MEET THE PRESS / A DECADE AFTER JFK / BONHOEFFER'S THEOLOGY / KEROUAC IN RETROSPECT / REVIEW OF A METAPHYSICAL POTHEAD / PSEUDOEXISTENTIAL FICTION
The New Via Media

The scheduling by last year's Lectureship Council of a fall lecture series on "Freedom of the Press" turns out to have been a remarkably lucky bit of foresight and a chunky piece of input into Calvin's fall activities calendar as well. No one last spring even in his least sober moment could have imagined either the proportions to which the governmental crisis would eventually rise or the yeasty role of the press in the ballooning of that crisis. But even last spring the rising tension over high-handed government had begun to emphasize the role of the press as a necessary catalyst in government-citizen relations. We are fortunate now to be able to take advantage of the recent reflections on the subject by such prominent members of the active broadcast community as Fred Friendly and Fred Graham, or by as competent a spectator as Vincent Blasi. (Graham, the CBS Supreme Court correspondent, in case it has slipped your mind, was one of the first recipients of the recent Agnew subpoenas.)

What more to say about the subject I really do not know. To insist that the various news media are vital today as a check upon a few million potentially unscrupulous employees of a federal octopus would probably be unduly alarmist. Every schoolboy knows that the separation of powers and a foolproof system of checks and balances ensures that those employees spend most of their time checking up on each other. To speak of the press as a voice crying out in the wilderness would no doubt be naive. And even claiming that the press is (collectively) an oppressed minority in danger of extinction, although that is the thesis some of us young liberals like to own, would probably be a little premature. All of these contentions are of course in some measure true, but we have a few years left institutionally as well as chronologically before 1984. Besides, all of these things are being written elsewhere by much more able men, so I cannot in good conscience even mention them here.

I really have no place trying to analyze or even describe the whole government-press relationship. Chimes may be able to do that with Agnew and Ford, but then they have about twice our budget. And having the whole thing spelled out here would probably encourage some people to stay at home on lecture night, if not drive them from the FAC in droves. After all, why go to hear Lyndon Johnson's Press Secretary when you already have the facts?

We can, however, examine some of our own ideas about What Goes On Behind the Scenes. Common sense, for example, tells us that the media cannot really know what happens in the inner councils of government, so long as the government wants it to remain a secret. Writers of news can do nothing except speculate, after the manner of the stereotypic Kremlinologist of a few years back who nearly toppled the entire state department hierarchy and got them to call in a whole phalanx of Rand men when he reported that Khruschev had had his shoes on the wrong feet the previous Wednesday on a walk across Red Square. Or they can print whatever tidbits are dropped to them out the window of the press parking lot at the White House, or wherever it is that the press parks.

So at least one aspect of the growing pattern
of revelations about what actually does occupy the time of the men in the inner circle is surprising: all along, it seems, the press has had a pretty accurate idea of what was going on. The marvel, moreover, is not simply that the behind-the-scenes sources of "secret" news are so much more direct and available than a noninitiate might think. The real eye-opener for the naive student activist is the realization that the men of government are often so sensitive to what happens on the Walter Cronkite Show or some expanded print-media version of it that their energies are substantially directed toward influencing it, controlling it, denouncing it, or even, foreseeably, stamping it out, all in the national interest.

My immediate reaction to that is to stop and say, "Hey, maybe we've got something here." It seems that the news media are a lot more indicative of what is going on in the government than the government would have us believe. Moreover, this is the case, ironically (and at the risk of repeating myself), often not so much because the fourth estate has discovered anything going on (an implicit assumption of this piece, you will have noted, is that there is always something "going on") as because the men in government—particularly when they are crooks wanting to be not found out—have actually taken their cues from the press. Their actions are thus in essence actually directed by what the press has written and in anticipation of what else the press might write. The paranoia exhibited in response to media critics by a man like Spiro Agnew, if one pardons the illustration, demonstrates that there is no ultimate immunity from determined press censure for such a man.

Thus from our cynical perspective, as we lie here folded in the middle of the eight lean years, the press provides a genuine and legitimate means for a modicum of reform. But, on the strength of what Messrs Friendly and Blasi have said in their lectures, the press itself as an institution is not the same institution that it was ten or even five years ago. As its function and role changes it continues to adapt and to redesign its own mandate to what it sees as new responsibilities and necessities. And a general trend toward more responsible, in-depth reporting seems accompanied by the development of a new consciousness of some of the moral and philosophical implications of its role and responsibility in a new and continually changing society (and blah, blah, blah). No more is the era dominated by the pug-nosed police reporter. A dear friend recently informed me that it is now passe to observe that all the copy boys on the New York Times have masters’ degrees in journalism from Columbia University (joke).

At this point my roommate, Lectureship Council Chairperson Dennis D VanderTuig, who is unscrupulously honest and claims never to have said any of the things attributed to him in numerous Chimes articles, informs me that when this thing I have spent the last twenty minutes writing is published only one of the lectures I am urging everyone to go see will be left to go see. He bemoans the fact that my typewriter has lain so long silent. "That should have been written months ago," he says. To that charge I can find no better rejoinder than that brought by the humble Saint Bernard, who, charged by Peter Abelard with the sin of excessive pride for the vigor of his attack on an Abelardian heresy, confessed that the charge was indeed true.
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Churches throughout the United States were filled on November 25, 1963. Going to a memorial service seemed an appropriate thing to do that Monday. The news of the previous Friday afternoon had thundered with shocking force into our individual worlds, unting us and propelling us with numbed minds and groping fingers toward any available radio or television. The unreality of the situation required our minds to try to focus on, to sort out any bit of information which might explain the phenomenon we were beginning to experience. During the next hours we were bombarded with information in such volume that it was difficult to bring order out of the chaos; everyone soon knew of Lee Harvey Oswald, J D Tippit, the Texas School Book Depository and Parkland Hospital, but who could put these details into some meaningful pattern? Surely Chet and David would help us understand. Having heard the initial news in front of the chapel at Boston University, I walked over the streetcar tracks on Commonwealth Avenue and down the steps to “The Dugout”—an undergraduate beer joint I knew had a TV. I demanded that the bartender switch the channel to “BZ” (WBZ, the NBC station). But Chet and David were not there yet and Frank McGee was manning the desk. The news came fast, but with little pattern. “The President was shot in Dallas at 12:30 today,” was too stark, too brute a fact to comprehend fully at first hearing. Frank McGee’s signal my emotions was his won inability to continue to report the events. Within a short while, each of us in our own way realized fully the truth of what we had heard and seen. The little group in “The Dugout” wept openly and unashamedly. “They’ve killed him, goddamn, they’ve killed him” someone shouted. I remained seated on the bar-stool for a seemingly endless time. There was nothing else one could do that Friday afternoon but weep—to weep in a disconsolate silence interrupted only by one’s own voice repeating incredulously, “President Kennedy is dead.”

By Monday morning one knew that the funeral arrangements were planned for that day. The procession would leave the White House at 11:30 am and would proceed to St Matthew’s Cathedral for a Requiem Mass. I went to Trinity Church, a large Episcopal Church in Boston’s Copley Square, knowing I would be able to return home for the televised events. Trinity Church was nearly filled. Its romanesque massiveness seemed appropriate to the event and the day, as did the hymn we sang:

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream  
Bears all its sons away;  
They fly, forgotten as a dream  
Dies at the opening day.

As I made my way home after the service I resolved that I would not forget Jack Kennedy; I was sure that the legend of this “Brightest and best of the sons of the morning” (to borrow Bishop Heber’s words) would live on like the legend of our other martyr-president, Abraham Lincoln.

The funeral procession was to leave the White House promptly at 11:30, a mixture of the great and lowly of the world. Those of us watching on TV observed the world’s leaders who stood out in the crowd: Haile Selassie and Charles deGaulle were up front, a place befitting the Lion of Judah and the saviour
of France, with the Duke of Edinburgh immodestly close to deGaulle.

Intermingling with the greats in the procession were many well-dressed but faceless men who looked nervously from side to side (Secret Service men, one thought. Good. You can't be too careful, can you? The more knowledgeable suggested that the little men were from the Surete National. How clever of deGaulle to bring his own bodyguards!). The bells across Lafayette Square began to toll as the procession moved away from the White House. The Naval Academy choir, on the lawn, sang the Navy Hymn.

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to thee
For those in peril on the sea.
Oh yes, one remembered, JFK had been a navy man. Then one recalled his heroic efforts in the Pacific during the war when he was commander of PT-boat 109. How ironic that he should have survived that ordeal in warfare only to be slain senselessly and needlessly at home!

But then our attention was brought back to the funeral procession as the widowed First Lady appeared on our TV screens. All eyes were upon her, and despite the throng she seemed to be alone to stand out as though the others were not there. The next sound we heard was the lonely and eerie sound of bag-pipes. Yes, the TV announcer said, the pipers of the Black Watch Regiment had been given permission by Queen Elizabeth to play and to march behind the casket, in response to Mrs Kennedy's request. Their shaggy hats and tartan kilts were as surprising as their music, but the lonely and plaintive wall of the pipes seemed, once again, to be appropriate to the day and the event.

The lonely music for the widow alone kept all of us TV watchers silent. She stood erect, with the poise and grace to which we had grown accustomed. But that day she responded to the situation with a manner that was more regal than the kings and queens who followed her. The reporter of the London Evening Standard, Lady Jean Campbell, reported that Mrs Kennedy had "given the American people from this
day on the one thing they always lacked—majesty."

The procession turned off Connecticut Avenue to Rhode Island Avenue and the TV cameras placed outside the Cathedral picked it up as it turned the corner. There was Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston waiting on the steps. The Protestants among us winced a bit when Mrs Kennedy knelt before him to kiss his ring. We remembered the bitterness of the 1960 campaign and all the "separation of the church and state" arguments about "a Catholic in the White House." That indelibility past, the family and the dignitaries were to be seated for the mass.

The TV men reported a bit of black humor in the distress of Angier Biddle Duke, the Administration's chief of protocol. It seems he had not figured on the swords that King Baudouin, Haile Selassie, and Prince Phillip would wear. There was also a space problem. Where would the dignitaries sit? The answer was to pack them in as best one could. One sympathized with Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands, although the comic sight brought a bit of relief, to see her squeezed between Anastas Mikoyan of the Soviet Union and one of his thick-necked body guards. The family was seated in the front rows, and one's heart went out to see the stooped and obviously shaken figure of Rose Kennedy, the late President's mother. Behind the family sat President Lyndon Johnson, ashen-faced.

At precisely 12:14 pm the coffin entered St Mathew's. We learned, through the medium of instant communication, that the nation and the world was aware of the precise moment as well. Chicago's Loop was deserted, while in New York's Times Square worldly cabbies stood in silence outside their taxis while
two Eagle scouts played taps from the front of the Astor Hotel. The nation's transportation system was frozen: trains did not leave, and those in transit had been stopped in woods or on mountain trestles; Greyhound buses pulled off the road; airplanes awaiting take-off cut their engines; the roar of the subway systems in Boston and New York was stilled.

The world took note as well: At that precise moment, the Panama Canal was closed; Athenian policemen stopped all traffic in the city of Plato (it was evening rush hour there); a crowd gathered in Berlin near the place where JFK had given his “I am a Berliner” speech—that day Berliners were grateful to acknowledge their “adopted son”; and, in Vietnam, the few American troops and advisors fired twenty-one gun salutes.

Cardinal Cushing’s rasping voice rose and commanded attention. “Kyrie eleison, Christie eleison... Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona eis requiem” (“Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy... Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest eternal”). The number of communicants was small, so the communion took very little time. Soon Bishop Hannan was on his feet to read five Scriptural passages (from Proverbs, Joel, Joshua, Isaiah, and Ecclesiastes). The conclusion was some quotations from the Inaugural, and our minds went back to that snowy January afternoon, about a thousand days before, when the words were first spoken:

“We observe today not a victory of a party but a celebration of freedom, symbolizing an end as well as a beginning, signifying renewal as well as change. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans...”

Yes, I thought, here was the voice of the new generation of which I was a part.

I recalled the election of 1952 in which I worked for young Congressman Kennedy in his Senate bid which saw him unseat Henry Cabot Lodge. I was eleven years old and had agreed to hand out campaign materials for Adlai Stevenson, my real hero, in front of my school gym, which was the precinct’s polling station. Within a few hundred steps of that gym was the modest, wood-frame house in which John Kennedy had been born. My home was just a few blocks away. Passing out literature for young Jack was the least one Brookline boy could do for another. I was delighted by his victory and followed his career with great interest. By 1958, when he sought re-election, we knew that a solid victory would launch his presidential campaign, as it in fact did. The campaign of 1958, at least in developing John Kennedy’s relationship with Massachusetts, was not so much an election as a coronation.

By 1960, as a university student, I was once more ready to do what was needed for JFK, throughout the primaries in the New Hampshire snows, the convention (who is Eugene McCarthy?) and the campaign. After the TV debate with Nixon we knew we had a winner. (We “Young Democrats” at Boston University laughed ourselves silly when one of our tweedy professors asked us if we had seen the debate between Senator Kennedy and “...uh, uh,...the other guy?”) The polls showed us so well ahead that the month of October found us confident almost to the point of arrogance. On election eve a great rally in the Boston Garden found me screaming in frenzied unison with other students as “the candidate” and
his exquisite wife walked among us.

If the election of 1958 had been a coronation, this was the triumphal entry. After eight years of dear old Ike we thought JFK was most compelling in suggesting that he would “get the country going again.” Arthur M Schlesinger, Jr, the high priest of the eastern liberals, intoned, with what was regarded as historic wisdom, that this was no less than a turning point in American history, when the nation revived its spirit and conquered the “new frontiers” which faced us.

The voice of Bishop Hannan snapped my consciousness back from election eve, 1960, to Washington, 1963. The TV camera focused on the lonely coffin as Hannan concluded with the most famous sentence JFK had ever spoken: “And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” After the Bishop left the lecturn, the Cardinal led in the Lord’s Prayer, and then pronounced the final words: *Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis*” (“Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them”).

The mass was over, and the assembled dignitaries filed out of St Matthew’s. We all watched the casket being tied to the gun carriage for the third time that day. The band struck up “Hail to the Chief” for the last time for President Kennedy. Men in uniform saluted while civilians straightened in the final tribute to the man who had been President.

Jacqueline Kennedy, recalling how her son John had enjoyed playing soldiers with his father, leaned over to him and said, “John, you can salute Daddy now and say good-bye to him.” Of all the mental images which one recalls of that funeral Monday none is more clearly imprinted in the mind than that of little John—it was his third birthday—saluting his father.

The remainder of the afternoon went according to plan: the procession to Arlington cemetery, the burial, Mrs Kennedy lighting the eternal flame, and by 3:30 it was over. President Johnson received the foreign dignitaries at the State Department while Mrs Kennedy went ahead with little John’s already planned birthday party; life must go on, somehow.

In 1960 we young liberals exulted in President Kennedy’s life-affirming zest, his brilliance, and his wit as the figure for a new “style” in American political life—a style which was unafraid of ideas, change, and the future. With Wordsworth we could say, “In that dawn t’was bliss to be alive, but to be young was very heaven.” With his death we realised that while life indeed must go on, we nevertheless had lost something of the best of ourselves. We would live and laugh and love, but we would never be young again.

The “Kennedy legend” and the “Lincoln legend” share one common element: it was perhaps merciful that both men passed from the scene before the contradictions in their political philosophies would require an “agonizing reappraisal.” In Lincoln’s case it was his faith in the self-made man, an ideal he embodied. Within a decade of his death the great, corporate enterprises were already making a mockery of that faith. The individual man could no longer “make it” in corporate America, and Lincoln’s belief in liberal capitalism would have had to been revised if he were to retain his deeply felt compassion for the common man; perhaps it was best for him that he did not have to.

In Kennedy’s case it was his view of America in the world. His “active” vision of Ameri-
can foreign policy was seen in the blunders of his two and three-fourths years: the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Berlin Wall crisis, and the Cuban missile crisis. He gave his pledge to the world in the Inaugural: “We will go anywhere, pay any price, support any friend, oppose any foe” in the name of freedom. In such an open-ended commitment lay the basis for the ultimate tragedy of modern American history—the war in Vietnam.

In 1960 we liberals cheered Kennedy because we believed that pledge had been made on behalf of freedom and humanity. The inherent contradiction in that viewpoint was that we believed it was the United States’ role in history to bear the burden of that “twilight struggle” on behalf of humanity. We confronted ourselves and that contradiction in the rice paddies of Vietnam as we learned that humanity—or, at least a majority of Vietnamese humanity—did not want us to assume that burden, at least as we defined it, for them. John Kennedy would surely have had to face it too had he lived. Arthur Schlesinger assures us that he would have realized it during his second term, and he would not have followed the course which Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon ultimately chose. I do not know what to make of such assurances. I do know that by 1968 we who did live had to reappraise with some agony the purposes of our nation and its place in the world.

The year 1968 found me in the United States Army. With a PhD in History, I was made a captain and sent as a historical officer to Germany (a lovely place indeed from which to view the Vietnam war!). The campaign of 1968 promised to be a national referendum on the war, and things started well with Eugene McCarthy’s victory in New Hampshire and Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy’s plunge into the presidential race. It was better to be in Germany and not have television, because John and Robert Kennedy presented such different visual images. But on the Armed Forces Network radio we heard all the major speeches, and once again, there was “the voice”: “I think we can do better”—alas, said only as a Brookline boy could say it, even if he was senator from New York at the moment. Could it be that we might be able to bring back those heady and joyful days of 1960 with all their confidence and optimism? For a while it seemed so, but, of course, it was not to be, and I rather think I knew it could not be.

The first blow of 1968 came in April when Dr Martin Luther King went to Memphis. We were on a war games exercise in central Germany, and I was on the night shift in the “situation room.” A colonel and I were working with the pins on the map when a young soldier rushed into the room and blurted out the news, “Sir, sir, Dr Martin Luther King has been murdered in Memphis, Tennessee.” I had scarcely had time to react when my superior drew on his pipe, looked thoughtfully into the distance, and said quietly, “Son of a bitch, got what he deserved.”

I stood dumb and numb, and at that moment came my shock of recognition—the recognition that there were two Americas, not one, and that the two conceptions of what America was about were at fundamental odds with each other. This man and I, I thought, belonged to two different nations. I excused myself and went for a walk on the dark and empty streets of Mannheim (at 2 am I had the streets to myself); and as I walked I wept for the second time that decade, both for the loss of Dr King and for “the Dream” which he and Jack
Kennedy had shared for America.

Bobby's bid for the presidency now became all the more important. Surely there was little time left, one thought, and here was the one man who could “put it all together again” for America. The primaries and the polls all looked good, and with Johnson's withdrawal, the road to nomination and election seemed clear (Richard Nixon? We Brookline boys had handled him before!). We were on vacation in late May and early June that year, and my parents were coming to visit us in Heidelberg. We drove to Oostend to meet the ferry from England. It was there we heard the news from Los Angeles. I looked out at the North Sea for sight of my parent's ship, and in the mist and fog which shrouded the Channel that day I wept for the third time.

It would be the last time I would weep, because I have no tears left for America and very little hope. It now seems more important to me to focus upon the work of God in the everyday realm of life and to venture into the larger arena only when the cause seems right, such as the McGovern crusade. Ten years on as I recall that death in Dallas, I see this decade as one in which we came apart as people in these United States, and that the breaking of the social bond was fundamental. That breaking made clear the contradictions inherent in the American Dream which we perhaps should have seen all along but did not see until public murders dramatized them.

Lest I be misunderstood let me make “perfectly clear,” as they say these days, that I do not recommend Christians opting out of politics or social concerns. To the contrary I urge my fellow Christians to become involved wherever they feel led, and I hope that for some that means politics. I do suggest, however, that political and social concern be motivated by and directed toward the building up of the Kingdom of God, not for the salvation or redemption of America. It could well be that these past ten years of pain and tears should be regarded by Christians as one which “we counted for evil but God counted for good.” If that is the case, then the painful lessons of this past decade which began in Dallas will not have been in vain. As we sang ten years ago:

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.
Since the posthumous appearance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* during the fifties, the German Lutheran pastor-theologian has suffered the inevitable fate of being all things to all men, or more particularly, to all Protestant theologians. His status as a martyr of the church, his compelling ethos and personal power which surface on every page of the *Letters and Papers*, and the ambiguous, metaphorical, and incomplete nature of his theological thought while in prison all contribute both to the atmosphere of reverence and to the freedom of extrapolation with which his last writings have been received by theologians in the Protestant tradition.

Two major American movements in particular have claimed Bonhoeffer as godfather, or at least as midwife: the "radical" death-of-God theology of William Hamilton, Thomas Altizer, and Paul Van Buren and the "secular Christianity" propounded briefly by Harvey Cox. Both of these movements seem to assume an essential discontinuity in the thought of Bonhoeffer, a rejection on his part of his earlier neo-orthodox and ecclesiastically oriented theology, a breakthrough in his thought, prompted by the extremity of his imprisonment, which relates only incidentally to his previous thought.

Paradoxically, such an approach to his last writings does not do justice to the

a new look at his theology of the church

BONHOEFFER

by David Timmer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's all too brief career in Hitler's Germany cast him in the roles of pastor, professor, ecumenist, organizer of the ecclesiastical resistance to Nazi domination of the church, and eventually as a participant in the political underground's attempt to assassinate Hitler. For this last activity, he was imprisoned by the Nazis and eventually executed in April of 1945. —ed
primary theme of the Letters and Papers themselves, the theme that the essence of Christian faith is not to be found “on the boundaries” of human existence but in the midst of everyday life. A growing consensus in the theological world is that the real message of the Letters and Papers is missed if the book is put in a class by itself and regarded as unrelated to Bonhoeffer’s total lifework. This “second look” at Bonhoeffer is asserting that the process of his thought in the Letters and Papers is only the natural unfolding of elements which were inherently presented in his earlier work.

Two workable alternative frameworks have been proposed for understanding Bonhoeffer’s thought in its total context. His friend and posthumous editor and interpreter Eberhard Bethge has suggested that Bonhoeffer’s theology be understood as a response to the problem of the “concretization of revelation,” or how the Word of God becomes the Kingdom of God. James Godsey asserts that the key to understanding Bonhoeffer in context is to trace the consistent emphasis on the work and presence of Christ through his writings. (1)

While finding fault with neither of these alternatives, I would propose a third framework for interpreting Bonhoeffer’s work: his theology of the nature and function of the church in the world. In this way, both of the previous frameworks are synthesized as they ought to be, for Bonhoeffer viewed the church as the “concretization” of an essentially “Christological” revelation. His theology of the church also highlights three vitally important factors in Bonhoeffer’s theological development: his experiences in the German Church Struggle and the political resistance; his personal theological struggles with the contemporary “pseudo-Lutheran” Two-Kingdom dogma; and his profound psychological analysis of personhood, relation, and community.

Bonhoeffer’s theology of the church unfolds in three natural and successive stages, corresponding chronologically to the history of German Protestantism during the rise and fall of the Third Reich. In the first stage, his emphasis falls on the role of the church as a unique fellowship of persons in Christ; this was the period during which he wrote The Communion of Saints (published 1930) and developed the ideas which came to expression in Life Together (1938). The second stage emphasizes the church as a community of discipleship and the obedience of the disciples to Christ. This emphasis is developed in his shorter writings relating to the struggle of the German church against National Socialism, and it finds its most extensive treatment in The Cost of Discipleship (1937). The third stage asserts the role of the church as that of claimant of the world for Christ. This thought was developed in his Ethics (published posthumously in 1949) and the Letters and Papers from Prison.

It is hoped that the following analysis of these stages of Bonhoeffer’s theology of the church will function to establish their continuity. The three roles into which he casts the church are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are mutually inclusive and interde-
of relationships between persons in the sin-broken community as opposed to the "communion of saints." Here he develops a distinction between agape and eros. According to Bonhoeffer, in the sin-broken community men experience other men only as ethical barriers, demands, or conflicting wills—in other words, as law. Within the communion of saints, however, as parts of the collective person representing Christ, men experience each other, through Christ, not as demands but as gifts and, therefore, as gospel, as objects of love. (4) Loving fellowship, Bonhoeffer emphasizes, is not a human possibility but is only possible out of faith in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Bonhoeffer distinguishes here between this spiritual communion which makes no claim or demand on the loved one (agape) and the more egotistical human love which demands mutuality of love in and for itself (eros), that is, access to other person unmediated by Christ. (5)

These two themes, a) Christ's vicarious establishment of the reality of the Christian fellowship, which results in the dual deputyship of the church for Christ and for the world, and b) the transformation of the relationships within the spiritual community from eros to agape, surface in various forms in the later theological thought of Bonhoeffer. As we will see, their imprint is still deep in the pages of Ethics and the Letters and Papers from Prison.

Eight years passed between the publication of The Communion of Saints and Life Together, and ten years had actually elapsed between the periods when the respective books were written. In the meantime Bonhoeffer had become deeply involved in the German Church Struggle; he had left Germany for a few years to minister to a German church in London, and while in England he had gained first-hand experience of the communal lifestyles practiced in such religious communities as Kelham and Mirfield. He returned to Germany in 1935 to take charge of an underground seminary at Finkenwalde, where he instituted a communal life-style with the seminarians. These experiences form the basis and motive for Life Together.

Although much of the book is pastoral and practical in nature, his explanation of the concept of community in the first chapter of the book reveals the theological basis on which the book rests. Bonhoeffer makes two distinctions which indicate how one should approach the community of believers. First, he points out that Christian community is a divine reality, not a human ideal. It is the business of the Spirit to bring about in his own way what has already been created by God in Christ, whereas human wish-dreams or complaints must be destroyed and replaced with thankfulness for God's gift. (6)

This, of course, is a reassertion in practical terms and pastoral language of Bonhoeffer's claim in The Communion of Saints that Christian community is realized vicariously in Christ and actualized in history by the Holy Spirit. Second, Bonhoeffer once again makes the distinction between agape and eros. He sternly warns Christians to respect the integrity and privacy of the fellow-believer, to approach him only through Christ, who by his atonement makes possible true confession, forgiveness, and spiritual communion. (7) It appears, then, that pastoral experience over this ten-year span had confirmed in Bonhoeffer's mind his theoretical analysis of relation and community.

Thus Bonhoeffer's development of the existence of the church as a unique fellowship of persons in Christ was maintained consistently over this significant period in his life and thought. We shall see how these principles play an integral role in the succeeding phases of Bonhoeffer's thought concerning the church.

The Church as Community of Obedience "To Christ"

In three seminal essays published during 1933, at the beginning of the struggle of the "Confessing Church" against the compromises between the German state church and National Socialism, Bonhoeffer began to explore and set forth the role of the church as a community of obedience to Christ. This new emphasis in his thought and practice was motivated by the new exigencies of the Church Struggle, but the conclusions which he put forward arose naturally out of the context of his earlier theology of the church.

In the first essay, "Dein Reich Kommt!" ("Thy Kingdom Come!", 1933), Bonhoeffer deals with the relationship between church and state within the Kingdom of God. (8) Bonhoeffer asserts that church and state are both manifestations of the Kingdom of God with different but complementary functions within that framework. The church, he says, is mandated to proclaim the miracle of the new creation, the end of the power of death; the state, for its part, is
to preserve the old order of creation and protect life. The church is established as a new community of confession and forgiveness, while the state preserves the old structures of the secular community. Christians are to live obediently within both of these communities.

In a second essay entitled "What is Church?" (1933), Bonhoeffer recognizes that the church must bring a "word" of God to the state as a part of its function. He delineates two possible words which the church may rightfully bring to the state. Under normal circumstances, the church merely reminds the state of its sin, its finitude and limitations. But the church always reserves the option of engaging in direct political action as a last resort.

The third essay, "The Church Before the Jewish Question" (1933), details the degrees of political action in which the church may engage if it feels called upon to choose that option. The first step, he states, is for the church to question the state's legitimacy when it no longer fulfills its appointed function within the Kingdom of God. The second step is to aid the victims of the state's malfunctioning, as a work of mercy and brotherhood. The third step is for the church to "throw itself into the spokes" of a state "machine" that is running amok.

Thus Bonhoeffer proceeds from an assumption concerning the nature of the church as community, which conforms closely to that outlined in The Communion of Saints, to a conclusion concerning the relative functions of church and state within the Kingdom of God. Finally he calls on the church to obey God by preserving the divinely ordained order of the Kingdom.

During 1933 and 1934, ad hoc "Confessing Synods" convening in Barmen and Dahlem established two basic principles for the life of the church in the world. At Barmen it was declared that the church must jealously guard her proclamation of the Gospel against perversion or dilution by any secular agency, especially the state. At Dahlem the synod declared that the true church must manage its own internal affairs, without interference from the state; by doing so, the Confessing Synod effectively established itself as an independent branch of the Evangelical (state) Church. Although Bonhoeffer was in England during these synods, and thus had no immediate part in drafting their testimonies, he firmly supported the principles which they enunciated.

In an essay entitled "The Question of the Boundaries of the Church and Church Union" (1936), he called the Confessing Church to remain true to Barmen and Dahlem, and to their primary implication, that the Confessing Church was in fact the true church of Christ in Germany. Two elements come out strongly in this essay: first, that the existence of the church per se is in some way contingent on how it functions, what it does, and whether or not it is obedient; second, that the world itself sets the boundaries of the true church by its rejection of the Gospel—"Outside the church, there is no salvation."

Both of these conclusions were to figure strongly in the theology of the church propounded in The Cost of Discipleship. This famous and controversial exegesis of Christ's Sermon on the Mount advanced Bonhoeffer's ideas concerning the church as a "visible community" within the world.

In it Bonhoeffer asserts that the church requires "space" in the world in order to fulfill its function. This space is necessitated by the Incarnation, for
Elegy for an Author

There was no cutting
of the beauty from its place
in the journey. It went
its way among the strands
of truth and time,
like the hidden sands
beneath the river.

Out of your heart
grew the green grass
of unnamed seasons,
bound to the spinning mystery
your deepest grasp
so longed to hold.

You could not turn your shoulder
back or put it forward
to the march,
for yours was the clear call
to the unknown,
though all lessons were gathering
points in your mind.

As your solitary eye was dimmed,
men put their hands in their pockets
and shook their heads.
"His was not a divided soul."

Across these clouds your visionary words
still pierce our silence
like a memory. A vast stone-binding
melts this land’s images
into one: it is the love
of mountains and the travel
that is ours. From whence
came not knowledge, but
the wisdom. For yours
was the imagination and the power.

c j strikwerda

The Church
as Claimant of the World
"For Christ"

When Bonhoeffer wrote The Cost of Discipleship in 1937, the violent persecution of the Confessing Church was beginning in earnest, with the arrest of Martin Niemoller and other leaders of the church. By 1938 the Finkenwalde seminary had been forced to close and many of its former students had been arrested. In the years of Christ. Just as the world thrust Jesus Christ out of itself, so it will try to destroy the space for obedience which the church claims. But the claiming of space, the separation from the world and the assault upon it which the church is to make, the recognition of the antithesis unto which the church and the world are cast, all of these are necessary for the proper functioning of the church.

The Christian pursues even his secular calling in order to emphasize his separation from the world, and the world brings the final apocalypse ever nearer as it attempts to thrust the church out of the world and onto a cross. (14)

Thus far Bonhoeffer has a) outlined the role of the church as a unique fellowship of believers in Christ, and b) placed that fellowship into the world in the context of the Kingdom of God, mandated the church to preserve the ordinance of God in establishing the Kingdom, and asserted that the church’s existence as the church is contingent on its obedience to the divine mandate despite the efforts of the world to deprive the church of its rightful space in the world.
following, as Bonhoeffer began work on his Ethics, it seemed that his worst suspicions were being confirmed; the world was destroying the space which the church was to occupy, the church was literally being pushed out of the world and onto a cross. Bonhoeffer himself had been silenced by the Nazis, and it seemed as if the resistance of the Confessing Church would be snuffed out.

It is nothing short of shocking, therefore, to find that it is precisely at this point that Bonhoeffer most vigorously affirms the essential goodness of the secular world as the world, and the necessity of the unity of the church with the world. But that is exactly what Bonhoeffer does in his Ethics. Does this new emphasis stand in contradiction to The Cost of Discipleship with its apparently "Anabaptist" cosmology, or do the themes which Bonhoeffer developed in that and earlier works actually form the foundation for his turning to the world in acceptance?

A careful reading of Bonhoeffer will, I think, affirm the latter alternative. In the world of Jurgen Moltmann,

Bonhoeffer takes up the Christology and ecclesiology of vicarious representation which he had worked out in The Communion of Saints and develops it further in Ethics, applying it to all of life created and redeemed by Christ for human fellowship under the mandates of the world. . . . (15)

Bonhoeffer himself explains how his thinking had developed between the writing of The Cost of Discipleship and Ethics. He notes that it was only when the church's message had been refined under persecution into its "hardest and most uncompromising form" that the secular defenders of basic civilized values in Germany had rediscovered the church as the home of these values, even though the church had often been attacked by those men in the name of these same values! (16)

Bonhoeffer's assertion of the essential unity of the church with the world is a natural consequence of his doctrine that through Christ the entire world is redeemed to God and therefore is the province of God's grace. He attacks the medieval Scholastic notion with its subordination of nature to grace, the "pseudo-Lutheran" idea that the orders of the world are autonomous and in opposition to the laws of Christ, and the Enthusiast (Anabaptist) doctrine that the church as the community of the Elect must struggle against a hostile world for the establishment of God's Kingdom within itself. In Bonhoeffer's words, "In all of these schemes, the cause of Christ becomes a partial and provisional matter within the limits of society." Thus, in these schemes, some reality lies outside of reality in Christ. (17)

There is for Bonhoeffer only one reality: God in Christ. The church must "see the world in Christ." (18) While earlier Bonhoeffer had emphasized that the church is differentiated from the world because internally it is a different sort of community, now he states that the church is nevertheless always a part of the world which God has reconciled through Christ as the world and as a whole.

What, then, of the space of the church in the world, the necessity of which Bonhoeffer asserted so strongly in The Cost of Discipleship? Bonhoeffer does not here deny that the church needs its space in which to function, but his sad experiences with the Confessing Church (as elucidated in greater detail in the Letters and Papers) had led him to conclude that the church may not properly defend her space in the world as an end in itself, or for the purpose of extending that space, but only through the salvation of the world as the world. (19)
Confession

Stolid, voluptuous, langourous,
She stands with her lover,
His lumpy hand covering hers,
To confess the sin growing in her belly.

Heads of the congregation,
Like cranes driven by the preacher’s words,
Stretch out, bite into the black detritus of her soul,
Lift it up and spew it out.
For all the world to see.

(And you, confessional poet, friend of the skunk,
What need requires you to air your smelly garments?
Is there no soap to wash them?
No hole to bury them in?
Why hang them in a public place?
To teach a lesson in natural depravity?
To bring a gospel of truth to those who are lost in purity?
Or are these radar screens, searching the empty heavens
For signs of some Enemy (or Friend) who never appears?
Are they an SOS,
Flags waiting for rain to cleanse them and reveal the
invisible ink of your desperation: “Help me”?
To whom do you call?
To what community do you confess?
Shall these people turn from honest work
To scan the soiled rags of your Samaritan soul?)

Still she stands,
Humble, obedient, uncomprehending,
Giving her “I do” to the preacher’s catechism
Like a pledge to keep faith with the union.

O child of God,
You who harbor no anger against any man,
Who know no envy, who have no power
Of mind to teach the ways of right and truth,
Who know only what you have been taught
And what your heart desires,
You whose frailties are but the systole and diastole of your heart,
To whom, my sister, in this House of God
Do you confess your soul?

Clarence Walhout
man feel guilty in order to show him his need for Christ, to pry into his innermost secret life in order to demonstrate his depravity. He felt that Christians should not and need not make this inner guilt the content of their proclamation. They should not, because the Christian has no right to violate the privacy of a brother for whose justification Christ died; they need not, because Christ is the Lord of all life, not just of the boundaries, the extremities with which man cannot cope. Christ should be found in the center of our lives, in those places, in fact, where we ourselves feel most secure and self-sufficient—in the midst of the secular world he died to redeem.

The contemporary theologians who have attempted to use Bonhoeffer's last writings as a validation of "Christian faith" without God or without the Church can only have done so by neglecting or ignoring the chastened, yet strong theology of the church and of the lordship of Christ which permeates the Letters and Papers. One should read Bonhoeffer no less critically than any other theologian and should use special care with the "unrevised" and fragmentary thoughts expressed in his letters written in the loneliness of a prison cell.

Yet a fair and informed reading of the Letters and Papers will indicate that Bonhoeffer is deeply committed to a dynamic orthodoxy and has an evangelical passion for God's Kingdom. His writings are thus an invaluable resource for anyone who desires to share in that commitment.

Bonhoeffer's new and often shocking terminology in the Letters and Papers—"A non-religious interpretation of religious concepts," Christ as "the man for others," God as "the beyond in our midst"—are comprehensible only in the context of the total and unified development of his theological thought. Bonhoeffer's theology of the church manifests a steady and consistent development from its earliest stages, as well as a sensitive responsiveness to experience. Beginning with an analysis of the internal structure of the church as a unique fellowship of persons in Christ, he places that church within the world as a community of obedience to Christ, and finally he unfolds his far-reaching cosmology of a world redeemed and the church as claimant of that world for Christ. His profound world-and-life vision is a testament, sealed by his martyrdom, to the potential of the church in God's world.

FOOTNOTES

5. CS, pp. 119-122.
7. Ibid., pp. 31-37.
10. Ibid., p. 110.
13. Ibid., p. 277.
15. Moltmann, p. 94.
17. Ibid., p. 196.
18. Ibid., p. 197.
20. Ibid., p. 294.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


I. Some Background

Death in October... from the past to the present... raging against academia... something new was about to happen... a number of beat fellows... and lots of writing

Jack Kerouac died on October 21, 1969, about four years to the day of the writing of this article. He left behind him an amazing wealth of literary works and a personal myth so vast that it has influenced an entire generation.

We who were reared in the fifties and sixties have grown, mostly without our knowledge, beneath the shadow of Kerouac's achievement and vision. But I believe we have misinterpreted his vision, misrepresented Kerouac himself, and eventually prostituted almost completely everything the man had to say to his generation and to ours. The surest way to prove such a thesis is to go back to Kerouac's life and works, take a fresh approach to them, and then transport what facts are discovered back here to October, 1973.

For this task, some historical and philosophical insight is needed about Kerouac's literary generation. Each of the works produced by Kerouac and his literary bedfellows (Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, William S. Burroughs, Lew Welch, Ferlinghetti, etc.) were essentially written in reaction to the stifling academic state of criticism and poetry championed (on the influence of Eliot) by the "New Critics" such as Lionel Trilling, Joseph Wood Krutch, and Malcolm Cowley. By the 1950's, the school of New Criticism had formed a vice-like grip on the literature produced by the generation. New Criticism represented the most elite of all literacy establishments, and their effects are still felt today.

But Kerouac, Ginsberg, et al., rejected the obscurity and dusty intellectualism of the New Critics to revive the personal and emotional aspects of thought in American writing. And the revival was done with a vengeance.

Kerouac and his fellows were not the first of the literary revolutionaries. Both Kerouac and Ginsberg were influenced by Kenneth Rexroth, poet and essayist, who had bolted from stuffy Chicago with his bags and his poems to settle in San Francisco. Ginsberg's other influence at this time was W. C. Williams, who took Ginsberg under his poetic wing and guided the earlier stages of his career.

While in San Francisco, Rexroth continued to rail against the tight-fisted east-coast literary establishment. Other young and frustrated poets rallied around him to form what would soon be known as the San Francisco Renaissance in poetry. These included Ginsberg, Corso, and, a bit later, Gary Snyder, Michael McClure, and Lew Welch, among others. The Renaissance was a literary blossom that spawned and liberated hundreds of novelists and poets in the subsequent years. It allowed them the freedom to delve more widely and deeply into the intricate workings of the human emotional and physical consciousness.

The attack upon Trilling, Krutch, VanDoren, etc., was a two-pronged offensive. On the one flank stood the Frisco poets while from the other front came the literary bullets of the Black Mountain school of poetry (including Charles Olsen, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan and others).

So issuing forth from what was originally a literary/political/aesthetic struggle came the novels and poems of Jack Kerouac. Kerouac would never have written what he did except for this bookish infighting between the New
Critics and the younger avant-garde poets. But in a way he remains an individual throughout the battle, almost oblivious at times to the integral part he played in the downfall of academic poetry.

Although the accomplishments of the school of New Criticism are immense and should not be made out to be purely the products of the literary arrogance of a chosen few, the school's demise was inevitable and healthy for American literature as a whole. Perhaps the best evidence for this view is the monumental influence, integrity, originality, and force of purpose of the works that followed the New Critics. Allen Ginsberg's long poem, "Howl," William S. Burroughs' Naked Lunch, John Clellon Holmes' novel, Go, and Kerouac's own On The Road, remain as important and essential landmarks of the freshness and vitality of American literature.

So we must now extract Kerouac and his books from this setting and get at the man himself. Where in his psyche lay the talent, power, and magic to enable him to forge an entirely original group of novels and poems? And where in the novels and poems lay the secret that forced an entire generation to reshuffle their social and human values.

II Into the Man

...down in Lowell...memere...Cassady/Cody...highways, highways...burn, burn, burn...beat friends...wine and stars...spontaneous prose...visions...loneliness...out for the count in Florida...

Ann Charters' biography, Kerouac, is a magnificent book. It is written with objectivity (a rarity these days), compassion, intelligence, and directness. It is a sprawling book of over 400 pages, complete with an astonishing array of photographs of Kerouac and his assorted literary accomplishments.

Charters is intelligent enough to leave her purely personal feelings for Kerouac aside, but perceptive enough to realize the some critical assessment of his novels is appropriate and welcome in a biography of this size. She combines the facts of Kerouac's life with the criticism of his writing in a deftly executed marriage of personal reality and literary possibility. She has, as the idiom goes, done her homework well.

We as readers learn first of the practical aspects of Kerouac's life. Born March 12, 1922, in Lowell, Massachusetts, of French-Canadian parents, he was christened Jean Louis Lebris de Kerouac. He relished his childhood in Lowell and was extraordinarily close to his mother after the death of his father following a series of illnesses. At heart, he remained in Lowell with his mother (memere to Jack) his only security and peace in a life filled with failures both mental and physical.

He was an athlete, adept in football and track in his high school; eventually he proceeded to Columbia University on a football scholarship. He was a star on the freshman team, but an injury kept him from making the varsity squad. It was a failure that was to haunt him all his life, in a way a metaphor for all the bad times that followed him into his adulthood.

His life after Columbia was a whirl of endless activity much too lengthy to trace in detail here. Suffice it to say that at Columbia he first met Allen Ginsberg, and in New York City he made the acquaintance of Burroughs, Lucien Carr, Hal Chase, and the now-legendary Neal Cassady.

Neal Cassady was the greatest influence upon Kerouac's life from the moment that the two first met. He was the one to initiate Jack to the life of the road. And from the late forties until his last tragic trip to California in 1961, Kerouac remained periodically on the road, rushing about by thumb, railroad boxcar, and old automobiles back and forth across the United States, down to Mexico, and off by boat to Tangiers and Paris. He was almost constantly without money and often in bad health and constantly drunk on cheap wine during this time. Yet he produced an awesome amount of work under these circumstances, including eleven novels in six years. His vision was as immense and lonely as the highways he traveled and as sweet as the red port wine he was never without.

His method of writing he himself named "spontaneous prose," a system of stream-of-consciousness outpourings of emotion coupled with meticulous detail (Kerouac's memory for detail was staggering) that enabled him to write such novels as The Subterraneans in three days, and the bulk of On The Road in a mere twenty-one days.

At the crux of his lifestyle and his writing was the idea that one must "burn, burn, burn." Live every moment whether joyful or depressing to its fullest. Experience all that one can experience within a lifetime. Follow the light of a star to the star itself.

It worked for his writing, but doomed his own life. He burned himself out with alcohol in a hopeless and tragic last attempt to return again to the magic and lure of the road, his old friends, and a vision gone astray. Charters, as she does...
with his entire life, traces these last days with grace and compassion. She is there in person to see him down his daily consumption of two fifths of scotch, two or three tall six-packs of Falstaff, and a few potato chips. He died from massive internal bleeding in 1969 and was buried in his beloved hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts. His grave is unmarked.

III Into the Myth

...his bony mad face covered with sweat and throbbing veins, saying, “Yes, yes, yes,” as though tremendous revelations were pouring into him all the time now, and I am convinced they were, and the others suspected as much and were frightened. He was BEAT—the root, the soul of Beatific.

...I like too many things and get all confused and hung-up running from one falling star to another till I drop. This is the night, what it does to you. I had nothing to offer anybody except my own confusion.

...besides he knew the road would get more interesting, especially ahead, always ahead.

-On The Road

The myth of Jack Kerouac developed through his novels, most notably On The Road, and to a lesser extent The Subterraneans, The Dharma Bums, Dr Sax, and his large book of poetry, Mexico City Blues.

I am not here to review these books. Most everyone has read On The Road, and probably one or two of the others. We need, however, to cull from the novels and poems some knowledge of what Kerouac was trying to say. When we have that, it needs to be compared to what the sixties and seventies have done to his voice.

One is struck immediately by the vitality of the books. They swirl, and hustle, and truck, and fly, and soar through the American night. The reader knows instantly that the author is a man very much alive and concerned with living. At the same moment one is struck with the knowledge that this is a desperate living, a running through and toward life only because death is pursuing softly behind. Amidst the burning is a sobering vision, a respect for the traces of death one encounters in day-to-day living—loneliness, fear, depression, the breakdown of relationships, and desperation at a society intent upon technological suicide.

There is a remarkable difference between this type of living and the sheer hedonism of the late-sixties culture where nothing was feared and everything “was beautiful.” Kerouac espoused a lifestyle of “burn, burn, burn” on a purely individual level, its only purpose being to counter the creeping of death into one’s personal existence. The terrible pace of his life is never thought of in a collective sense, as a mass movement.

True, he maintained a close group of friends throughout his life and they were dubbed (by Kerouac himself) as the “beat generation.” But at most his group of friends reached maybe twenty-five persons who knew him closely, hardly any
The reality is simply this. That he was a man seeking freedom from a life that he himself had made repressive. That he would be satisfied with being considered a writer and nothing more. That he loved the land he grew up in and the idea of life so much that he ran a mad race against death until exhausted mentally and disabled physically, and that death finally caught him at the cold, jazz, wine-filled, dark, mad end of the road.

IV Parting Shots

We had finally found the magic land at the end of the road and we never dreamed the extent of the magic.

- On The Road

...God it was the most beautiful thing that ever happened to me in its own way—but it was all sinister.

-The Subterraneans

Smile & think deeply.

-Mexico City Blues,

158th Chorus

V Asides

Jack Kerouac said in On The Road that everyone goes home in October. He did in 1969. Perhaps it is time for each of us to do the same in our own way. Get back to the magic of our selves, forget much of the useless and inane bickerings among ourselves, protect our own particular vision from the arrogance of death, stand for a moment beneath the full moon and think of the great lights and falling stars that abound within us so often appears as simply evil and darkness and death. Step aside for a time and shake hands across the decades with Jack Kerouac for his magic. Jazz, bop, burn, and goodnight.
Cauterized, sealed, frozen, welded into an imponderable, improbable, unproductive mass, hermetically caulked to seal in staleness, this is the state of Justin's mind as we zoom in upon it this morning. He vegetates in the lobby of the university library unable to convince himself to study. Unable to move.

But then minds are always churning, and Justin's, no exception, has for some inscrutable reason seized upon the words "dank tarn" from somewhere he did not remember, and rolls them over in his mind now as if at will.


His back was flat on the bottom of the chair, his head propped artificially against the back. His neck began to feel like a noodle. At length the level of discomfort forced a change in position; the change in posture suggested a new line of thought.

"The university. What is the university? The university, the universe, the universal. The universal joint."

A quorum of German pro-
fessors ambled by in a way reminiscent of the Biergarten joviality of their culture. Justin saw them goose-stepping.

"Here we have Germans, the Master Race. Why are they here, why are they not in Germany? Because this is the University, the University is the Universe, and even Germans would rather belong to the Universe than to the Master Race. Because the Master Race is, after all, intelligent enough to know that it cannot exist without the universe. How stupid it would have been to think so. Germans soon would have found out that they were no Master Race if they had tried to get along without the universe. To leave the universe—they would have had to leave themselves."

He reflected that it was impossible to know if other master races had tried it and perished. "If they have, then how could we know that they were master races? In fact how could they have been Master Races, if only the fittest survive? Come to think of it, how do we know that they would have perished? Maybe they’re out there somewhere. Maybe they didn’t need the universe after all."

He reflected that the Germans were a puny Master Race to need to rely upon the universe. He reflected how this realization was reflected in the paunches of the German professors, who had long since passed into the library.

The Chinese. Surely more masterful than the Germans. Eaten alive by the West, the inscrutable orientals had snuck out the other end and taken over our laundries, our fortune cookie empires, and our honor. Then they had given us opium and made us beasts. Their ping pong team had defused our bombs in flight and when we had come to pick up the pieces they’d blown us up with our own bombs and then they’d picked up the pieces. Neat trick. The universe would revert to China—Who else?—since they were as out of it as anybody.

"Anybody except maybe me here in this chair. OK, let’s get back in there. What to do. Choice: books to read. On: Robert Browning, Louis XIV, Existentialism, Philosophy of History, K’ang Yu-wei. Play by Shaw. Where to start? First the schedule. Let’s see. Joyce paper due three weeks ago. Already did that. That’s one thing done. Kang Yu-wei was executed or something, forget about him. Do existentialists read books about existentialism? Find out before investing the effort. Check, check, check, OK.

“Shaw’s play is about a cat-

It would be good though if he could find out about existentialists first so he would know whether he would have to read the guy’s book or not. The thought of reading 300 pages of something he could bull-shit about made him sick. He decided to stay in the lobby for a few minutes in case an existentialist happened by, so he would sound him out about it. Wouldn’t do to miss a chance to find out about existentialists. One could walk through there anytime. Justin wondered what an existentialist was, actually.

After about a minute he began to get tired of waiting.

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**the existentialist**

by Peter Dykstra

25
But since the alternative was to go start reading the book he decided to wait a little longer. “If I leave, I’ll probably miss one by about fifteen seconds,” he thought.

The only thing to do would be to run out of the lobby through the double doors into the stacks and then run back in ten seconds in time to catch the existentialist. But would that be quick enough? He timed a girl with a tight sweater and a particularly casual walk from the double exit doors to the double stacks entrance doors. Ten seconds would be cutting it close. Stacks into stacks, he reflected as it popped up, but that was another matter. This was serious thinking. He was constructing whole logical situations and concomitants, whole systems of thought. He was being reflective.

But then he’d probably miss the existentialist by half a minute and have to run back and forth three times, maybe four. But that wouldn’t help, because no matter how many times he ran back, the existentialist would undoubtedly come exactly fifteen seconds after the last time he ran back. Moreover, Justin knew that he would have to give up eventually, and that that would be what the existentialist would be counting on. It was a battle of wits. The only thing he could do was stay right where he was. “He’s got to come out of there sooner or later,” he resolved, “and when he does, I’ll be ready for him.”

Few if any of the people walking through the lobby even faintly resembled existentielists. It would be quite impossible for the man to lose himself in the crowd. “But what if he left already? And he’s tricked me into sitting here instead of following him?”

It occurred to Justin that the existentialist who had written the book might have mentioned something in it about the reading habits of existentielists. The thought exasperated his thinking. There was a good chance that he had. If he had he was certainly low-down. After all, if he had written negatively about his own book, who would buy it? But then of course nobody who had not bought the book would know, until it was too late. Were existentielists that perverse, that they would write in their own books, probably on the last page, that they wouldn’t stoop to read the stuff themselves because it was all such a bunch of baloney? And if they didn’t come right out and admit it, did that make them anything except a little less perverse?

The only thing to do to find out would be to read the book, and to do that would defeat the purpose of knowing whether or not he should do it. He was trapped. He had no choice but to catch the existentialist and find out about it firsthand. He would have to learn from experience.

He thought about running up through the doors just once and then back to a chair. Maybe that would throw the existentialist off balance. He was probably lurking right over there behind the double doors, just waiting for Justin to have to go to the bathroom. Maybe it was even the same existentialist who had written the book. Hiefer Niedelschpepsi.

Justin’s plotting was interrupted by a voice calling him from across the lobby. “Justin.” His eyeballs shifted to one side. Carmen Veregadori was carrying books and walking toward the chair next to Justin’s, tapping a cigarette package against his belt buckle to get a cigarette out with one hand. He sat down and lit up. “Smith just told the other section. Bluebook Tuesday on nihilism, existentialism, dada-
ism, and Social Darwinism. The same thing Smith did his doctorate on."

Saturday, Sunday, Monday passed, and Justin still had not caught an existentialist. Not that he had expected to. He had in fact given up his vigil at the library about five minutes after Carmen had showed up. But he had continued his mental exercise, almost unconsciously, in neglecting to think about the test until Tuesday afternoon as the proctor passed out the mimeographed sheets.

To Justin, the single question posed no surprise. It was a typical example of the type of midterm question asked by a professor who had spent eight years of his life working on the same question and was daring somebody to try to outdo him. Justin read it twice:

Relate the concomitant factors of the four major isms of our course to date: nihilism, existentialism, dadaism, and social Darwinism.

Justin shrugged mentally. "Well, let's see what we can do with the sentence structure." He began to write:

"To date, we in this course, as part of our investigation of the behind-the-scenes influences and concomitants of social culture in America within the past and continuing up into the present (and, significantly, into the future as well, so that our present study is guaranteed not to fall apart into so many dry bones) have considered the four isms mentioned above, four isms which are generally taken to represent widely divergent forces (or, perhaps, nonplanar vectors, to borrow an analogy from the physical sciences which might prove demonstrative), yet which can in fact be in subtle ways analyzed as having remarkable similarities, particularly, and perhaps most significantly in such areas as modus operandi, etc, and in other significant if not at first glance readily apparent ways."

He paused. So much for that. He went on to the second sentence.

"I.e., our study of these four representative isms generates within us an understanding of the broader historical and social patterns which they typify, the way in which ideas spread, and the nuances which they effect upon each other."

"Many researchers have at many times taken these ideas and attempted to evaluate them in terms of individual importance. Many, however, on being faced with the above argument, miss the point and continue to doubt, quite stupidly, and to ask, with misguided sincerity, 'But how are they related?'"

"Such a question, the intelligent man realizes, is exactly the question which must at all costs be avoided, for it is exactly that question which is so often allowed to cloud the issue. The exact modes of relationship, though they are quite readily demonstrable, are no sacred cows. This we must stress. They deserve, of course, to be looked at rationally; but the issue here is not one of relating our terms to rationality. What we must do is relate them to each other."

"Social darwinists, nihilists, dadaists, and existentialists all in the same camp? Of course not. No nimble-minded existentialist worth his salt, however hard he may be to pin down in a conversation in the library lobby, for example, will admit to being a monkey if he knows that he is not one."

The bell interrupted the smooth flow of brain coagulation to muscle direction to ink flow to paper. Justin paused and looked up, in search of a stunning conclusion. An analogy occurred to him, and he wrote one last sentence. "Just as it takes a hearty sphincter to eat beans, though, it takes a
disciplined mind to overcome all of the many traditional weaknesses in this area.”

Most people were still writing. But then most of them would probably be writing yet for years and years to come. He envied them their sphincters no more than he envied them their minds, and he only thought at all about either of the two to wonder which would ultimately turn out to be the more constipated. He filed out behind Carmen and dropped the bluebook on the desk by the proctor’s briefcase. They went to have coffee.

Justin still had the receipt for the existentialist book, which hadn’t been opened, so he took it back to the bookstore. “Had to drop the course,” he told the lady. “I flunked a bluebook and my sister’s got rickets.” She gave him the money, minus a quarter service charge, and he paid Carmen for the coffee. “Buy you a beer, come on let’s leave the universe for a while.”

They got into Carmen’s white ’65 Mustang and went out to get drunk.

It was two months later when they got the bluebooks back that Justin finally found out that the existentialist had in fact all along been his professor; and that he had recommended Justin for an assistantship at Harvard.

It was there that Justin later discovered himself.
Dizziness, drugs, and other highs


As a child Andrew Weil loved to whirl; he would spin his body frantically, and he “could spend hours collapsed on the ground with the world spinning around—this despite the obvious unpleasant side effects of nausea, dizziness, and sheer exhaustion.” His experience, at the age of four, of being given either on the occasion of his tonsilectomy was both “frightening” and “intensely interesting.” Another of his “interesting” early experiences was gained by sniffing cleaning fluid in the basement of his home. Later, Andrew Weil indulged in alcohol regularly, but he disliked some of the physical accompaniments of the alcoholic “high.” A story he had read about a student who had died, allegedly of an overdose of mescaline, made him “curious” about the consciousness-altering powers of illegal drugs. As a result, he not only personally experimented with drugs, but throughout his years at Harvard College and Harvard Medical School he conducted rather extensive research projects on the effects of such drugs.

Weil sees these experiences as part of a unified quest:

We seem to be born with a drive to experience episodes of altered consciousness. This drive expresses itself at very early ages in all children in activities designed to cause loss or major disturbance of ordinary awareness. To an outside, adult observer these practices seem perverse and even dangerous, but in most cases adults have simply forgotten their own identical experiences as children.

Lest he be taken to be suggesting that those of us who may not have cared for whirling, ether, and sniffing are psychologically imbalanced (a suggestion which some of his remarks seem to imply), altered states of consciousness are, on his view, also experienced in daydreams, trances, reveries and the like.

I read this book with mixed feelings. On the negative side, Weil’s discussion moves too quickly over a vast range of topics and disciplines: pharmacology, religion, psychiatry, anthropology, philosophy, politics, insecticides, etc. He seems, at times, too eager to completely demolish current thinking about drugs, medicine and the material realm. While he chides the pharmacological/medical establishment for building theories on bias rather than on factual research, his own discussion—even when
citing his laboratory research—has the tones of the prophet and the evangelist. Often his prescriptions lack theoretical precision. He complains, eg, that "academic psychiatry" seems to know the "unconscious" as "an intellectual construct and not as a direct experience." But surely what many psychologists and psychiatrists mean by the "unconscious" is something which by definition cannot be known by "Direct experience."

On the positive side, Weil rightly stresses the need for an over-all perspective on drug use. It does no good to dismiss the drug-user as "unhealthy" when his activity may be rooted in a healthy dissatisfaction with a sick society. The simple facts that alcohol is legal and marijuana is illegal are obviously irrelevant to the question of whether one is more beneficial to human beings than the other. Current popular discussion, which accepts as profound such inanities as "heroin-use leads to crime" (when heroin-use is a crime) is surely, as Weil insists, unproductive.

Furthermore, while Weil completely rejects the framework of accepted medical and pharmacological thinking about drugs he is not content simply to rest his case on conspiracy theories or visionary ramblings. (I say that he does not rest his case on such things, which is not to deny that they are present in his discussion.) Rather, he presents arguments in support of his dissatisfaction with establishment-thinking which, hopefully, signals a post-Ginsberg style among the freaked-out, and which would be, for us ambivalent types, a welcome complement to the post-Watergate morality.

Weil's arguments fall into two categories. The first kind, which are probably the most provocative but about which I am least qualified to judge, are his "internal" disputes with the scientific establishment. I will only summarize some of his more significant contentions on this level and comment on the general patterns of his arguments. Alcohol, he argues, is "the worst of all drugs." Marijuana, on the other hand, does not even qualify as a drug; rather, it is simply an herb which functions as an "active placebo—that is, a substance whose apparent effects on the mind are actually placebo effects in response to minimal physiological action." Most of the alleged dangers of heroin-use are due to mind-set and setting, not to the properties of the drug itself. In the right setting a $70-a-day heroin habit can be kicked with the aid of nothing but aspirin and discomfort equal to that of a common cold. Many of the diseases associated with heroin use come from dirty needles and the like. Heroin is "relatively innocuous from the purely medical point of view."

As to the effects of LSD on pregnant women, Weil recommends that no drugs be taken during pregnancy (although herbs are permissible). The structure of Weil's general "internal" apologetic can be seen most clearly in his discussion of the alleged psychological dangers of drugs. These allegations are answered by him in two general ways: Weil treats some allegations as being based on actual cases of drug-use in which proper set and setting were not present (eg, a person has a "panic-reaction" because he does not know what to expect when taking a drug and thus has anxiety, or someone's tolerance to a drug increases because he is not in a "stable" setting where there is a concern for a proper temporal spacing of doses); other allegations he treats are based on "the incorrect attribution of casual relationships to correlations between drug use and behavior" (eg, "flashback" experiences are also common among non-drug-users).

Each of these kinds of arguments can be legitimate. In many areas of human experience diverse responses by different individuals to similar situations—eg, individuals who rebel against, and those who identify with, similar religious upbringings—can be understood in terms of differences in mind-set and setting. But this argument can also be used to rule out the possibility of significant counter-examples, as anyone who has tried to take seriously a company's "satisfaction-or-money-back-guarantee" promise can testify. Similarly, for the second apologetic device: it is true that we must be careful not to end investigations by finding "false causes." The rooster's crowing does not cause the sun to rise. The magician's tricks often succeed because we attribute the wrong causal factors. But the "false cause" response can become vacuous, as when Humean public relations men tell us that no causal connection between cigarette smoking and lung cancer has yet been established. For Weil to use these apologetic devices legitimately, he must give us better criteria than he has for showing that he is using them in non-vacuous ways.

Nonetheless, Weil's challenges do point to a possible experimental narrowness in current drug research. In his calmest moments he seems to be calling attention to cases which are "odd" according to accepted theories, and proposing that we treat such cases as ideal and as suggestive of alternative models:

I do not doubt that many physicians have been severe stomach cramps or other symptoms in withdrawing
cases. But, some physicians have seen minimal physical symptoms in other patients. By paying attention to the latter cases we can become more confident in our ability to help people disengage themselves from harmful uses of narcotics without making them more dependent on material solutions to their problems.

The second group of arguments might be called "external" ones. Here Weil challenges some basic epistemological and metaphysical assumptions of Western thought. In this area it becomes clear that Weil is not committed to a principal defense of drug-use. Rather, the legitimacy of drugs is a tactical question: are they the best means of achieving altered states of consciousness? They are, he thinks, a means; although they are best employed in settings modeled after those of primitive cultures. His experiences with drug use among Amazon Indians convinced him that drugs are most helpful when they are: (1) natural drugs used in natural ways, (2) used ritualistically, (3) under the supervision of experts, and (4) for "positive" purposes, rather than destructive ones.

Far more basic than the drug question is the issue of which perspective on reality we will adopt. Weil contrasts two ways of "using the mind"—the "straight" way and the "stoned" way (where "stoned thinking" is not necessarily drug-induced). Each of these "ways" has four characteristics. "Straightness" stresses the intellectual faculty of the mind, sense experience, "external" reality, and differentiating features. The "stoned" outlook utilizes "intuition," appreciates ambivalence, looks for unities and similarities, and sees infinity not as a threat but as evocative of positive experiences.

Weil calls for an integration of these two approaches in a way that has implications for our medical, ecological and political thought. There is much in his case to which a Christian should be sympathetic. Surely our vision of the "whole man" will have implications for our medical, environmental and political dealings. The Genesis picture of the disruptive effects of sin, not only on man's individual and communal relations, but on the non-human physical realm and on man's interaction with it, says something about the integral unity of the created order. Undoubtedly there is much to be explored concerning this unity, and we would do well to think new and radical thoughts in order to begin that investigation.

I suspect, however, that such investigations will not vindicate Weil's positions—eg, his wholesale rejection of "allopathic medicine" (combating the illness of treating the symptoms) does not seem to promote an integral view of man. Even more strongly, I suspect that the source from which he hopes to derive a way of healing and wholeness will not live up to his expectations. One of Weil's fundamental mistakes is to equate the teachings of Jesus with those of the oriental mystics.

Trees and Sunshine

Robert Eskes
Yes, Dialogue would like to receive letters. We know, you’ve heard the same thing from your Aunt Sadie in Schenectady or your sweetie in Seattle. But say you’ve only got one envelope left. Why not make the most of it? Stuff it with a letter to us. We’ll print it (your Aunt Sadie won’t).

But we need articles, too. Not just any articles but timely ones, imaginative ones, forceful ones, funny ones. We’d like to revive that neglected form, the informal essay. And to find out where all the poems, short stories, and plays are hiding on this campus.

Let’s do things this way: if you have something all prepared, show it to us; if you have a brainstorm, show us an outline or a thesis. We’ll work it over with you.

You’ll find our mailbox in the Student Senate office in what looks like a giant beehive. Hand your stuff to one of the local drones, and he’ll see that it finds us.

Deadline for next issue: Nov 28.