unconditional positive regard" requires that there are no grounding conditions or reasons on which the positive regard is based (except the mere existence of the person). It is thus always an evanescent phenomenon. So, there can be no trustworthy positive regard at all. This is indeed a haunting proposition.

This metaphor of "haunting" seems to be particularly apt in any critical analysis of modernity. Life conceived, understood, and lived under auspices of the modernity we are discussing here is going to be haunted in some ways. The price one pays for the kind of strict and powerful individualism that characterizes modernity is to be haunted by the void of meaning, value, and

grounding in all aspects of life. This problem has been noted by thinkers in both the 19th and 20th centuries. I cite here the work of the Spanish philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936). In his work, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, (de Unamuno, 1913/1954) he raises the issue of what, in translation, we would refer to as the "wherefore," meaning essentially "the purpose" or "end" of something, including life itself. For him, the most important question about life is the "wherefore" question—for what reason or purpose, and toward what end. A life devoid of a "wherefore" is, for him, and ultimately for all of us, a frightening proposition. A Rogerian psyche, as a psyche conceived and lived in modernity, will be, it seems to me, haunted by the fact that if there is a "wherefore" to life, it is within the self, and therefore able to supply only fulfillment of an otherwise empty self. To apply another metaphor, this must be like throwing open the blinds to look out the window in order to see what one anticipates to be a lovely vista, only to find out that one is looking into a mirror, every window to the world having been replaced by a mirror that reflects back only the self.

The fundamental relevance of the question of the "wherefore" is addressed in a more modern voice by the contemporary French phenomenologist, Jean-Luc Marion (2008). It is no coincidence that Marion is a very good Descartes scholar. It was, after all, the work of Rene Descartes that began the modern period and exalted the private mind by making it the instrument of certainty, and the guarantor, by virtue of its rational activity, of individual identity and existence. While Descartes could not have anticipated, much less intended to produce, the modern individualism, alienation, and moral relativism that are at the heart of the malaise of modernism, he nonetheless is rightly considered to be the father of modernism. The modern individual ego, with all its powers and problems, is the finished product of the enlightenment that Cartesian philosophy made possible. The contemporary connection between the power of the individual mind and one's very being is strong—much stronger for moderns than Descartes's simple observation that it was in thinking that he was assured of his own being. Marion, in his phenomenological analysis, however, concludes that the fundamental question at the foundation of human concern is not the question of being, but of what we might refer to as "mattering."

1. There is an irony here in Rogers's, and the broader culture's, position on objective standards of value and conduct. Certainly, Rogers valued certain things, the worth of individual persons, autonomy, and freedom for individual persons to self-actualize etc., and he valued them "objectively," that is across persons, time, and circumstances. But those very values, for the most part require the devaluing or at least suspension of most "objective" values that are taken to be true and valuable across persons, time and circumstances.

The assurance we most ardently seek is not captured by the Cartesian conclusion, *cogito ergo sum*, but by the question, *a qua bon?* This is usually translated as “what’s the point?” or “what’s the use?,” “What’s the good?,” or even, closer to de Unamuno’s terminology, “what for?” This is the question of the modern age, urgent and persistent even amid all the certainty provided by the conspicuous achievements of enlightenment rationality as manifested in its science and technology.

The question of mattering is an inherently evaluative concern: it demands judgment that shades into moral concern. As Marion makes clear, the assurance of mattering—that I matter—cannot come from myself, i.e., from the inside. It must come from outside myself, from another. He reframes the central question, *a qua bon?* as “does anyone out there love me?” And assurance of love cannot come from myself: self-esteem is ultimately impotent. Marion’s analysis builds on and extends the work of another French phenomenologist from the prior generation, Emanuel Levinas (see 1969), capturing the absolutely ethical foundation of human life as lived and the essential and surpassing importance of otherness, of both the absolute and the concrete, individual kind. Thus, the malaise of modernism that takes the form of individualism and alienation from the other is significant indeed. It lies at the heart of our individual and collective identity and existence.

The 20th-century sociologist, Robert Nisbet (1913–1996) wrote an important and insightful analysis of the malaise of alienation. In his introduction to the 1970 edition of his book (Nisbet, 1953/2014), Nisbet clarifies what he meant by alienation:

the state of mind that can find a social order remote, incomprehensible, or fraudulent; beyond real hope or desire; inviting apathy, boredom, or even hostility. The individual not only does not feel a part of the social order; he has lost interest in being a part of it. (p. xxiii)

We should note here that the claim is not that the alienated individual does not want to be part of the body of persons that make up his or her culture; sociality is extremely important for reasons that should be clear—others are needed to provide validation for the autonomous self. It is that the “social order,” including institutions, mores, roles, and obligations, among other things, no longer holds the person’s

allegiance, nor holds sway over his or her aspirations or actions.

Nisbet (2014, pp. xxiv–xxv), in this same preface, lays out four species of alienation that characterize modernism, i.e., our contemporary 20th-century culture: (a) alienation from the past, which cuts off “spiritual roots . . . leaving no viable prospect of the future” (p. xxiv), (b) alienation from physical place and nature, through mobility and rapidly developing information technology (pp. xxiv–xxv), (c) alienation from things, particularly “hard property,” and a shift to “soft property—shares and equity in something distant, personally unmanaged, and impersonal” (p. xxv), and, most importantly, (d) alienation from community, or the “social bonds which themselves reach from past to future” (p. xxv). The alienation described by Nisbet may well be the sickness of our age and both grounds for, and manifestation of, the individualism, epistemological relativism, and anti-foundationalism of our contemporary culture. Nisbet puts this all in the context of psychology in a way that makes contact with the work of Carl Rogers as Gantt and Thayne have explicated it (Nisbet, 1953/2014, p. 55):

Personal crises, underlying emotional dissatisfactions, individual deviations from strict rectitude—these have presumably been constant in all ages of history. Only our own age tends to blow up these tensions into reasons for a clinical approach to happiness. Such tensions appear more critical and painful, more intolerable to contemporary man, simply because the containing social structures of such tensions have become less vital to his existence.

Nisbet argues that the of the emaciation of the structures, functions, and authority of community is understood in the contemporary mind as the price that must be paid for freedom—understood, of course, as a radical sort of individual libertarianism. There is, however, an interesting paradox to freedom as conceived by the modern mind. The Italian philosopher Augusto Del Noce (1910–1989) studied what we are calling here “modernity” with an eye especially to the progress of secularism and the decline of religion in modern Europe with a particular interest in Marxism as one of the major forces in this phenomenon. He contends that Marxism has been the most successful philosophical movement in

the late 19th through the mid to late 20th centuries. This success is not to be measured by the success of its political manifestations in the communist nations of Eastern Europe. Rather its success is found in its effect on the broader culture and the modern mind set of our day. (Del Noce, 2014) Del Noce points out that "Marx's philosophical position can only be defined as an effort to think *man's liberation from every dependence*, first of all from God" and that this effort was "linked completely with a complete negation of the transcendent and the supernatural" (Del Noce, 2014, pp. 272–273). There is irony in linking Marxism with liberation—though that theme has been prominent in Marxist liberation movements for over a century. The liberation is not of the political sort, but rather of the cultural, epistemological, and spiritual sort. Once liberated from all of the trappings of culture and tradition, and the "false consciousness" that they create, people will be more amenable to and more easily absorbed in the certain and inevitable march of history that Marxism proclaims to be both true and real. Meanwhile, however, we are trapped in our own being, now liberated from religion, transcendence, and social institutions including the family. We must thus then rely on our individual selves as the source of all the stability and meaning from which we have just been liberated—and thus, the culture of individualism, relativism, and alienation is reinforced. Charles Taylor (2007), two decades after his early work on agency and strong vs. weak evaluations, produced his *magnum opus* on the larger topic that I have outlined here—the "malaises of modernity" (Taylor, 1991). James K. A. Smith (2014) provides a very insightful and readable treatment of this phenomenon, and finally, the French sociologist and anthropologist, Bruno Latour (2013) offers a compelling analysis of the predicament of modernity in relation to the issues we have dealt with from a distinctly postmodern perspective. His section on "The unerring ways of a generation" (pp. 63–69) is particularly relevant to the discussion.

The purpose of the preceding was to provide a broader perspective for Gantt and Thayne's excellent, careful, and critical explication of Carl Rogers's work and its continuing influence in various forms. They are correct to conclude that Rogers captured the spirit of his own age—and ours—and perhaps more than any other author, popularized an understanding of

ourselves in terms of our modern predicament. He, of course, was less critical of that understanding and its origins and consequences than the authors I have cited here. But he did make an accurate diagnosis of a central problem of psychological life and function in our age. It is worth making a historical connection that puts Rogers's work and Gantt and Thayne's analysis into an even broader historical perspective—the romanticism of the Renaissance. Much of the tone and thrust of Rogers's work can be found in an often-cited passage from the 15th century philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494); however, while the latter is, in this passage, presuming to quote God, Rogers would likely be disinclined ever to do so.

Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will . . . shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature. We have set thee at the world's center that thou mayest from thence more easily observe whatever is in the world. . . . so that with freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer.

This classical romantic mindset both influenced and, ultimately, gave way to the enlightenment project of bringing everything under the auspices of the individual rational mind. The question remains, however: How does this become clinically relevant? The answer is that culture itself, and the understanding of self, others, relationships, need, capacity, and possibility that it affords to us, is clinically relevant. In other words, Rogers—and a host of scholars and practitioners since—did not discover the essence of human ontology, including pathology and wellness. Rather, he captured the spirit of the times and told a story of pathology and wellness deeply imbedded in the cultural affordances of our time—the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It is the modern romantic story created against the backdrop of the triumph of enlightenment thinking and the "emancipation" it has provided. Philosopher Louis Dupre (2004) summarized the two-fold triumph of the enlightenment as, first, complete confidence in the human mind (even the individual mind) to recognize and establish truth, and second, the "emancipation" from needing to believe in anything except what could be found through the exercise of the mind.

The cultural elite, and, sadly, many in the mainstream of our culture, are now living out the fruits of this emancipation. Rogers's writing reflects the spirit and essence of this emancipation very well.

However, a stubborn fact of modernity seems to be that emancipation from all transcendence, structures, institutions, orders, and truths beyond the contents and capture of the individual rational mind, along with the behavioral, emotional, epistemological, and moral freedom it offers is more attractive and more fulfilling in the abstract than it is when lived out in one's daily life and concrete relationships. Indeed many thinkers in the 19th and 20th centuries have written of the predicament of contemporary humankind as being, in some sense, *condemned* to freedom. It is a fearsome thing to be responsible for creating and maintaining one's own meanings, morality, and fulfillment, especially in a world where other such beings are engaged in the identical project for themselves. Other people and some stubborn things in the world seem obstinately disinclined to validate our personal projects of meaning and satisfaction. Thus the personal malaise of modernity. On the face of it, and this essay cannot do other than just describe that face, it is not clear whether Rogerian-inspired therapy or the contemporary family of rational/emotive/cognitive/behavioral therapies (because they embody and reinforce the malaise of modernism) can actually alleviate personal manifestations of that same malaise. The research is apparently clear that such modernist therapies can be rather successful at reducing distress and its various manifestations. It makes good sense to believe that if we are condemned to freedom it is helpful to be taught how to ameliorate some of the symptoms of the inevitable existential angst—particularly the part that may be most obviously irrational. However, it seems important to ask whether therapeutic approaches grounded in the assumptions and excesses of modernity can be expected to address psychological issues that are grounded in and draw their content and urgency from, those very assumptions and excesses. Only if one grants that the malaises of modernity are inevitable—and “just the way things are”—should one be inclined to settle for such an approach that allows one to live more meaningfully in a meaningless world, or more peacefully in a pointless culture. It has been my experience that sometimes

students being trained in the psychological helping professions genuinely wonder just what use to make of much of their intellectual training and coursework. The question seems to be, “what is the intellectual obligation of clinical/counseling professionals, or clinical/counseling programs?” May I suggest this: If, as we clearly see from the analysis of Rogerian theory in the paper by Gantt and Thayne, there is within the intellectual tradition of our training, an imbedded malaise of modernity, then we have an obligation to recognize, identify, and address that malaise. It is an intellectual problem that is at the root of both pathology and treatment. It is in our culture. This seems like a noble intellectual obligation—to address it, and seek to heal the culture as we help our fellow beings heal *from* the culture. If we can help free each other from the intellectual commitments that have produced the malaise we will have done, perhaps, some lasting good.

MODERNITY, SEXUALITY AND SAFE SPACES

Gantt and Thayne choose a powerful, not to mention controversial, example of an important and innately meaningful aspect of our humanity as the topic area within which to illustrate the landscape of that humanity from a Rogerian and from a Christian (particularly a Latter-day Saint) perspective. Sexuality, although controversial, is crucial to the modernist project. Modernist understandings must locate all aspects of our humanity within the auspices, range, and control of the personal ego. The rationality attributed to the personal ego goes far beyond mere logic and reason: it extends to evaluations of all sorts, including moral sensibility, moral judgment, as well as feelings and passions of all sorts. Sexuality is in a sense the crown jewel of our modernist humanity, partly because of its universality—almost everyone admits it is a very important aspect of his or her life as a human being. Sexuality also stands out in the extent to which it engages at once thought, feelings, emotions, the body, and the mind, as well as other people. This makes it of great interest to modernist thinkers seeking to exalt and empower the ego. More than this, however, sexuality has traditionally been taken to have a significant biological component. If the powerful modernist ego, the modernist project seems to suggest, can wrest sexuality away even from biology

(the body), then the power of the ego is complete. So, much is at stake in the seemingly benign project of bestowing on the personal ego (the powerful modern self) the power over sexual identity, orientation, motivation, and so on. We have known this since the sexual revolution; although its cultural and intellectual import was not salient in the minds and hearts of most who participated in it. It has become salient, however, as our contemporary culture lives out the effects of the sexual revolution in the context of the malaise of modernity.

Gantt and Thayne rightly take up the important issue of what have come to be called in our culture "safe spaces." To a great extent, safety of some sort is at the heart of the Rogerian, modernist project. A safe space, whatever else it might do, provides the ego a place to operate, to create life, meaning, and morality for itself without interference from others or even otherness—that is, without stifling opposition that would short circuit the ego's creative and expressive acts. Gantt and Thayne rightly acknowledge that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the ultimate, and perhaps the only, truly safe space. Latter-day Saints should believe that a genuinely safe space is available in the restored church as guided by prophetic authority and the gifts of the spirit. However, there is also a sense in which the gospel or church of Jesus Christ is not the sort of safe space many may be looking for.²

On the one hand, Christianity, by virtue of its essential message, is everyone's ultimate "safe space," although I prefer the term "safe haven." Matthew 11:28 invites *all* to come and promises to give them rest. Alma 34:16 teaches that the atoning act of Jesus

2. Of course, the calling of every Christian is to love all and do all we can to express that love in words and deeds. All Christians should hope and strive to provide a spirit-filled place for everyone to rest, feel loved, and unburden. This is certainly in keeping with what Rogers, and anyone in the helping professions, would recommend. And we should acknowledge that sometimes Christians, including Latter-day Saints, fall short, failing to provide sufficient love, warmth, and compassion. However, even when genuine warmth and love are offered and available, there is as a strong strain of the malaise of modernity that makes a modern self, defined and enformed by it, resistant even to genuine love. For a self afflicted by the malaise of modernity, love, without unconditional validation is not really love. Again, it is the self that judges and insists for itself what is love and what is not.

Christ "can satisfy the demands of justice and encircle [all who believe] in the arms of safety." Jesus reminded the Nephites: "I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me" (3 Nephi 18:25). And finally, the Savior's call is to everyone: "has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost . . . Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?" (Moroni 7:36).

On the other hand, every convicted Christian knows that salvation is free but it is not cheap. According to Alma 34:9, "all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement." In Matthew, Christ teaches, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for [Christ's] sake shall find it." And "strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life," while "broad is the way that leadeth to destruction." (Matthew 7:14, 13) This must surely seem like the supreme sacrifice to the modern ego—after all those years of self-creation—to lose the life and the self one has built. In fact, in the Book of Mormon we find what seems to be an unqualified promise to everyone who seeks Jesus Christ. "If men come unto [Him He] will show unto them their weakness . . . [His] grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves . . . [and He can] make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27). It would be hard to think of a more direct refutation of the powerful modern ego and the malaise of modernity that takes the form of self-creation.

Because the project of modern self-construction and self-maintenance is so compelling, and so complete as to include and envelope every aspect of the self—from thought to emotion, to relationships and identity—and because it is, even in its comprehensiveness, haunted by specters of nothingness and alienation, modern egos require not only love and fellowship, they require validation. Without validation, the ego's entire creation is insecure. As I read scriptures, as most Christians do, Christ validates very few—at least as we are now, where He finds us or we find Him. The scriptures are full of accounts, stories, and parables of people finding Christ, only to have to leave something of themselves aside or give up something of themselves in order to really find Him and find themselves in Him. So, the ultimate safe space is not a place of validation but of unburdening and rest for

the soul, or renovation, and giving ourselves over to be remade. The contrast with modernity could hardly be more stark. It is so stark in large part because the giving over and the remaking go as deep as the very foundation of our self-constructed modern self. It penetrates even to what we love. In the same sermon in which He invites us to lose ourselves, Jesus also tells those who seek Him, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:37–38) It does not take a careful reading to understand that this is not a statement of Jesus' callous disregard for family ties. It is, rather a metaphor, for the depth and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to make and remake a soul. Its power can remake even what we love. We are called to lay on the alter even what we have come to love, and to find new love, find Him, and find ourselves in return. The Lord, we are told, requires the heart and a willing mind (D&C 64:34) Ironically, and paradoxically, the ego of modernity both claims absolute control over what it loves and how it loves, and yet, at the same time, can make itself helpless in the face of "love" which "just happens," or overcomes us. Either way, the Christian message seems clear: we can change what we love if we first change whom we love, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). It may be here that we find a foundation for Christian psychotherapy. It may be here that we find the ultimate safe space.

THE NEGLECTED ELEMENT

Running through the fine essay by Gantt and Thayne, as well as this brief response, is an ontological argument—a declaration of what it means to be a human being, at the most basic and fundamental level. At the foundation of the malaise of modernism is an understanding of ourselves uncritically reflecting intellectual allegiance to a peculiar mixture of materialist naturalism which brings with it the clear and present psychic impetus of the brute matter of which our bodies are composed, combined with a strong rationality capable of creating for ourselves an identity, and a version of self and reality which we take to be true and moral. If this all seems contradictory to the reader it is because it is contradictory. It seems as if the fundamental mind-body dualism, descended from

the 17th century and never resolved, has come down to us intact, and is now asserted, even with its innate contradictions, as being essential to our understanding of ourselves. There is, running through what is this contemporary makeshift ontology, a particular view of agency, one understood in strong libertarian terms. It holds that we have a mind free to choose for itself (and thus for us) all those aspects of ourselves we may want to choose; but we also live in a strongly deterministic world composed of matter and its various causal structures that are also operating in us and on us, often without our awareness, chiefly through things called "variables" and "structures," that seem to have power to cause things within us either with our cooperation or without it. This is the world as described by modern scientism (see Hayek, 1952/1979). The fundamental manifestation of human agency in this intellectual *mélange* is autonomous unencumbered free choice – oddly enough, operating in a being who is both free to make meanings and choose actions, and at the same time ultimately powerless to resist or alter brute physical facticity.

The recommendations for an alternative to a Rogerian theory of humanity and therapy made by Gantt and Thayne, and the ideas I have expressed here are informed by another understanding of human ontology and human agency. On this view, human agency is not a mere capacity or a property of our innate rational powers. It is, rather, incumbent in the being of humans. To be human is to be a moral agent. The monumental manifestation of agency thus conceived is not self-creation and choosing, but the giving over of oneself—hopefully to truth and good. Truth and good are not of our own making by the individual mind; rather, they have their origin in the world of which we are a part, appropriated in and by our own actions, as our actions make contact with and embody what is true. I have elsewhere offered the beginnings of a formulation of such an understanding of agency (Williams, 1992, 2002, 2005, in press), and this essay extends an invitation for further scholarly investigation. Agency is the key to human ontology and to human happiness and thriving. This view of agency requires as a grounding assumption a source of truth accessible to us. That same source of truth, for every Christian, invites us into the safe space.

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