

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY HOW THE "HOUSE OF CARDS" CRUMBLES

Abraham Maslow, humanistic psychologist of the mid-twentieth century, offers sweeping claims to the confused mind of modern man. He promises what only God can deliver, a system of universal moral absolutes. Based on key presuppositions centered around the inherently good "inner nature" of man, he draws this conclusion and stakes his claim:

"Observe that if these assumptions are proven true, they promise a scientific ethics, a natural value system, a *court of ultimate appeal for the determination of good and bad*, of right and wrong. The more we learn about man's natural tendencies, the easier it will be to tell him how to be good, how to be happy, how to be fruitful, how to respect himself, how to love, how to fulfill his highest potentialities."¹

Note very carefully, as we begin our study, that Maslow intends empirical, scientific validity for his claims. His observations of the "healthiest" individuals imply:

"...a *naturalistic system of values*, a by-product of the *empirical description* of the deepest tendencies of the human species and of specific individuals. The study of the human being by *science* or by self-search can discover where he is heading, what is his purpose in life, what is good for him and what is bad for him, what will make him feel virtuous and what will make him feel guilty, why choosing the good is often difficult for him, what the attractions of evil are."²

Parenthetically, Maslow notes the absence of "oughts"! For all the repetitious emphasis on man's need for values, and the impossibility of neutrality, *he claims to be neutral*, to be merely "descriptive" as he uncovers a universally applicable system of moral values.

Despite the many pages devoted to "spirituality" and "spiritual values" in his writings, Maslow does not hesitate to reveal his atheism, his blatant rejection of the God of Christian theism:

"To spell out only one implication here, these propositions affirm the existence of the highest values within human

¹Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being (PB)*, p. 4, emphasis added.

²Maslow, *PB*, p. 205, emphasis added.

nature itself, to be discovered there. This is in sharp contradiction to the older and more customary beliefs that the highest values can come only from a *supernatural God*, or from some other source outside human nature itself."³

We must critically, biblically, and philosophically examine the extravagant claims of this modern, would-be autonomous man. He sees a crumbling of traditional value systems among modern men. He offers them an alternative that suits--or rather caters to--their desire to suppress the truth about their Creator. He offers the unregenerate "scientific" validation for their worship of the creature in place of the Creator. It is hardly a wonder that modern psychology has had such a pervasive impact on twentieth century culture. Furthermore, Maslow's theories coincide neatly with the liberal theologies perpetrated by theologians in this century. But his comments cry out for a critique, specifically the type of analysis that Van Til's apologetic method is designed to provide.⁴

Biblically, one need not search far in order to bulldoze Maslow's psychology, a superstructure built on the presupposition of man's innate goodness. A quick perusal of Genesis 1-3, Romans 1-3, or just about any page of Scripture, exposes that assumption as a lie. We must not ignore this biblical aspect of our critique, nor should we hesitate to employ God's Word. Nevertheless, we seek to go one step further in this analysis. We can demonstrate that Maslow's "hierarchy," his pyramid of "needs" culminating in "self-actualization," is a house of cards that falls quickly to the ground when examined on the basis of its own inherent presuppositions. Maslow must, though he dares not admit it, presuppose the truth of Christianity in order to oppose it with his man-made "values." The foundation on which he *claims* to stand is pure quicksand.

There are a number of critical areas to be covered. We must survey the theological atmosphere in which he writes, where liberalism has scattered its seed far and wide. Then we must look back to the ancient philosophies that feed into his system. Parmenides, Heraclitus, Aristotle, Plato, Kant, existentialism, and others are among Maslow's building blocks. His epistemology must be exposed, along with his claim to offer an empirical, scientific approach that assures validity. His views of

³Maslow, *PB*, p. 170, emphasis added.

⁴I want to give adequate credit to Van Til for his apologetic insights. However, my mind is so very saturated with Van Til's thought, that it may at times be nearly impossible to recall exactly *where* (often in more than one book!) I've picked up a particular idea!

revelation, authority, autonomy, and the supernatural must be revealed. His solution to the "problem of evil" begs examination. The application of his theories to education, *whose time has already come*, require a clear exposure. Maslow's borrowing of Christian terms and concepts, not to mention presuppositions, must be noted. The religious pluralism advocated by his writings is a key emphasis that correlates with the New Age movement and much modern ecumenism. Philosophically, Maslow's recurring irrational-rational dialectic must be examined, as well as his struggle with the relationship of universals and particulars, seen in the "Being/Becoming" emphasis of his writings. His idol needs identification. Finally, there is one constant question that presses for an answer: *By what standard? By what standard*, for example, does Maslow define the "psychologically healthy" person whose "inner core" is to give us a universal system of moral absolutes? *By what standard* does Maslow even raise the problem of evil, which he proposes to solve? *By what standard* can Maslow determine man's inherent goodness, the presupposition of all that he writes? *By what standard* does Maslow presume to revolutionize our public education? *By what standard* has Maslow excluded Christian theism at the outset of his "scientific" study? *By what standard* does he determine that man is so greatly in need of values? Over and over again, we shall be forced to ask this pressing question.

The Soil: Modern Theology

Maslow has been able to scatter the seeds of his psychology in the rich soil of modern theology. There it not only takes root, but grows to full bloom and thrives in its immense popularity.

Liberalism, with its many descendants, holds key tenets that coincide neatly with Maslow's teaching. There is emphasis on the *individual*, his private experience and emotions, in opposition to the community and external sources of authority. The sinfulness of man is replaced by an evolutionary, optimistic view of human nature and potential, similar to what Maslow teaches. Such elements work toward the destruction of the gospel message. Machen said it well:

"Even our Lord did not call the righteous to repentance, and probably we shall be no more successful than He."⁵

⁵Machen, p. 68.

Various representatives of modern theology are clearly parallel to Maslow's humanism. One particularly striking example is Paul Tillich, whose "panentheism" is right in line with Maslow, along with his view of God as the "power of Being," and his teaching that human beings need "true union with Being-itself."⁶

We live in what could rightly be called a "therapeutic society," characterized by a dichotomy between thought and feeling, with the latter taking precedence. Personal experience and "religious symbols" are exalted over the facts of redemptive history as authoritatively interpreted by *God* in His Word. Modern theology and psychology are united in efforts that challenge the message of the historic faith and would destroy it apart from God's sovereign grace.

Religious Pluralism

Not only is Maslow in line with modern theology generally. His teachings *particularly* feed the ecumenical, pluralistic environment of modern society and many churches.⁷ The *religious* character of his writings is no secret when we consult primary sources. It must not be underestimated. There is no neutrality here! Maslow has an agenda, one he hopes to impose on the culture through the education of our children. He has no hesitation in disclosing his goals. In his theory concerning the ultimate human goal of "self-actualization," he believes he has found validation in religions, where "people yearn toward self-actualization," and "the actual characteristics of self-actualizing people parallels at many points the ideal urged by the religions."⁸

Maslow admits that he searches for a "common faith" (John Dewey) or "humanistic faith" (Erich Fromm, an admitted atheist).⁹ He stakes his claim on the assumption that all religions have common roots. The divine *revelations* of all religions, he asserts, are nothing more than what his humanistic psychology calls "peak-experiences." Therefore, he concludes, all religions are essentially the same:

⁶Toon, p. 129.

⁷Vatican II, at a time (1960's) close to publication of Maslow's works, specifically affirmed a religious *inclusivism* that quickly degenerates into explicit pluralism. Roman Catholic theologians, such as Karl Rahner and Hans Kung (condemned but still influential), contribute to the pluralistic environment. Protestant theologians like Clark Pinnock and John Hick are also key players. See my paper, "Medieval Theology Meets the New Age," written for Dr. Robert Strimple's class, "Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology."

⁸Maslow, *PB*, p. 158.

⁹Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences (RVP)*, p. 39.

"To the extent that all mystical or peak-experiences are the same in their essence and have always been the same, all religions are the same in their essence and have always been the same."¹⁰

According to Maslow, the differences are conditioned by time and space, and should therefore be peeled away so that the "core-religious experience" or "transcendent experience" remains.¹¹

The redefinition of "God" is one key factor that Maslow cites in support of his thesis. He insists that concepts of the supernatural (beings, laws, or forces) become irrelevant at this point. More and more people "define their god" as a force or principle or integrating power. At the same time, scientists see the world as growing and evolving, not final and eternal.¹² God is no longer a *Person* to the modern mind:

"The word 'god' is being defined by many theologians today in such a way as to exclude the conception of a person with a form, a voice, a beard, etc."¹³

Rather, says Maslow, God is "Being itself" or "the integrating principle in the universe" or "the whole of everything." Tillich's phrase, "concern with ultimate concerns," fits the picture. Maslow defines humanistic psychology the same way, asking what difference then remains between that psychology and the modern view of "god."¹⁴ Of course, he fails to note that those who hold to historic Christianity refute such a view of God. Christian theism, with its affirmation of the supernatural and of the *personal* God of Scripture distinct from His creation, is excluded at the outset from the "species-wide" religious pluralism that Maslow holds dear.

Maslow's educational agenda, covered in a later section, must be noted in connection with his insistence on one-world religion:

"The teaching of spiritual values, of ethical and moral values definitely does (in principle) have a place in education, perhaps ultimately a very basic and essential place."¹⁵

¹⁰Maslow, *RVP*, p. 20.

¹¹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 20.

¹²Maslow, *RVP*, p. 55.

¹³Maslow, *RVP*, p. 45.

¹⁴Maslow, *RVP*, p. 45.

¹⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. 57.

But according to Maslow, this poses no threat to the church-state separation concept:

"...for the very simple reason that spiritual, ethical, and moral values need have nothing to do with any church. Or perhaps, better said, they are the common core of all churches, all religions, including the non-theistic ones."¹⁶

Again, Maslow presupposes in principle that Christianity cannot be true.

Oddly enough, this *unity* of all religions quickly breaks down into such a *diversity* that no two individuals could share the same religion at all! Maslow notes that the "peak experience" is very private, hardly able to be shared. Rituals, dogmas, ceremonies and other externals are not important to the "peaker" and may even be thought harmful. From his perspective, each individual has *his own private religion*.¹⁷ Thus we can begin to see the irrational element inherent in Maslow's thinking. On what basis can he claim to *unite* all religions if every person has his own *private* religion such that no two are quite alike? His "unity-of-religions" thesis must be challenged as incoherent. Orthodox Christians certainly object to the intrusion of his system into a broad educational system. But on the basis of his own statements, any individual might reasonably object, and Maslow offers no consistent answer!

The Roots: Ancient and Modern Philosophies

Maslow's psychology, which is concurrently a *theology*, did not develop solely as a parallel to modern theology. Philosophical affinities, stretching over hundreds of years, emerge with regularity in his writings. We must note these roots to Maslow's system, taking heed to the particular issues that are raised.

Maslow openly admits that his "new conception has much in common with the older philosophies."¹⁸ He laments the "neglect of the writings of philosophers, theologians, and psychologists of the Eastern world, particularly of the Chinese, Japanese, and Hindus."¹⁹ He considers the Stoics and hedonists illustrative of

¹⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 57.

¹⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. 28.

¹⁸Maslow, *Motivation and Personality (MP)*, p. 270.

¹⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 78.

the desire/need theme running through history, exemplified in his hierarchy of needs construction.²⁰ His general approach to philosophy is an eclectic one. In order to those mentioned, we find echoes of Aristotle, Plato, Kant, and certain (not all) existentialists. The tension between two ancient Greeks, Parmenides and Heraclitus, runs like a thread through Maslow's books and will help us to challenge the fundamental irrationality of his thinking.

Being-Becoming: Parmenides-Heraclitus. Solomon was correct when he said that there is nothing new under the sun. Maslow has resurrected the ancient philosophical controversy that centered around unity and diversity, or static being and change. Parmenides proclaimed static being and eliminated *change*, while Heraclitus proposed a constant state of *flux*, describing all reality as fire; here we have change that never stands still. Maslow manages to state his own dilemma in similar terms:

"How can we reconcile the facts of Being with the facts of Becoming? Growth is not in the pure case a goal out ahead, nor is self-actualization, nor is the discovery of Self.... The danger with a pure Being-psychology is that it may tend to be static, not accounting for the facts of movement, direction and growth."²¹

Let us first delineate his teachings in terms of the Being-Becoming dilemma, and then consider the relevant challenges that must be raised by the Christian.

"Self-actualization" is a familiar term in American culture. Maslow elevates it to the status of religious dogma in his humanistic system. It is the ultimate goal, one that Christians must recognize as inherently idolatrous; the worship of the Creator has been exchanged for the "self-actualization"--the worship--of the creature. Maslow defines it in rather static terms, as a state of "Being" rather than "becoming":

"This state of Being, rather than of striving, is suspected to be synonymous with selfhood, with being 'authentic,' with being a person, with being fully human. The process of growth is the process of *becoming* a person. *Being* a person is different."²²

²⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 28.

²¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 44.

²²Maslow, *PB*, p. 35.

Maslow perceives this "transient state of Being," which he labels a "peak-experience," as the reward for "good Becoming." This is his secularized version of "heaven."²³ He describes this "state of Being" in terms of gratified needs and a pantheistic union with the cosmos that is decidedly religious in nature:

"Cosmic consciousness...the person somehow perceives the whole cosmos or at least the unity and integration of it and of everything in it, including his Self."²⁴

"Transcendence of human limits, imperfections, shortcomings, and finiteness," where one may be experiencing being "a god, a perfection, an essence, a Being (rather than a Becoming), sacred, divine."²⁵

"And I can then even feel some subjective equivalent of what has been attributed to the gods only, i.e., omniscience, omnipotence, ubiquity (i.e., in a certain sense one can become in such moments a god, a sage, a saint, a mystic)."²⁶

In this transcendent state, where the creature autonomously assumes the attributes of godhood (!), the unity-diversity dilemma supposedly finds resolution. Maslow heralds "unitive consciousness," found in the self-actualized "state of Being":

"This is the ability to simultaneously perceive in the fact--the *is*--its particularity, and its universality; to see it simultaneously as here and now, and yet also as eternal, or rather to be able to see the universal in and through the particular and the eternal in and through the temporal and momentary."²⁷

"Since the whole of Being is being perceived, all those laws obtain which would hold if the whole of the cosmos could be encompassed at once."²⁸

Maslow says that all mystics, including the Zen and Taoist, have tried to describe the "particularity of the concrete object and, at the same time, its eternal, sacred, symbolic quality (like a Platonic essence)."²⁹ Self-actualized people, he claims, are able

²³Maslow, *PB*, p. 154.

²⁴Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature (FR)*, p. 277.

²⁵Maslow, *FR*, p. 278.

²⁶Maslow, *FR*, p. 279.

²⁷Maslow, *FR*, p. 115.

²⁸Maslow, *PB*, p. 74.

²⁹Maslow, *FR*, p. 115.

to see both the concrete and the abstract at the same time, even to perceive the world as a unity.³⁰ He admits to assuming the "obvious truth" of "holism," that "the cosmos is one and interrelated...any person is one and interrelated."³¹ His individual psychology is grounded in a similar assumption, that each person has "an essential biologically based inner nature, which is to some degree 'natural,' intrinsic, given," in a sense unchangeable and unchanging.³²

There is specifically a fusion of "polarities and conflicts" in this monistic experience.³³ Maslow claims a powerful inner healing as the result of this sort of integration:

"Resolving a dichotomy into a higher, more inclusive, unity amounts to healing a split in the person and making him more unified."³⁴

Perception of objects outside the self are seen in similarly monistic terms. The object perceived "is seen as if it were all there was in the universe, as if it were all of Being, synonymous with the universe."³⁵

Let's teach this to our children! -- Maslow proclaims:
"We need to teach our children unitive perception, the Zen experience of being able to see the temporal and the eternal simultaneously, the sacred and the profane in the same object."³⁶

Thus in the name of psychology and science, Maslow introduces an alien religious into public education. We will return to this theme.

Meanwhile, Maslow isn't hesitant about the religious--or rather anti-religious--nature of what he promotes. Both modern scientists and modern theologians, he claims, are seeing the world as having "some kind of unity and integration," some sort of evolving, and "some kind of meaning." Maslow believes that calling this integration "God" is *purely arbitrary!*³⁷ He makes no secret of his contempt for the Christian worldview:

³⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 88-89.

³¹Maslow, *MP*, p. xi.

³²Maslow, *PB*, p. 3.

³³Maslow, *PB*, p. 91.

³⁴Maslow, *PB*, p. 144.

³⁵Maslow, *PB*, p. 74.

³⁶Maslow, *FR*, p. 191.

³⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. 55.

"Many orthodoxly religious people would be so frightened by giving up the notion that the universe has integration, unity, and therefore, meaningfulness (which is given to it by the fact that it was all created by God or ruled by God or is God) that the only alternative for them would be to see the universe as a totally unintegrated chaos."³⁸

Thus, in his construction of a purely autonomous "spirituality" and value system divorced from God, Maslow thinks he can dismiss the "orthodox" with a psychological explanation. But what if they're right? What if, indeed, the only alternative to the God of Scripture is truly "the universe as a totally unintegrated chaos"? This Maslow does not consider, and he provides no answer.

He admits his system is flawed. People resist being classified so that their individuality is lost,³⁹ yet Maslow has lumped the entire universe such that no individuality, or particularity, can exist. He creates a problem he cannot solve. In one chapter, he claims that he wants to:

"...correct the widespread misunderstanding of self-actualization as a static, unreal, 'perfect' state in which all human problems are transcended, and in which people 'live happily ever after' in a superhuman state of serenity or ecstasy."⁴⁰

Maslow wants an exalted individuality, and he wants a unified cosmos that replaces the God of Scripture. What he offers with one hand, in the ecstatic "peak-experience," he takes away with the other when he admits that his hope is flawed. He claims to "transcend" the ancient unity-diversity dilemma in the "peak-experience," but that transcendence is a mere mirage. The static "being" of Parmenides (rationalism) combines with the flux of Heraclitus (irrationalism), resulting in a dialectic tension. Maslow rejects the eternal, unchanging Creator who alone gives meaning to the facts of the diverse world in which we live. He alone provides the unifying principle that explains those facts in a meaningful way. The tension and irrationality of Maslow's thought is never resolved, nor can it be, in an atheistic system. This issue will rear its ugly head again--and again and again--particularly when we consider Maslow's vain attempt to establish a universal system of moral absolutes apart from the one true

³⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. 60.

³⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 130.

⁴⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 115.

Lawgiver. Autonomous man is continually the ultimate reference point.

Aristotle. Maslow's relationship to Aristotle is a mixed bag. He openly rejects Aristotle's system of logic as being in conflict with the fusion of polarities experienced in the self-actualized state of Being:

"It is as if less developed people lived in an Aristotelian world in which classes and concepts have sharp boundaries...but seen by self-actualizing people is the fact that A and not-A interpenetrate and are one."⁴¹

Maslow wants to stress "wholeness," where good-bad, male-female, adult-child are merged into one. Peak-experience perception tends to be "non-classificatory," unlike the "Aristotelian division of the world into classes."⁴² The rejection of logic is considered by Maslow as critical to psychological growth and health, and a prime consideration in therapy:

"It is extremely important...even crucial, to give up our 3,000-year-old habit of dichotomizing, splitting and separating in the style of Aristotelian logic ('A and Not-A are wholly different from each other, and are mutually exclusive).... All these 'opposites' are in fact hierarchically integrated, especially in healthier people, and one of the proper goals of therapy is to move from dichotomizing and splitting toward integration of seemingly irreconcilable opposites."⁴³

Along with logic, the rationality of Aristotle's system is dethroned:

"Self-realization cannot be attained by intellect or rationality alone.... Aristotle had a hierarchy of human capacities in which reason took the top place."⁴⁴

At this point, note very carefully that Maslow rejects concern with logic in his system. Bear in mind that the *laws of logic* do not exist independently, but were created by God. Thus we have yet another indication of Maslow's hostility toward his Creator. Later, however, we will see how desperately Maslow wishes to be *scientific*, to validate his theories through empirical, scientific

⁴¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 40.

⁴²Maslow, *PB*, p. 94.

⁴³Maslow, *PB*, p. 174.

⁴⁴Maslow, *Motivation and Personality (MP)*, p. 271.

research! It should be obvious how inconsistent this is with Maslow's open disdain for logic and reason.

There is another aspect of Aristotle, however, that Maslow welcomes with open arms. Aristotle introduced the concept of *potentiality* into the unity-diversity dilemma. This Maslow finds useful in his human potential theories, as he attempts to reconcile static "Being" and "Becoming."

It is alarming to see that Maslow considers the infant child to be *not* fully a human being:

"Humanness and specieshood in the infant are only a potentiality and must be actualized by the society."⁴⁵

We cannot help but ask whether this little child would grow up to be an elephant or a tree if his humanness were not "actualized by the society"! Maslow doesn't admit the ludicrous results of his thesis, but since he rejects logic, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised.

The bulk of this potential-actual construction focuses on innate human goodness and potential. Maslow proposes to solve the unity-diversity, or Being-becoming, dilemma by borrowing heavily from Aristotle, right down to the acorn-oak tree analogy:

"That which the person *is* and that which the person *could be* exist simultaneously for the psychologist, thereby resolving the dichotomy between Being and Becoming. Potentialities not only *will* be or *could be*; they also *are*. Self-actualization values as goals exist and are real even though not yet actualized. The human being is simultaneously that which he is and that which he yearns to be.... Man demonstrates *in his own nature* a pressure toward fuller and fuller Being, more and more perfect actualization of his humanness in exactly the same naturalistic, scientific sense that an acorn may be said to be 'pressing toward' being an oak tree."⁴⁶

By seeing the future as existing *now* within man, Maslow claims to complement the teachings of Freud, who found the past within man. In the "peak experience," *time disappears* as Becoming temporarily ceases and only Being exists.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. xiv.

⁴⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. 160.

⁴⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. 214.

Thus Maslow attempts to solve the unity-diversity dilemma. We must not fail to note the appearance here of Maslow's idol:

"Any full perception of any woman or man includes their God and Goddess, priest and priestess possibilities."⁴⁸

The outright *worship* of the creature, man, could hardly be more blatant! Maslow's disappointment lies in his perception that man's potentialities are so often and easily suppressed, therefore failing to fully develop.

Plato. Maslow speaks about the consequences of peak-experiences, the "cognition of being" or "the perceiving of the Platonic essences, the intrinsic values, the ultimate values of being." He believes that these help in curing sickness and growing toward "full humanness."⁴⁹ He equates his "Being-values" or "B-values" with the Platonic essences.⁵⁰ He considers his analysis of those values "a demonstration of fusion and unity of the old trinity of the true, the good, the beautiful."⁵¹

This borrowing from Plato's forms brings us to a consideration of values. Maslow is vitally interested in universally applicable values determined by reference to autonomous man as the ultimate standard. We will return to this subject in much detail. For now, note that Maslow digs deeply into the anti-theistic foundations of Greek philosophy to establish a system of values divorced from God. With that divorce final, the "true," the "good," and the "beautiful" has no ground for definition. Maslow must smuggle in the Christian worldview for such definitions, presupposing the very truth he wishes to suppress.

Kant. Maslow's borrowing from Kant is more subtle, yet profound. He tells us that "Kant was certainly correct in claiming that we can never fully know nonhuman reality."⁵² This is an interesting twist on Kant's division of reality. Kant split the phenomenal from the noumenal, the former being subject to empirical, sensory observation. The noumenal encompassed the concerns of religion, such as God and self. Maslow, on the other hand, divides *human* and *nonhuman* reality. He implies exhaustive knowledge of *human* reality, but complete agnosticism about all

⁴⁸Maslow, *FR*, p. 116.

⁴⁹Maslow, *FR*, p. 177.

⁵⁰Maslow, *FR*, p. 276.

⁵¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 84. Note the counterfeit "trinity"!

⁵²Maslow, *MP*, p. 7-8.

else. Man is certainly the center of Maslow's universe (his idol)!

Elsewhere, Maslow provides more explanation of the rationale for his division:

"The psychologist proceeds on the assumption that for his purposes there are two kinds of worlds, two kinds of reality, the natural world and the psychic world, the world of unyielding facts and the world of wishes, hopes, fears, emotions, the world which runs by non-psychic rules and the world which runs by psychic laws."⁵³

Maslow admits here an "insoluble philosophical problem."⁵⁴ But one must *presuppose* this two-tiered structure for intelligibility:

"Any therapist *must* assume it or give up his functioning. This is typical of the way in which psychologists bypass philosophical difficulties and act 'as if' certain assumptions were true even though unprovable.... One aspect of health is the ability to live in both of these worlds."⁵⁵

Here we collide with the *irrationalism* in Maslow's thought, which exists alongside his *rationalism*, wherein the cosmos is a unity (not a dichotomy!) and universal moral absolutes can be uncovered within the heart of man.

Yet another Kantian concept is that of man's organization of reality. Maslow asks what the word "value" really means. His answer again exposes the irrationalism he can't escape:

"It doesn't really mean anything...it's just a label. Only pluralistic description can serve, that is, a catalogue of all the different ways in which the word 'value' is actually used by different people."⁵⁶

So...Maslow asserts the possibility of a naturalistic, scientific, universal *value* system, located using man as the ultimate reference point...but he can't even define "value," and he admits it! This is incoherent to the core.

Existentialism. This one is perhaps Maslow's favorite. He heralds the coming of "existential therapy" as providing the

⁵³Maslow, *PB*, p. 201.

⁵⁴Maslow, *PB*, p. 201.

⁵⁵Maslow, *PB*, p. 202.

⁵⁶Maslow, *FR*, p. 110.

answers to the "valuelessness" observed in "a large proportion of the population of all affluent nations."⁵⁷

Maslow appreciates the "radical stress on the concept of identity" in existential psychology. He likes the term "identity" better than "essence, existence, ontology" or others. He also appreciates that existential psychology:

"...lays great stress on starting from experiential knowledge rather than from systems of concepts or abstract categories or a priori...it uses personal, subjective experience as the foundation upon which abstract knowledge is built."⁵⁸

Existentialism is also preoccupied with the serious dimension of life rather than the superficial. Existentialists also call us back to "raw experience as prior to any concepts or abstractions," teaching us about "the limits of verbal, analytic, conceptual rationality."⁵⁹

Echoes of Aristotle can be heard when Maslow notes existentialism's concern with the gap between human limitations and aspirations, actuality and potentiality.⁶⁰ Maslow defines the "existential human dilemma" with the statement that "even our most fully-human beings are...simultaneously merely-creaturally and godlike."⁶¹

But Maslow is not without a few criticisms of existential philosophy. "Some existential philosophers are stressing the self-making of the self too exclusively." Others, however, have focused on "*discovering* the self and of *uncovering* therapy, and have perhaps understressed the factors of will, of decision."⁶² Remember, Maslow believes that there is, intrinsic to human nature, a potentiality to be uncovered and developed. *He cannot account for the existence of this innate goodness, nor does he have an ultimate standard by which to judge it to be "good."* Nevertheless, self-discovery is more his theme rather than the self-creation promoted by much existentialism.

Another rejected aspect of existentialism is its focus on anguish and despair:

⁵⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. 38-39.

⁵⁸Maslow, *PB*, p. 9.

⁵⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 14.

⁶⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 10.

⁶¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 174.

⁶²Maslow, *PB*, p. 12.

"I don't think we need take too seriously the European existentialists' exclusive harping on dread, on anguish, on despair, and the like, for which their only remedy seems to be to keep a stiff upper lip. This high I.Q. whimpering on a cosmic scale occurs whenever an external source of values fails to work."⁶³

Maslow lays blame at the feet of "external values" yet cannot account for the universal validity of the "internal values" he promotes as their replacement. Perhaps the existentialists are a little more consistent than Maslow. Rejection of God's authority does ultimately lead to dread, anguish, and despair. But Maslow is not ready to face the results of his system, although he admits that "in the later stages of growth the person is essentially alone and can rely only upon himself."⁶⁴ This dreadful "aloneness" is a prime tenet of modern existentialism taken to its logical conclusion.

Maslow makes a distinction between Nietzschean existentialism, which he welcomes, and the Sartre-type, which he rejects. The latter, he says, denies human "specieshood" and the existence of a basic "biological human nature" which has evolved into a higher, transcendent nature.⁶⁵ He embraces the courageous nature of Nietzsche's existentialism, wherein man must bravely face his situation -- replacing God! Describing the "playfulness" of the "peak-experience," Maslow says that:

"It has a cosmic or a godlike, good-humored quality, certainly transcending hostility of any kind.... It is existential in the sense that it is an amusement or delight with both the smallness (weakness) and the largeness (strength) of the human being, transcending the dominance-subordinance polarity."⁶⁶

Briefly, Maslow summarizes all of this as "Nietzschean." He describes the self-actualizer as one who is:

"...able to face, endure, and grapple with the 'real' problems of life...'existential' problems to which there is no perfect solution...understanding and accepting the intrinsic human situation...facing and accepting courageously."⁶⁷

⁶³Maslow, *PB*, p. 16.

⁶⁴Maslow, *PB*, p. 38.

⁶⁵Maslow, *FR*, p. 349.

⁶⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. 112.

⁶⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. 115.

When Maslow speaks of a unified cosmos that is "one," a monism, he is a rationalist. Yet here, in his existentialism, his basic irrationalism surfaces. There is a swing between rationalism and irrationalism, one that cannot be resolved and never comes to rest. One cannot help but think toward the wonderful promise of our Lord to give rest to the weary and heavy-laden!

The Rational-Irrational Dialectic. We have seen some of the specific borrowings of Maslow from both ancient and modern philosophies. No doubt there are others we might discern, but we must move along. However, we could hardly leave this section without touching a little more fully on the rational-irrational tension in Maslow's thought, and the way that dialectic plays out in his teachings about both God and man.

In his introduction to *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, where Maslow argues explicitly for the unity of all religions, he states that:

"Small r religion is quite compatible, at the higher levels of personal development, with rationality, with science, with social passion."⁶⁸

In line with this "small r" religion, Maslow argues for:

"a pervasively holistic attitude and way of thinking," for an "experience-based rationality in contrast to the a priori rationality that we have come almost to identify with rationality itself."⁶⁹

Thus Maslow's basic view of *religion* is one that reflects the irrational side of his thinking.

Now we move from God to man. Maslow considers man innately good, and the ultimate reference point in determining good and evil. But he admits that he really cannot find his desired unifying principle in the heart of man when he says:

"Every human being has *both* sets of forces within him. One set clings to safety and defensiveness out of fear...the other set of forces impels him forward toward wholeness of Self and uniqueness of Self, toward full functioning of all his capacities, toward confidence in the face of the external

⁶⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. xiii.

⁶⁹Maslow, *RVP*, p. xi-xii.

world at the same time that he can accept his deepest, real, unconscious Self."⁷⁰

If such a civil war occurs within every human heart, how does Maslow expect to find universal moral absolutes from such an unreliable source?

Maslow, in fact, admits that one danger of "being-cognition" is that of fatalism, a "loss of voluntarism, of free will, a bad theory of determinism."⁷¹ Here we have the *rationalism* that Maslow holds alongside the *irrationalism* previously noted. This dialectic plays itself out at every point in Maslow's thought, never to be resolved.

Epistemology: How Does Maslow Know?

How does Maslow know what he claims to know? How do any of us know anything at all? What is Maslow's epistemological foundation? We will find here, as with all unbelieving thought, the simultaneous claims to know *nothing* and *everything*. The one is irrationalism, the other rationalism. A familiar tune by now!

Irrationality and ultimate mystery appear ultimate at times:

"Healthy openness to the mysterious, the realistically humble recognition that we don't know much, the modest and grateful acceptance of gratuitous grace and of just plain good luck--all these can shade over into the anti-rational, the anti-empirical, the anti-scientific, the anti-verbal, the anti-conceptual."⁷²

The person may thus view the "peak-experience" as the "best or even the *only* path to knowledge, and thereby all the tests and verifications of the *validity* of the illumination may be tossed aside."⁷³ Rationality is cast to the wind here, as it is in Maslow's definition of his own profession, classifying the psychologist "not as one who knows the answers, but rather as one who struggles with the questions."⁷⁴

Yet only a few pages later, Maslow calls in the troops of rationalism in his godless attempt to deal with the "general collapse of all traditional values."⁷⁵ To handle that crisis:

⁷⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 46.

⁷¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 119.

⁷²Maslow, *RVP*, p. viii.

⁷³Maslow, *RVP*, p. viii.

⁷⁴Maslow, *RVP*, p. 46.

⁷⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. 8.

"Only truth itself can be our foundation, our base for building. Only empirical, naturalistic knowledge, in its broadest science, can serve us now."⁷⁶

Man's knowledge, Maslow insists, can increasingly approach "'The Truth' that is not dependent on man."⁷⁷ So he admits that *truth does not depend on man*, yet in rejecting God he is left with *nothing except man* as the ultimate judge of truth. We must pause and ask...*by what standard* does Maslow determine *truth*? The answer he provides, when he defines the term "prophet," is hardly satisfying:

"The characteristic prophet is a lonely man who has discovered his truth about the world, the cosmos, ethics, God, and his own identity from within."⁷⁸

Whose truth? *His* truth? (Certainly not *God's* truth!) This is hopeless circularity and relativism!

Man - the object of Maslow's study. As a psychologist, Maslow proposes to study man and his nature. Specifically, he wants to study "good rather than bad human beings, healthy rather than sick people," but he warns that someone else will have to duplicate his results before they can be considered reliable.⁷⁹ He anticipates results when he proposes a study of "the ideal, authentic, or perfect or godlike human, a study of human potentialities as *now* existing in a certain sense, as *current* knowable reality."⁸⁰ He claims that we human beings "*both* discover and uncover ourselves and also decide on what we shall be." The difference of opinion here "can be settled empirically."⁸¹

So far, we are faced with Maslow's rationalism. But how does he define a "good human being"? By what standard? Maslow is very vague about what a "good human being" is. He believes we just "know" unconsciously, instinctively, and very simply.⁸² So much for rationalism. This is irrationalism at its height!

⁷⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 10.

⁷⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. 55.

⁷⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. 21.

⁷⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 25.

⁸⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 11.

⁸¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 13.

⁸²Maslow, *PB*, p. 171.

Man - the subject of Maslow's study. Considerable space is devoted to the knowledge of "healthy" individuals during their "peak-experiences." He states that:

"Studies of psychologically healthy people indicate that they are, as a defining characteristic, attracted to the mysterious, to the unknown, to the chaotic, unorganized, and unexplained."⁸³

In considering these "self-actualized" persons and their "peak experiences," Maslow holds out hope in his search for "truth":

"Peak-experiences are states in which striving, interfering, and active controlling diminish, thereby permitting Taoist perception, thereby diminishing the effect of the perceived upon the percept. Therefore, *truer knowledge* (of some things) may be expected and has been reported."⁸⁴

In discussing the "validity of Being-knowledge," gained during such "peak-experiences," Maslow concludes that it is characterized by the following:

- (1) The question of knowledge has been naturalized.
- (2) There is now a wider range of "experientially valid knowledge."
- (3) The knowledge was "there all the time," just waiting to be perceived.
- (4) Such "transcendent knowledge" can also be achieved in other ways.⁸⁵

Considering "peak-experience" knowledge in another of his writings, Maslow notes the "philosophical implications," which he describes as "tremendous":

"Reality itself *may* be seen more clearly and its essence penetrated more profoundly" and there "the whole of Being...is only neutral or good."⁸⁶

⁸³Maslow, *MP*, p. 49.

⁸⁴Maslow, *RVP*, p. 80, emphasis added.

⁸⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. 80-81.

⁸⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. 81.

So far, we see a claim to increasing knowledge, perhaps even *comprehensive* knowledge. In another place Maslow insists that "full knowledge leads to right action and that right action is impossible without full knowledge."⁸⁷ Healthier people, he says, are "less ought-blind," able to be "Taoistically guided by the facts" in making decisions about values or the nature of reality.⁸⁸ However, Maslow's rationalism slides into irrationalism yet again:

"It is possible for the great insight to be mistaken."⁸⁹

"All peak-experiences feel like Being-cognition, but not all are truly so."⁹⁰

"Just because the perceiver *believes* that he perceives more truly and more wholly, is no proof that he actually does so. The criteria for judging the validity of this belief ordinarily lie in the objects or person perceived or in the products created.... But in what sense can art be said to be knowledge?... If we are to go at all beyond the private, the problem of external criteria of validity remains, just as it does with all other perceptions."⁹¹

These are rather striking admissions that Maslow lacks an adequate standard for the judgments he makes. After making sweeping claims for the "knowledge" to be gained through "peak experiences," he admits that it all falls to the ground in relativity. The constant interplay between rationalism and irrationalism strikes again. Quotes could well be multiplied to demonstrate this swing between comprehensive knowledge and agnosticism.

The Fear of Knowledge - Romans 1 Revisited. It is fascinating to review a chapter, in *Psychology of Being*, that Maslow titles "The Need to Know and the Fear of Knowing." The Christian mind cannot help being transported to Romans 1. The unbeliever does not have a *saving* knowledge of God, to be sure. Yet he is confronted at every turn with an inescapable *knowledge* of God, in creation, that leaves him without excuse for his failure to honor his Creator. We may marvel at the amount of ink that Maslow spills in his crusade against Christian theism, but in light of Romans 1, it should be no surprise. *He holds down the truth in unrighteousness.* He "knows" God, but he runs in terror,

⁸⁷Maslow, *FR*, p. 122.

⁸⁸Maslow, *FR*, p. 123.

⁸⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 99.

⁹⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 100.

⁹¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 98.

not wanting to know what he knows. This chapter is a perfect illustration.

Maslow speaks of two kinds of fear, that of knowing self, and of the outside world. In this chapter, however:

"We speak simply of fear of knowledge in general, without discriminating too sharply fear-of-the-inner from fear-of-the-outer."⁹²

The inner fear is one that Maslow explains in terms of attempts to protect self-esteem and self-love, fearing knowledge that would cause us to despise ourselves.⁹³

Indeed, the unbeliever fears knowledge that would cause him to despise himself! Isaiah, a righteous man by human standards, was completely overwhelmed in the presence of a holy God. Whatever "self-esteem" he possessed was instantly crushed. Maslow won't identify the issue, but clearly it is the knowledge of God, and self *in relation to God*, that is feared.

Maslow explains that we not only fear knowledge of our inadequacies, but also our best side. This lengthy quotation is well worth our close investigation:

"Here we are reminded that our own Adam and Eve myth, with its dangerous Tree of Knowledge that mustn't be touched, is paralleled in many other cultures which also feel that ultimate knowledge is something reserved for the gods. Most religions have had a thread of anti-intellectualism...some trace of preference for faith or belief or piety rather than for knowledge, or the feeling that *some* forms of knowledge were too dangerous to meddle with and had best be forbidden or reserved to a few special people.... It is precisely the god-like in ourselves that we are ambivalent about, fascinated by and fearful of, motivated to and defensive against. This is one aspect of the basic human predicament, that we are simultaneously worms and gods."⁹⁴

Maslow specifically speaks of the *religious* man's "fear that knowing trespasses on the jurisdiction of the gods, is dangerous and will be resented."⁹⁵

⁹²Maslow, *PB*, p. 60.

⁹³Maslow, *PB*, p. 60.

⁹⁴Maslow, *PB*, p. 61.

⁹⁵Maslow, *PB*, p. 63.

The perversion of Romans 1 (not to mention Genesis 3!) is incredible. The comprehensive knowledge of God is indeed beyond the creature. Rather than acknowledging fallen man's terror of the God of Scripture, *knowing* He exists, Maslow turns the tables and claims that man fears the "god-like" *in himself!* The Creator and creature are *exchanged* in his analysis.

The unbeliever's knowledge of God subjects him to responsibilities he cannot escape. He is clearly culpable, without excuse, because God has clearly revealed His "invisible qualities" and His deity in His creation. This, too, Maslow turns on its head. He speaks of a "motivational dialectic" in philosophies, religions, and legal systems. Knowledge and responsibility to act are correlated in that dialectic:

"This close relation between knowing and doing can help us to interpret one cause of the fear of knowing as deeply a fear of doing, a fear of the consequences that flow from knowing, a fear of its dangerous responsibilities."⁹⁶

Indeed, there are consequences that flow from the unbeliever's knowledge of God! The responsibilities from which he flees are truly "dangerous." The unbeliever is a covenant breaker, fleeing his responsibilities before the living God of Scripture.

Metaphysically, the Christian and unbeliever have a common situation. Both are creatures made in the image of God. One is a covenant keeper, the other a covenant breaker. Epistemologically, however, the antithesis could hardly be more profound. Maslow illustrates powerfully the darkness and futility of the unbelieving mind, attempting to escape the knowledge of God. He attempts to flee the common metaphysical situation (living in God's world) using an epistemology that is anti-theistic to the core.

Authority, Autonomy, and Revelation

The editorial preface to *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences* gives ominous insight into the direction of Maslow's view of divine revelation, one that advocates the religious pluralism characteristic of the modern age:

"There has been a rising sentiment in favor of increased communication among, if not unity of, the religions of the world...and efforts have been and are being made to reconcile

⁹⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. 65-66.

the views of the great religious leaders of all major religions--Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu--religions that, in the past, have been regarded by their followers as having been founded upon the direct revelation of a supreme being to a chosen earthly prophet."⁹⁷

Continuing the introduction to Maslow's anti-Christian work, this editor notes the intention to merge all claims to divine revelation under a psychologically contrived category:

"Dissenting from the followers of those prophets who claimed direct revelation from God, and from the nineteenth century scientists who denied not only direct revelation but God himself, the author declares that these revelations were, in his words, 'peak-experiences' which are characteristic not only of specially ordained emissaries of God but of mankind in general."⁹⁸

There have been many attempts among modern minds to deny the possibility of revelation from the God of Christian theism. However, the psychological attempts are perhaps the most insidious. Not only is the supernatural expressly denied. It is also, supposedly, *explained*, in terms claimed to be scientific!⁹⁹ Freud, for example, provided a blasphemous "explanation" of Christianity in *Totem and Taboo*. Carl Jung explains not only believers, but *God Himself* as the human unconscious. One could hardly deal a more devastating blow to the "faith once and for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). We must respond to this latest challenge with clarity and authority. We must *explain* those who attempt to *explain away* our faith. But we cannot be satisfied with merely *better* or *more probable* explanations. It is necessary to demonstrate that these psychological attempts to explain Christianity *must presuppose Christian theism*, and thus in the end they self-destruct. In addition, their claim to "scientific study" is one that in principle excludes Christianity at the outset.

Maslow takes the position that every religion known to man is grounded in the private revelation of some individual prophet claiming divine inspiration for his pronouncements:

⁹⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. v. The editor who wrote this is E.I.F. Williams, representing Kappa Delta Pi Publications.

⁹⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. vi.

⁹⁹Maslow, *RVP*, p. vi. Maslow believes that "peak-experiences," the name he coins for all claims to divine revelation, are subject to scientific study. We will return to this theme in another section.

"The very beginning, the intrinsic core, the essence, the universal nucleus of every known high religion...has been the private, lonely, personal illumination, revelation, or ecstasy of some acutely sensitive prophet or seer."¹⁰⁰

Maslow believes that such "revelations" or "mystical illuminations" are equivalent to the "peak-experiences" that are recently being investigated by psychologists.¹⁰¹ He considers them "perfectly natural" although "phrased in terms of supernatural revelation."¹⁰² (Note his rejection of the possibility of the supernatural!)

Organized religion, Maslow claims, is grounded in the original prophetic revelation, making it available to the masses.¹⁰³ Maslow generally condemns such organization as destructive of true religious experience.

Truth. The question of *truth* is of vital concern to the Christian. What sort of truth does Maslow attribute to the "revelations" gained through "peak-experiences"? In considering this question, we are faced once again with the inconsistency that runs throughout Maslow's thought. Having no anchor, truth is a mirage and is purely relative.

Maslow expresses concern that the mystic will deny "the possibility that the inner voices, the 'revelations,' may be mistaken."¹⁰⁴ Here we encounter a radical skepticism about the possibility of actual *truth* being revealed. Maslow expresses himself even more fully when he considers the truth of mystic illuminations in *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*:

"The very roots and origins of religion are involved, but we must be very careful not to be seduced by the absolute subjective certainty of the mystics and of the peak experiencers. To them, truth has been revealed. Most of us have experienced this same certitude in our moments of revelation."¹⁰⁵

At the same time, Maslow believes that the "knowing obtained in peak-insight-experiences," as well as the "revelations that can come in psychotherapy," may be independently validated and

¹⁰⁰Maslow, *RVP*, p. 19.

¹⁰¹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 19, 26.

¹⁰²Maslow, *RVP*, p. 19-20.

¹⁰³Maslow, *RVP*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴Maslow, *RVP*, p. ix. This is now Maslow's own introduction to his work.

¹⁰⁵Maslow, *FR*, p. 106.

valuable. He is disappointed that many have flatly rejected this "path to knowledge."¹⁰⁶ He speaks of the "self-validating insight" of being a "real identity, a real self," obtained in the "peak-experience."¹⁰⁷ But if indeed such insight, or revelation, is *self-validating*, how can it be *independently* verified? And what if it is simply *false*? At this point Maslow abandons his earlier skepticism in favor of subjective, "self-validating" truth.

The type of answer Maslow offers is phrased in terms of a union of psychology and religion. Maslow claims that "dichotomizing pathologizes." He says that removing all that is "religious" from science led to a "dichotomized religion" that was doomed:

"It tended to claim that the founding revelation was complete perfect, final, and eternal. It had the truth, the whole truth, and had nothing more to learn."¹⁰⁸

Maslow equates this "whole truth" attitude with being "anti-intellectual and anti-scientific...making piety and obedience exclusive of skeptical intellectuality--in effect...contradicting natural truth." Such religion is "arbitrary" and "authoritarian," based on "blind belief."¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, it is exactly a "whole truth," anti-intellectual authoritative status that Maslow claims for insights gained in "peak-experiences" as a key path to knowledge. Such "knowledge" is arbitrary, based on "blind belief." Maslow assumes the inherent goodness of man. How, then, could his inward "revelations" be judged as "wrong"? Maslow swings back and forth between radical skepticism, demanding scientific validation before truth can be declared, and the autonomous claim that truthful "insights" are clearly gained through "peak-experiences." Bear in mind that Maslow has no ultimate standard by which to judge what is true or what is false. He has rejected, in principle, the one ultimate standard, God's *self-attesting* revelation. In its place he substitutes man's *self-validating* illuminations.

Rejection of the Supernatural. Maslow's open contempt for the supernatural is certainly no secret. He dislikes a "pie-in-the-sky kind of religion" where human improvement necessitates renouncing the world.¹¹⁰ He rejects any attempt to dichotomize the

¹⁰⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. 75-76.

¹⁰⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 14.

¹¹⁰Maslow, *RVP*, p. 15.

"sacred" and the secular, claiming that such compartmentalization rests its validity on the supernatural.¹¹¹

In one sense, we can agree that the sacred and secular are not to be sharply separated. Christ is the Lord of all, the Creator of all the facts of reality. However, the divorce of these two realms does not rest on the presupposition of the supernatural. Quite the contrary! When Kant, for example, ripped the noumenal world from the phenomenal, he "made room" for religion by wiping out the reality of supernatural intervention in the latter. Despite Maslow's claim to bring these two in harmony, he follows Kant in his rejection of God's supernatural working in the world. The autonomous mind of man, for both Kant and Maslow, controls all categories of thought.

Maslow's rejection of the supernatural is intimately related to his flawed attempt to establish universal moral absolutes apart from God, solely from within man. He assumes for his field of psychology the prerogative of establishing universal moral absolutes, and laments the contrived neutrality that has dominated this area of study:

"The casting out of values from psychology not only weakens it, and prevents it from reaching its full growth, but also abandons mankind to supernaturalism, to ethical relativism, or to nihilistic valuelessness. But if it could be demonstrated that the organism itself chooses between a stronger and a weaker, a higher and a lower, then surely it would be impossible to maintain that one good has the same value as any other good, or that it is impossible to choose between them, or that one has no natural criterion for differentiating good from evil."¹¹²

At this point, we would agree that values cannot--must not--be cast out in the study of man's nature and how he should live. Certainly values cannot be thrust from any counseling room that claims the name "Christian"! However, Maslow lumps supernaturalism with "ethical relativism" and "nihilistic valuelessness," as if the divine revelation of God's authoritative standards had some similarity to systems grounded in the rule of pure chance.

Maslow asserts that he is developing the view that:

¹¹¹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 14.

¹¹²Maslow, *MP*, p. 97.

"The highest spiritual values appear to have naturalistic sanctions and that supernatural sanctions for these values are, therefore, not necessary."¹¹³

Then he asks why "supernatural sanctions" were ever necessary!

Maslow admits that "any doctrine of innate depravity of man" leads necessarily to some "extra-human interpretation" of values such as goodness and other virtues. If such values cannot be explained *within* human nature, they must come from *outside*.¹¹⁴ Clearly, Maslow views God as the invention of man, grounded in what he considers an erroneous doctrine of man's depravity:

"The worse man is, the poorer a thing he is conceived to be, the more necessary becomes a god."¹¹⁵

Another "explanation" of Christian faith emerges here! Meanwhile, Maslow credits modern psychology's optimistic view of man for the downfall of faith in the supernatural:

"One source of the decay of belief in supernatural sanctions has been increasing faith in the higher possibilities of human nature."¹¹⁶

Maslow admits one of the problems inherent in his analysis when he says that:

"If the only sanction for 'spiritual' values is supernatural, then undermining this sanction undermines *all* higher values."

Indeed, undermining the supernatural *does* undermine all higher values. Maslow, meanwhile, skirts a basic issue. *By what standard* does he determine *any* value--spiritual, higher, or whatever--to be universally applicable? He, for example, has judged belief in the supernatural to be irrelevant or even harmful. *By what standard?* He has also judged that--despite the evil so prevalent in the world--man's nature is inherently good. But again, *by what standard?* Maslow has to presuppose the universal moral absolutes of Christian theism in order to get off the ground with a basic definition of what is "good."

Autonomy. Maslow applauds and promotes the *autonomy* of man, denying the possibility of authoritative divine revelation. There

¹¹³Maslow, *RVP*, p. 36.

¹¹⁴Maslow, *RVP*, p. 36-37.

¹¹⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. 37.

¹¹⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 37.

are sweeping implications here for the development of autonomous, man-made values, grounded in the anti-biblical assumption that man's nature is inherently good and not sinful:

"The recognition that man's best impulses are appreciably intrinsic, rather than fortuitous and relative, must have tremendous implication for value theory. It means, for one thing, that it is no longer either necessary or desirable to deduce values by logic or to try to read them off from authorities or revelations."¹¹⁷

Maslow proudly parades autonomy as one of his fourteen "Being-values," characteristic of the self-actualized person.¹¹⁸ He describes such a person as self-determined, "the creative center of his own activities," non-needing, unmotivated, even "god-like,"¹¹⁹ feeling like a "prime mover."¹²⁰ Maslow finds useful "the existentialist stress on the ultimate aloneness of the individual" because it reminds us of responsibility, identity, and *autonomy*.¹²¹ This autonomy is quite possibly Maslow's own idol, as he identifies it, in equation with self-realization, as the ultimate value to be pursued:

"It looks as if *there were* a single ultimate value for mankind...self-actualization, self-realization, integration, psychological health, individuation, autonomy, creativity, productivity."¹²²

These are all terms that Maslow equates with "realizing the potentialities of the person" or "becoming fully human."

The term *functional autonomy* is a key term found in Maslow's writings. Such autonomy is said to develop as man's "lower needs" are gratified and he moves on to pursue "higher needs," climaxing in self-actualization. The "higher" develops based on the "lower," eventually becoming independent. Maslow claims to have discovered here "the solution to the age-old dilemma of the theologians," who have long attempted to reconcile in man the flesh and spirit, the higher and lower.¹²³ Thus the functionally

¹¹⁷Maslow, *MP*, p. 102.

¹¹⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. 91. Other values are truth, goodness, beauty, wholeness, dichotomy-transcendence, aliveness, uniqueness, perfection, necessity, completion, justice, order, simplicity, richness, effortlessness, and playfulness.

¹¹⁹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 67.

¹²⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 106.

¹²¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 14.

¹²²Maslow, *PB*, p. 153.

¹²³Maslow, *MP*, p. 103.

autonomous person can withstand the loss of love, having become independent based on previous need gratification.¹²⁴ Maslow's autonomy can be seen here as not so very absolute after all, depending heavily on the gratification of a hierarchical structure of needs. He admits the difficulties in reconciling "this ultimate necessity for trust in the inner individual with the necessity for help from the environment."¹²⁵ Autonomy is the pinnacle of the "need" hierarchy, the goal of man--or rather the idol.

A couple of major inconsistencies emerge from within Maslow's discussions of autonomy. He notes that "children do *not* choose discipline, restraint, delay, frustration, even where this is 'good for them.'" Maslow "free choice" theory is thus limited; as he admits, it doesn't prepare well for the future.¹²⁶ Yet in another writing, he blames the "authoritarian view of life" for the existence of aggressive behavior. The discipline and restraint that is necessary for children (and others!) necessarily involves *authority*. Maslow exalts man as the ultimate authority, possessing innate goodness and wisdom. If this were so, why would any sort of discipline be needed to prepare for the future?

An even more radical incoherence is found in the combination of autonomy and monism. Maslow describes the self-actualized person as:

"...more able to fuse with the world.... I-Thou monism becomes more possible.... The greatest achievement of identity, autonomy, or selfhood is itself simultaneously a transcending of itself."¹²⁷

More explicitly, the self is *obliterated!*

"The goal of identity (self-actualization, autonomy, individuation)...seems to be simultaneously an end-goal in itself, and also a transitional goal, a rite of passage, step along the path to the transcendence of identity. This is like saying its function is to erase itself."¹²⁸

Maslow also describes this as "the Eastern goal of ego-transcendence and obliteration."¹²⁹ Thus we have, simultaneously,

¹²⁴Maslow, *MP*, p. 58.

¹²⁵Maslow, *PB*, p. 51.

¹²⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 101.

¹²⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. 105.

¹²⁸Maslow, *PB*, p. 114.

¹²⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 114.

the *autonomous* self (rationalism) and the *obliterated* self (irrationalism). The self is both "god" and non-existent at the same time! Once again we collide with the rational-irrational dialectic that characterizes so much of Maslow's thought.

It is in this consideration of autonomy that we can provide a biblically based *explanation* of Maslow and others who attempt to explain away Christian faith. Their would-be autonomy is the driving force behind these efforts to flee the Creator and His divine revelation. Rather than be subject to the demands of God, who has clearly revealed Himself in His creation, Maslow denies the supernatural, denies divine revelation, denies authority, and places the would-be autonomous man on the throne. That man is the ultimate authority, yet at the same time, in Maslow's monism, he self-destructs. It is almost as if Maslow would rather *not exist at all* than to exist as a creature of God, a covenant-breaker. Even in his own conscience, Maslow cannot escape the presence of the living God. No wonder he would prefer to monistically blend into the scenery and erase his own self!

Maslow's "Scientific" Authority

It is important to consider the scientific status Maslow claims for his theories. Scientific authority commands great reverence. Thus Maslow's speculative construction gains credibility in the eyes of modern man. But is it truly scientific? What presuppositions ground his conclusions? In addition to such questions, we need to discuss the fact that science is never neutral, but rests on the presupposition of Christian theism.

Evolution is an accepted "fact" of much modern science, despite its defiance of God the Creator and lack of conclusive evidence. Maslow *assumes* evolutionary theory in his optimistic view of man:

"Man has a higher and transcendent nature, and this is part of his essence, i.e., his biological nature as a member of a species which has evolved."¹³⁰

Maslow's assertion of human *autonomy* claims support in:

"...the uniform agreement among biological theorists in considering increasing autonomy and independence of environmental stimuli as *the* defining characteristics of full

¹³⁰Maslow, *RVP*, p. xvi.

individuality, of true freedom, of the whole evolutionary process."¹³¹

Even the problem of evil, specifically man's aggressive tendencies, is explored according to evolutionary assumptions about man's history. Although Maslow acknowledges that conclusions drawn from animal to man are suspicious, he cites the cooperative nature of anthropoid apes as reason to reject the idea that man's inner nature is evil.¹³²

The rational-irrational dialectic haunts us yet again with full force. While considering the issue of human motivation, Maslow says:

"Instinct theory accepted the fact that man was a self-mover; that his own nature as well as his environment helped to decide his behavior; that his own nature supplied him with a ready-made framework of ends, goals, or values...that all man form a single biological series; that behavior is senseless unless one understands its motivations and its goals."¹³³

There is a fundamental inconsistency between man's radical autonomy (rationalism), as Maslow proposes throughout his writings, and the theory that he is shaped by impersonal evolutionary forces (irrationalism). Maslow has no basis for proposing such a *purposeful* ascent of the human race. Indeed, evolution in general has no basis for a *starting point*, without a Creator, and no ground for moving *forward* rather than backward, since the alternative to Christian theism is pure chance. As a matter of fact, the assumption of meaningful progress is one that must presuppose the truth of Christian theism.

Brute Facts. Van Til reminds us, throughout his apologetic writings, that there are no "brute facts." All facts are created by God and interpreted by Him. The thought systems of unbelief either unite all the facts into a monistic whole, such that all facts are the same, or propose a diversity such that no two facts are related. Before we look deeply into Maslow's "science," we must consider how he deals with this critical issue.

Maslow would seem to agree with Van Til that facts are not isolated from meaning. He sees a grave danger in assuming that facts can be "amoral, totally separated from values." That

¹³¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 35.

¹³²Maslow, *MP*, p. 83, 120.

¹³³Maslow, *MP*, p. 79.

assumption makes possible the atrocity of Nazism, for example.¹³⁴ Indeed, in a purely chance universe, there is no basis on which to judge the slaughter of millions as an evil act.

Elsewhere, Maslow specifically states that *science* cannot be a matter of "brute facts," a "neutral" undertaking divorced from values:

"Many people define science as morally and ethically neutral, as having nothing to say about ends or oughts. They thus open the door to the inevitable consequence that if ends have to come from somewhere, and that if they cannot come from knowledge, then they must come from outside of knowledge."¹³⁵

Maslow's conclusion is that:

"Facts create oughts! The more 'is' something becomes, the more 'ought' it becomes...the more clearly perceived something is, the more 'oughty' it becomes and the better a guide to action it becomes."¹³⁶

Furthermore, Maslow proposes a direct perceiving of values, such that "the most profound perceptions of 'facts' causes the 'is' and the 'ought' to fuse."¹³⁷

A relativism is specifically asserted as desirable, in philosophy and the social sciences particularly. Maslow notes the conflict between the claim of organized religion to have *eternal, absolute, final truth*, and the relativism of the social sciences and the philosophers of science:

"Any philosophy or religious system which has no place for flux and for relativism is untenable (because it is untrue to all the facts)."¹³⁸

What kind of *facts*? Brute, uninterpreted *facts*? By what standard can Maslow judge any sort of truth, if that truth is not eternal, absolute, or final? What answer does he have to the Nazism he has just declared to be so evil? Is it evil now, but perhaps good a hundred years from now? When Maslow says that "facts create oughts," does he not again leave room for the triumph of terror? Wouldn't the *fact* of Nazism mean that it *ought* to be so?

¹³⁴Maslow, *RVP*, p. 57.

¹³⁵Maslow, *FR*, p. 119-120.

¹³⁶Maslow, *FR*, p. 120.

¹³⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. 84.

¹³⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. 94.

Facts, indeed, are not amoral. They are not "brute." Science is never conducted apart from a value system. It is because God is back of every fact, creating and interpreting it, that science can get off the ground. Now our question is how Maslow conducts his "science" of human nature.

Science: Man's Creation. Maslow calls science:

"...a human creation, rather than an autonomous, nonhuman, or *per se* 'thing' with intrinsic rules of its own.... Its laws, organization, and articulations rest not only on the nature of the reality that it discovers, but also on the nature of the human nature that does the discovering."¹³⁹

Maslow says that it has been a "misguided effort" "to make science completely autonomous and self-regulating."¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, "science itself implies a value system,"¹⁴¹ one that is humanistic to the core, according to Maslow:

*"Science is based on human values and is itself a value system. Human emotional, cognitive, expressive, and aesthetic needs give science its origins and its goals. The gratification of any such need is a 'value.'"*¹⁴²

Maslow does warn about the projection of one's own "tastes, prejudices, and hopes" as a real danger in scientific endeavors.¹⁴³ He devotes considerable space to a discussion of scientists and their motivations in pursuing science. He believes they should be "psychologically healthy" and that psychotherapy would improve their quest for truth.¹⁴⁴

Notice that Maslow imposes the values of psychotherapy upon science. *Man* (not God!) is the ultimate reference point for what is right or wrong in the study of himself and the world around. Maslow wants to warn about the projection of one's own values on science, yet he admits no ultimate standard outside of man to call the scientist to account. But he must, at least implicitly, presuppose such a standard or he has no basis for scientific statements of any kind.

¹³⁹Maslow, *MP*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰Maslow, *MP*, p. 1.

¹⁴¹Maslow, *MP*, p. 3.

¹⁴²Maslow, *MP*, p. 6.

¹⁴³Maslow, *MP*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁴Maslow, *MP*, p. 10.

Science Swallows Religion. One of the most striking features of Maslow's thought is his broad proposal concerning the redefinition of science. Maslow displays extreme disappointment over the past limitations of science. The nineteenth century atheists, he claims, abandoned religion because it "presented him with a set of answers which he could not intellectually accept" because these answers "rested on no evidence which a self-respecting scientist could swallow."¹⁴⁵ Yet the "objective, value-free science" of the nineteenth century failed to satisfy all varieties of non-theists, including atheists, agnostics, rationalists, humanists, and theological liberals. These, Maslow claims, should be looking to the *social sciences* for their foundation,¹⁴⁶ "sciences" that are anything but value-free. Science, in the past, has failed to integrate *everything* that is real. While people yearn for values, for something to believe in, science excludes religious questions from its realm, and liberal religion has declined because it fails to provide *emotional* as well as *intellectual* satisfaction.¹⁴⁷

Hardly anything escapes the realm of scientific inquiry when Maslow stretches its boundaries. Put most simply, Maslow believes that science should encompass "all confirmable knowledge in all its stages of development." By broadening the scope of science, Maslow believes it will now be "capable of handling values."¹⁴⁸

Not only values, but *religion*, is claimed to be within the rightful territory of science. Maslow believes that because of recent developments in psychology:

"We may be able to accept the basic religious questions as a proper part of the jurisdiction of science, once science is broadened and redefined."¹⁴⁹

Even "the sacred, the eternal, heaven and hell, the good death" have "real referents" in the world, being "not mere hallucinations, illusions, or delusions." Thus they are subject to scientific study.¹⁵⁰ *What was it Maslow has said about the supernatural? Irrelevant? Pie-in-the-sky? Maslow has to redefine every one of these terms to excise the supernatural element!*

¹⁴⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 40.

¹⁴⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁰Maslow, *RVP*, p. 44.

In the past, science and religion have been separated into two mutually exclusive worlds. Science "mistakenly conceived of itself as having nothing to say about ends or ultimate values or spiritual values." Such values were considered as outside the range of "natural knowledge," unable to be validated.¹⁵¹ Maslow laments this exclusion of religious values from scientific study:

"This dichotomizing of knowledge and values has also pathologized the organized religions by cutting them off from facts, from knowledge, from science, even to the point of often making them enemies of scientific knowledge."¹⁵²

Science then becomes "amoral and non-ethical." Meanwhile, there are recent changes in both science and religion, perhaps "one more instance of what has happened so often in the past, i.e., of snatching away another territory from the jurisdiction of organized religion." Maslow believes that all of the following are among those things being "snatched away" from organized religion: *values, ethics, spirituality, morals.*¹⁵³ This development is one he considers to be encouraging to the "deeply religious person," for whom "value questions may be more firmly answered than ever before."¹⁵⁴ Certainly the *church* cannot provide such assurance, as Maslow proudly proclaims:

"Very obviously, such values and such hungers cannot be handed over to any church for safekeeping. They cannot be removed from the realm of human inquiry, of skeptical examination, of empirical investigation."¹⁵⁵

Very obviously? *By what standard* is this such an obvious truth? *By what standard* does Maslow propose to conduct his inquiry, his "skeptical" examination, his "empirical" investigation? Very obviously (to borrow Maslow's term), *some* ultimate standard must be presupposed in order to initiate such a study.

Science: Description or Prescription? Most significantly, Maslow desires to study "peak-experiences" scientifically, for the purpose of establishing a universally applicable value system. Man's inner nature, *assumed good* at the outset, is subjected to scientific study. A dichotomy between science and religion would exclude the study of "mystical and peak-experiences," along with other areas that "involve an integration of the realm of Being

¹⁵¹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 11.

¹⁵²Maslow, *RVP*, p. 12.

¹⁵³Maslow, *RVP*, p. 12.

¹⁵⁴Maslow, *RVP*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. 17.

with the realm of the concrete."¹⁵⁶ Maslow insists that he has empirically *discovered* the characteristics of self-actualizing people rather than *inventing* them.¹⁵⁷ He claims to be *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive* in his study of human motivation:

"I maintain firmly then that we have been making descriptive, scientific statements rather than purely normative ones."¹⁵⁸

Similarly, he calls *The Psychology of Being* science, *not exhortation*, a presentation of hypotheses for "testing rather than for final belief."¹⁵⁹ But only one page earlier, this "science" is purported to be "the only way we have of shoving truth down the reluctant throat!"¹⁶⁰ Elsewhere, he describes his "psychology of being" as "not purely descriptive or academic!"¹⁶¹ *Which is it?*

There is an ongoing dialectic between mere *description* and the *prescribing* of universal moral absolutes -- values. Maslow desires a fusion of the two. He claims that:

"'Pure' value-free description is, among other things, *sloppy* description."¹⁶²

Perhaps Maslow has forgotten, as he penned this line, that this is exactly what he heralds as the hallmark of "Being-cognition." "Self-actualized" people are applauded for their ability "to take a non-valuing, non-judging, non-interfering, non-condemning attitude toward others,"¹⁶³ and for penetrating perception of the "being" of objects in general. This "pure" perception is highly valued at one point, then cast aside at another point as "sloppy"!

Possibly "pure, value-free description" is of use for certain kinds of scientific study not directly concerned with human beings. This is what Maslow teaches in one of his writings:

"The development of physics, astronomy, mechanics, and chemistry was in fact impossible until they had become value-free, value-neutral, so that pure descriptiveness was possible. The great mistake that we are now learning about is that this model, which developed from the study of objects

¹⁵⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 16.

¹⁵⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. vii.

¹⁵⁸Maslow, *MP*, p. 272.

¹⁵⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. ix.

¹⁶⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. viii.

¹⁶¹Maslow, *PB*, p. iii.

¹⁶²Maslow, *FR*, p. 123-124.

¹⁶³Maslow, *PB*, p. 40.

and things, has been illegitimately used for the study of human beings. It is a terrible technique. It has not worked."¹⁶⁴

One of Maslow's prime *values* is to retain human values in science:

"Science was not, is not, and cannot be completely objective, which is to say, independent of human values. Furthermore, it is highly debatable whether it ought even to *try* to be."¹⁶⁵

Yes, it *is* a terrible technique in the study of man, *the image of God*, to disregard values. Yet we dare not forget that, despite some basic differences in these other sciences, *no science* is truly neutral. All science must presuppose the truth of Christian theism. This is particularly critical in the study of man, due to his covenantal relationship to God. Attempted "neutrality," divorcing the study of man from the knowledge of God, is not neutral at all and must necessarily result in gross distortion. Maslow cannot, however, escape this charge. *He divorces psychology from theology when he assumes that Christian theism cannot be true.* Maslow the psychologist cannot merely describe man's nature and hope to come up with universal moral absolutes. He begins and ends with man, in defiance of man's Creator and Judge. Man is his only and ultimate reference point.

Science: What do we really know, how do we know it, and is it really true? Epistemology stares us in the face again in our consideration of science. Maslow, not surprisingly, exhibits his inconsistency. At some points we see the declaration of *certainty* for his scientific procedures:

"It is quite clear to me that scientific methods (broadly conceived) are our only ultimate ways of being sure that we do have truth."¹⁶⁶

Maslow boldly asserts his confidence in the development of a "scientific" value system:

"We think that a scientific ethic may be possible, and we think we know how to go about constructing it."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴Maslow, *FR*, p. 170.

¹⁶⁵Maslow, *MP*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. viii.

¹⁶⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. 149.

The way he goes about this construction of a "naturalistic value system" is through a scientific, "descriptive study of the free choices of self-actualizing people," those who are "healthiest...highly evolved."¹⁶⁸ His basis thesis is that:

"We can, in principle, have a descriptive, naturalistic science of human values.... we can discover (rather than create or invent) which values men trend toward, yearn for, struggle for, as they improve themselves, and which values they lose as they get sick."¹⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Maslow says that "a psychological pluralism in science teaches us that there are many paths to knowledge and truth."¹⁷⁰ He claims that we don't have enough knowledge yet for the "One Good World," or even "to teach *individuals* how to love each other--at least not with any certainty."¹⁷¹ There is an interplay of radical doubt and radical certainty in Maslow's comments about knowledge derived from science. Intertwined with his emphatic claims about discovering ultimate values within man, there is a skepticism. He calls his theory about Being-perception "a hypothesis awaiting controlled research," based as it is on "uncontrolled observation."¹⁷² He admits that:

"The cognitive experiences I have been describing cannot be a substitute for the routine skeptical and cautious procedures of science."¹⁷³

Meanwhile, flashes of insight and subsequent validation of such insights should not be put in "an antagonistically exclusive relationship."¹⁷⁴ The "empirical spirit" should be accepted by "clergyman and atheist alike," because man's knowledge is incomplete and finite.¹⁷⁵ In that "empirical spirit," despite the admission of finitude and skepticism, Maslow nevertheless insists that he has established an "empirical case...for the presence within the human being of a tendency toward...self-actualization," or "a pressure toward unity of personality...toward seeing the truth...toward being good."¹⁷⁶ He argues transcendently that

¹⁶⁸Maslow, *PB*, p. 156.

¹⁶⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 167.

¹⁷⁰Maslow, *MP*, p. 10.

¹⁷¹Maslow, *PB*, p. v.

¹⁷²Maslow, *PB*, p. 99.

¹⁷³Maslow, *PB*, p. 100.

¹⁷⁴Maslow, *PB*, p. 100.

¹⁷⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. 54.

¹⁷⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. 155.

"much of human behavior makes no sense" without the presupposition of self-actualizing tendencies in man.¹⁷⁷

Frankly, Maslow halts between two opinions--certainty and skepticism--because he has no basis for predication. He has no foundation for knowledge, having divorced the empirical "facts" of scientific inquiry from the God who created those facts and gave them meaning. He seeks knowledge from within man, knowledge that man needs to give meaning to his life. He divorces that knowledge from man's Creator, who alone provides that meaning. In doing so, he is involved in hopeless circularity.

The Problem of Evil

Maslow proposes a solution to the problem of evil that has plagued theologians for centuries. He summarizes their massive problem:

"The theologians have long struggled with the impossible task of reconciling sin and evil and pain in the world with the concept of an all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing God. A subsidiary difficulty has been presented by the task of reconciling the necessity of rewards and punishments for good and evil with this concept of an all-loving, all-forgiving God."¹⁷⁸

We must consider Maslow's view not only of evil in general, but specifically the evil within man. Before we become immersed in details, however, we must note a basic, critical issue. To even raise the "problem of evil," to even *discuss* "evil" coherently, one must presuppose a universal, absolute value system by which to *define* what is good and what is evil. Such a system is found only within the worldview of Christian theism. Maslow blatantly rejects Christianity but at the same time must presuppose it in order to launch his attack.

Human Evil. In the area of human nature, Maslow's strongest emphasis is on *needs*. These he insists to be morally neutral:

"On the surface, the basic needs (motives, impulses, drives) are not evil or sinful.... At our most scientifically cautious, we would still have to say that they are neutral rather than evil.... As for the metaneeds for excellence, truth, beauty, lawfulness, simplicity, etc., it is

¹⁷⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. 155.

¹⁷⁸Maslow, *PB*, p. 92.

practically impossible in our culture, and in most cultures that we know, to call them intrinsically bad or sinful."¹⁷⁹

As Maslow continues, he wavers between certainty and ignorance. He admits his inability to explain human evil:

"The raw material of humanness and of human specieshood, therefore, does not in itself explain the huge amount of evil that is obvious in our world, in human history, and within our own individual characters."¹⁸⁰

Maslow explains evil *in man* by reference to factors *outside* man, including sickness (of body and personality), ignorance, immaturity, and bad social or institutional arrangements. What he excludes, as even a possibility, is any sort of sinful nature arising from within man:

"Our knowledge is sufficient to reject any claim that human nature is, in its essence, *primarily, biologically, fundamentally* evil, sinful, malicious.... But we do not dare to say that there are *no* instinctoid tendencies at all to bad behavior."¹⁸¹

Still, Maslow says that "we just do not know enough to make such an affirmation" but "such knowledge is attainable." He claims his method is an "empirical approach" to "good and evil." He insists that "knowledge of destructiveness *has* advanced even though not yet to the point of final and conclusive answers."¹⁸²

Thus Maslow asserts certain knowledge--a "final and conclusive answer"--that is sufficient to eliminate the Christian view of man, yet admits to a rather comprehensive level of ignorance about the extent of human evil! It is typical of apostate thought to claim knowledge simultaneously of *everything* and of *nothing*.

Maslow's "empirical approach" to human evil presupposes evolution and bases much of its study on "infrahuman primates," whose aggression is viewed as a reasonable response to various "situational determinants."¹⁸³ Maslow thus suppresses the truth about man's moral accountability before God.

¹⁷⁹Maslow, *MP*, p. 117.

¹⁸⁰Maslow, *MP*, p. 117.

¹⁸¹Maslow, *MP*, p. 118.

¹⁸²Maslow, *MP*, p. 118.

¹⁸³Maslow, *MP*, p. 119.a

Even in turning to the study of human children, Maslow claims certain knowledge that original sin cannot be the true human condition:

"Psychologists and psychoanalysts often have conceived of the infant as a little devil, born with original sin and hatred in his heart. Certainly this undiluted picture is false."¹⁸⁴

"If one looks at a healthy and well-loved and cared-for infant...it is quite impossible to see anything that could be called evil, original sin."¹⁸⁵

Over and over, Maslow attacks any view that would attribute inherent sinfulness to man. He lumps all such views and calls them the "bad-animal" theory of instincts. From this theory, he says, it follows that "conscience, rationality, and ethics are no more than an acquired veneer, completely different in character from what lies beneath." From this "misconception" there follows restraining forces such as the *church*, school, and state.¹⁸⁶ Maslow spares no words in his criticism of this position:

"This mistake is so crucial, so tragedy laden, that it may be likened in historical importance to such mistakes as the belief in divine right of kings, in the *exclusive validity of any one religion*, in the *denial of evolution*, or in the belief that the earth is flat. Any belief that makes men mistrust themselves and each other unnecessarily, and to be unrealistically pessimistic about human possibilities, must be held partly responsible for every war that has ever been waged, for every racial antagonism, and for every religious massacre."¹⁸⁷

Maslow equates any claim to *exclusive religious truth* with the denial of evolution and the view that the earth is flat, laying blame on the Christian worldview for a variety of evils throughout the ages! He is not alone in his hostile reaction to the biblical view of man, *but without presupposing that very view*, he cannot explain the entrance of sin into the world, not can he even *define* good and evil. The only sort of "explanation" he can offer, in the face of so many instances of human sin, is that situational forces *outside man* press him into acts of aggression. Yet if such forces do not arise from man, where is Maslow's ultimate

¹⁸⁴Maslow, *MP*, p. 121.

¹⁸⁵Maslow, *MP*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁶Maslow, *MP*, p. 86.

¹⁸⁷Maslow, *MP*, p. 86, emphasis added.

explanation? The supernatural cannot be a factor, according to Maslow's stated presuppositions.

One of his proposed explanations is phrased in terms of the evasion of growth, which is "psychopathology." Tendencies toward self-actualization, he says, are weak and thus easily overtaken by habit, culture, education, and the like. Man is troubled by two sets of opposing forces that pull him apart.¹⁸⁸ The failure to understand such "psychopathology" is what Maslow blames for the "erroneous" view of original sin, and for defective value theories. Man doesn't choose the good; therefore:

"A good many have thrown up their hands altogether and talked about original sin and intrinsic evil and concluded that man could be saved only by extra-human forces."¹⁸⁹

In one blow, Maslow throws out both sin *and* salvation, replacing the Creator-Redeemer with the would-be autonomous man who must save himself from external and internal forces that press him to commit evil acts.

Another "explanation" offered is that:

"Human evil is largely (though not altogether) human weakness or ignorance, forgivable, understandable and also curable."¹⁹⁰

Ignorance, particularly, is a major source of human sin for Maslow:

"This also is a modern phrasing of the old Socratic doctrine that no man with full knowledge could ever do evil. While we cannot go that far since we now know of sources of evil behavior other than ignorance, still we can agree with Socrates that ignorance of the facts is a major source of evil behavior."¹⁹¹

The "saviors" in this system are primarily the "professional psychotherapists" who Maslow claims:

"...every day, as a matter of course, change and improve human nature, help people to become more strong, virtuous, creative, kind, loving, altruistic, serene."¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸Maslow, *PB*, p. 164.

¹⁸⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 165.

¹⁹⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 165.

¹⁹¹Maslow, *FR*, p. 124.

¹⁹²Mslow, *PB*, p. 165.

Thus man, weakened and victimized by forces beyond himself, must also save himself. Such psychological "salvation" is a gruesome replacement for the free gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ. It also crumbles internally, because Maslow has no ultimate standard *outside of man* to judge what takes place *in man*. *By what standard*, we must ask, does Maslow determine that his profession truly improves human nature?

One of Maslow's great concerns is the suppression of the *good* he considers inherent to human nature. He considers the "mythic...inexact...illogical...metaphorical" and such to be characteristic of man at his highest level as well as his lowest, insisting that "'good' as well as 'bad' impulses can be repressed."¹⁹³ He advises the study of "healthy trends" in humans in order to better understand human weakness. He wants to study the "best human beings," not only in their "healthy trends" but also in their sins. He believes we can never understand "irreducible human evil until we explore more fully...the 'incurable' sins and the shortcoming of the best human beings we can find."¹⁹⁴ But the hope he holds out is admittedly quite limited. Acknowledging "bad" behavior as "very deeply rooted in human nature," Maslow believes "it can never be abolished altogether" but will lessen as "society improves" and "personality matures."¹⁹⁵

Not only is Maslow concerned with the "suppression" of man's goodness. Evil, he thinks, is primarily a crime against the *self* rather than against the *Creator*:

"Every crime against one's own nature, every evil act, every *one without exception records itself* in our unconscious and makes us despise ourselves."¹⁹⁶

It is crucial to see that while Maslow views human nature as intrinsically good, rejecting the biblical view of original sin, he cannot escape the basic flaws of his own assumption. At one point he compares his system with Freudianism, which focuses on pathology, and recognizes that both pose unique problems:

"The growth school...is equally vulnerable, for they tend to see through rose-colored glasses and generally slide over the problems of pathology, of weakness or *failure* to grow. One

¹⁹³Maslow, *RVP*, p. 41.

¹⁹⁴Maslow, *MP*, p. xxii.

¹⁹⁵Maslow, *PB*, p. 196.

¹⁹⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. 5.

is like a theology of evil and sin exclusively; the other is like a theology without any evil at all, and is therefore equally incorrect and unrealistic."¹⁹⁷

At another point, Maslow attempts to conveniently cover the cracks in his foundation by seeing human excellence as eternally *potential*, never fully *actual*. Thus he can say, in concert with Aristotle, that it *exists* (potentially) even while it obviously does not exist (actually):

"We have come close to identifying it [the nature of normality] with the highest excellence of which we are capable. But this ideal is not an unattainable goal set out far ahead of us; rather it is actually within us, existent but hidden, as potentiality rather than as actuality."¹⁹⁸

These sorts of admissions are important. Maslow cannot completely and consistently ignore human sin. Even within his own God-given conscience, he is faced with the standards and existence of his Creator (Romans 2:14-15). His system is fundamentally flawed. He cannot define, explain, or correct human evil without presupposing the position of Christian theism.

Evil in general. Moving the problem beyond human nature, Maslow believes he has answers to the "problem of evil" in general. He explains that his solution:

"...is not a denial of evil or pain or death but rather a reconciliation with it, an understanding of its necessity."¹⁹⁹

He looks to his own theory of "self-actualization" and of the perceptions of those he defines as "self-actualized" people. He supposes his solution of the dilemma to be "naturalistic."²⁰⁰ During the "peak-experiences" of these individuals, "the world...is seen only as beautiful, good, desirable, worthwhile." There is a reconciliation with evil such that "evil itself is accepted and understood and seen in its proper place in the whole, as belonging there, as unavoidable, as necessary, and therefore, as proper."²⁰¹

Man's ascent to the throne of God is no secret here. The peak experience is one of becoming "godlike" in this total acceptance

¹⁹⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. 48.

¹⁹⁸Maslow, *MP*, p. 279.

¹⁹⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 82.

²⁰⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 92.

²⁰¹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 63.

of everything, including evil. There is such "universal understanding" that there is no blame or condemnation.²⁰² The "polarities of life" are "transcended or resolved." There is a fusion or integration with the world, a perception of unity. Fears of death, insanity, and disintegration all tend to disappear.²⁰³ The self-actualized person's solution to the "problem of evil" is to:

"... 'accept reality' as being-in-itself, in its own right. It is neither *for* man nor is it *against* him. It just is impersonally what it is."²⁰⁴

For example, consider the "evil" of an earthquake:

"For the men who can perceive and accept it naturalistically, impersonally and as uncreated, it presents no ethical or axiological problem, since it wasn't done 'on purpose' to annoy him."²⁰⁵

God's providential control and goodness are thus cast away, leaving man adrift on an impersonal sea of chance where there can be no meaning. What man cannot comprehend--comprehensively--is rejected as a "brute fact" that cannot possibly have meaning within the plan of any sovereign Lord such as Christian theism worships.

Without a doubt, creature replaces Creator in Maslow's "solution" to the problem of evil. The "reconciliation" of good and evil, where all judgment are suspended, is "godlike" according to his system:

"Another way of saying this is to compare it with one aspect of the concept of 'god' which is contained in many religions. The gods who can contemplate and encompass the whole of Being and who therefore understand it, must see it as good, just, inevitable, and must see 'evil' as a product of limited or selfish vision and understanding. If we could be godlike in this sense then we, too, out of universal understanding would never blame or condemn or be disappointed or shocked.... Though we can never be gods in this sense, we can be more godlike or less godlike, more often or less often."²⁰⁶

²⁰²Maslow, *RVP*, p. 64.

²⁰³Maslow, *RVP*, p. 65-66.

²⁰⁴Maslow, *PB*, p. 93.

²⁰⁵Maslow, *PB*, p. 93.

²⁰⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. 82.

Such "Being-perception," attributed to "gods" and to persons immersed in "peak-experiences," seems to Maslow an important experience for human beings:

"When we B-perceive him, then we can be all-loving, all-forgiving, all-accepting, all-admiring, all-understanding, B-amused, lovingly-amused. But these are precisely the attributes assigned to most conceptions of a god.... If such an acceptor cannot be found among human beings, then the very strong tendency appears to project and create a godlike figure, sometimes a human one, sometimes supernatural."²⁰⁷

Thus Maslow's "psychology of religion" is one that explains "god" as a human projection designed to meet certain basic needs for love and acceptance. All we really have here is Maslow's personal idol, a "god" of his own imagination. This idol is created and designed to cater to the cravings of the creature. He is not the God of Scripture who is worthy of our worship and service.

Maslow's "solution" to the problem of evil is one that ultimately self-destructs in its refusal to acknowledge the standards of the Creator. In describing a relevant book he has read, Maslow says this:

"Written by a professor of theology, it was total confusion. It was the approach that Evil now has become Good because there is some kind of paradox while playing with words: If evil becomes totally evil, then it somehow becomes good...there were rhapsodies to the beauties of sodomy and drug addiction, which, for a poor psychologist who spends much of his time trying to rescue people from the anguish of these kinds of things, were incomprehensible."²⁰⁸

But Maslow himself cannot answer such a book. He has no standard by which to judge what is evil. His own system is one in which evil becomes good, because the Creator and Lawgiver has been dethroned, reduced to a "projection" of the mind of man. Maslow must unwittingly presuppose the truth of Christian theism, which in principle he rejects, in order to determine that he must "save" his counselees from certain types of "anguish."

The "problem of evil" is one that finds answers only in the sovereign Lord, the Creator who alone foreordains whatsoever comes to pass and gives meaning to every fact. The unregenerate man has

²⁰⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. 93.

²⁰⁸Maslow, *FR*, p. 172.

no foundation on which to raise the "problem" of evil. Evil can hardly be a "problem," but rather is equally ultimate, a series of "brute" facts to be courageously faced by man in the void. Much less can sinful man arrogate to himself the invention of a *solution* for the problem of evil. God alone has defined good and evil, and to Him alone is man accountable for his sin. God alone is the author of salvation, the One who "works all things according to the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

Need, Motivation, and Idolatry

Maslow is best known for his "hierarchy of needs," pictured as a pyramid. Man's behavior is explained largely on the basis of need gratification. At the pinnacle of the pyramid is "self-actualization." We might think here of the "high places" in the Old Testament. God commanded the destruction of these idols, not their "actualization."

Basically, Maslow divides human "needs" into two categories, the "lower" and the "higher." "Lower" needs include such basics as safety, belongingness, identity, love, and respect. Satisfaction of "lower" needs brings "higher" needs into awareness, culminating in self-actualization. Maslow summarizes his hierarchical arrangement:

"Gratification of one need and its consequent removal from the center of the stage brings about not a state of rest or Stoic apathy, but rather the emergence into consciousness of another 'higher' need."²⁰⁹

The "growth-motivated" person, whose basic needs are satisfied, "becomes more determined from within than from without." He is more highly motivated, less dependent on others, more detached, more self-directed, more *autonomous*.²¹⁰

One of man's fundamental needs, according to Maslow, is love:

"Love hunger is a deficiency disease...the healthy person, not having this deficiency, does not need to receive love except in steady, small, maintenance doses."²¹¹

However, "although they need less to receive love, they are more able to give love." Maslow distinguishes "Being-love" and

²⁰⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 30.

²¹⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 30, 34.

²¹¹Maslow, *PB*, p. 42.

"Deficit-love," much as he distinguishes needs in general. "B-love is welcomed into consciousness" and is "non-possessive."²¹² The Christian is compelled to offer a biblical critique at this juncture. *God is love, and we love because He first loved us* (1 John 4:8,10). Love is *active* and directed away from the self and its cravings, or "needs" (1 Corinthians 13). Having rejected God, Maslow's "love" is an anemic, passive substitute that does nothing for anyone.

Human motivation is explained by Maslow using his pyramid of needs gratification:

"The chief principle of organization in human motivational life is the arrangement of basic needs in a hierarchy of less or greater priority or potency."²¹³

"The single holistic principle that binds together the multiplicity of human motives is the tendency for a new and higher need to emerge as the lower need fulfills itself by being sufficiently gratified."²¹⁴

Maslow rejects "contemporary theories of motivations," which he claims "unite in regarding needs, drives and motivating states in general as annoying," viewing motivation primarily as "need reduction." He traces this state of affairs to psychology's experience with "sick people...who in fact suffer from bad experiences with their needs."²¹⁵ For Maslow, it is desirable for man to gratify "basic needs" so that he can move forward to the satisfaction of "higher needs," particularly self-actualization.

Maslow sees basic human needs as *innate*,²¹⁶ yet views "higher" needs the result of "later evolutionary development."²¹⁷ Although presupposing evolution as scientific fact, Maslow cannot consistently deny the fact that man differs from the animals in some crucial respects:

"This theory starts with the human being rather than any lower and presumably simpler animal. Too many of the findings that have been made in animals have been proved to be true for animals but not for the human being."²¹⁸

²¹²Maslow, *PB*, p. 42.

²¹³Maslow, *MP*, p. 59.

²¹⁴Maslow, *PB*, p. 55.

²¹⁵Maslow, *PB*, p. 27-28.

²¹⁶Maslow, *MP*, p. 80.

²¹⁷Maslow, *MP*, p. 98.

²¹⁸Maslow, *MP*, p. 56.

What Maslow faces here, but refuses to acknowledge, is the image of God that confronts him even in his own consciousness. On the basis of his own principles, including the evolutionary presupposition, he cannot explain the chasm between man and beast.

Maslow's scheme of "needs" is also equated with fundamental human *rights*.²¹⁹ He also proposes that "basic needs" are "probably common to all mankind" and are "therefore, shared values."²²⁰ In fact, Maslow calls his need hierarchy "a theory of the ends and ultimate values of the organism."²²¹ Such "values" quickly degenerate into idolatry:

"So far as he is concerned, *the absolute, ultimate value, synonymous with life itself, is whichever need in the hierarchy he is dominated by during a particular period.*"²²²

It does not take much biblical imagination to see here the cravings and lusts of the flesh, the idols that capture and enslave the human heart (Psalm 115:1-8, Ezekiel 14:1-11).

Perhaps the most revolting feature of this scenario is the blatant attempt to place man on the throne of God, and to offer, again, a psychological explanation of religious faith. Maslow has this to say about the "self-actualized," *autonomous* person whose basic needs have been gratified:

"I have called the person godlike because most gods have been considered to have no needs or wants, no deficiencies, nothing lacking, to be gratified in all things."²²³

At every point in Maslow's thinking, we are faced with the erasure of the Creator-creature distinction, such that man assumes lordship of the universe. Maslow also utilizes his "need" theory, in particular the need for safety, to explain religion:

"The tendency to have some religion or world philosophy that organizes the universe and the men in it into some sort of satisfactorily coherent, meaningful whole is also in part motivated by safety seeking."²²⁴

²¹⁹Maslow, *MP*, p. xiii.

²²⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. 152.

²²¹Maslow, *MP*, p. 63.

²²²Maslow, *PB*, p. 153-4.

²²³Maslow, *PB*, p. 110.

²²⁴Maslow, *MP*, p. 41-2.

We would do better to explain Maslow's speculations in the terms of Romans 1, where the unbeliever, holding down the truth in unrighteousness, seeks refuge from the righteous wrath of God. It is Maslow who is motivated by "safety seeking," but it is God alone who is the safe refuge for those who trust in Him and not in themselves (Jeremiah 17:5-8).

One of the gravest dangers about the various schools of modern psychology is the small grain of truth that is grossly distorted, then molded into an all-encompassing explanation of human nature and behavior. Maslow is no exception. In order to work on this paper today, I needed a good night's rest and adequate nutrition (plus, perhaps, a few cups of coffee!). Having these basic needs met, I was able to become highly motivated about writing. But Maslow's attempt to penetrate the mysteries of human need is fatally flawed, because he does so without reference to man's Creator. No accurate analysis of human need, motivation, or values can be provided when divorced from God. As Van Til asks, "how can modern psychology tell us of the needs of the human being unless it ask of Christ and God what these needs may be?"²²⁵ Paul's letters speak to Christians of contentment with little support from the outside world (1 Timothy 6:6-10; Philippians 4:11). Man's spiritual, or "higher" needs (to borrow Maslow's term), are described in Scripture in terms of God's Word and reconciliation with Him. When Jesus spoke to Martha and told her that only one thing, His Word, was truly needed (Luke 10:41-42), he turned Maslow's pyramid on its apex.²²⁶

Maslow's Educational Revolution

Maslow launches a massive attack on the current state of American education (at the time of his writing), and the revisions he recommends are nothing short of revolutionary. It is important to review these, because today, some thirty years later, his anti-theistic program has indeed invaded public education.

Maslow believes that educators will "finally be forced to try to teach spirituality and transcendence," with the primary goal of education "phrased in terms of inner, subjective experiences in each individual."²²⁷ Today, Maslow is no voice crying in the wilderness. Programs like "values clarification" are exactly the sort of education his writings promote.

²²⁵Van Til, *Essays on Christian Education*, p. 143.

²²⁶Thanks to my friend Jay Adams for this insight, but I don't recall which book or talk it came from!

²²⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. 35.

Concern is expressed about the state of American education in particular, where educators assume that it's possible to acquire training and skills while education remains "value free or amoral." Maslow considers educators to be "value-confused" in this atmosphere because "they are not clear about the ultimate value of the acquisition of pure knowledge." Knowledge has become "self-validating...independent of its origins, its motivations, its functions," with "pure knowledge" becoming "functionally autonomous."²²⁸

Maslow is quick to tell us that *his* ultimate goal for education is:

"...to aid the person to grow to fullest humanness, to the greatest fulfillment and actualization of his highest potentials, to his greatest possible stature...to become *actually* what he deeply is *potentially*."²²⁹

This goal is one that Maslow considers *universally* valid:

"Another consequence of this new insight into the highest human end-goals and end-values is that it holds for every living human being."²³⁰

Every living human being? By what standard does Maslow assert such an awesome claim? The skeptical, empirical "scientist" has clearly turned religious zealot, imposing his own universal moral absolutes (for which he has no basis) on humanity. Meanwhile, "no subject matter is a sacred and eternal part of any fixed-for-all-time curriculum."²³¹ We can get dizzy swinging between Maslow's absolute pronouncements and his disdain for universal absolutes of any kind!

Looking at the current philosophical confusion in education, Maslow says that the attempt to be "value free" results in education that is "purely technological," "trying to rest on tradition or habit alone," "indoctrination." He calls all of these "value-confusions, philosophical and axiological failures," breeding "value-pathologies."²³² According to Maslow, "education...must be concerned with its final values," which he equates with *his* values, specifically "spiritual values" or

²²⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. 48-9.

²²⁹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 49.

²³⁰Maslow, *RVP*, p. 50.

²³¹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 50.

²³²Maslow, *RVP*, p. 51.

"higher values." He then lists a number of *religious* questions, all value-laden, such as: What is the good man? Good life? Truth? Justice? Virtue?²³³ *Religion* has traditionally addressed such questions, but now:

"Answers have come more and more to be based on natural, empirical fact and less and less on custom, tradition, 'revelations,' sacred texts, interpretations by a priestly class."²³⁴

Christians must view this agenda with grave concern. Maslow is replacing "sacred texts," and he is replacing the church, with a public educational system that indoctrinates in a clearly *religious* sense.

Maslow's approach toward the individual child must be viewed with no less alarm. Assuming that ultimately the autonomous child will make the "right" choices left to his own devices, Maslow promotes a "hand-off" approach, with a minimal amount of assistance, where the criteria for right and wrong emerge solely from within the self:

"We can't *force* him to growth, we can only *coax* him to, make it more possible for him...*only* he can prefer it; no one can prefer it for him."²³⁵

"This amounts to a revision of Taoistic 'let-be,' which often hasn't worked because the growing child needs help. It can be formulated as 'helpful let-be.' It is a *loving* and *respecting* Taoism."²³⁶

The new "humanistic goal" of education, for Maslow, is self-actualization:

"...helping the person to become the best that he is able to become.... We know only too well that a parent cannot make his children into anything. Children make themselves into something."²³⁷

Maslow proposes "intrinsic learning" and "intrinsic education," experiences that lead easily to "peak-experiences." He particularly emphasizes the arts, music, dancing:

²³³Maslow, *RVP*, p. 52.

²³⁴Maslow, *RVP*, p. 52.

²³⁵Maslow, *PB*, p. 54.

²³⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. 55.

²³⁷Maslow, *FR*, p. 169.

"Such experiences could very well serve as the model, the means by which perhaps we could rescue the rest of the school curriculum from the value-free, value-neutral, goal-less meaninglessness into which it has fallen."²³⁸

The specific values, however, are purely self-defined, wrenched from any sort of external authority. The "ideal" college, according to this paradigm, would involve no required courses or credits or degrees, but would be a "discovery of identity," a learning of the "spontaneous expression of your inner feelings."²³⁹ Maslow believes such an atmosphere would enable people to transcend their cultural conditioning so they could become "world citizens." He charges our churches and Sunday schools with failure to "awaken the sense of brotherhood to all mankind," focusing rather on "colorful Bible tales."²⁴⁰ Instead of learning God's Word, Maslow believes our children should be taught to discover ultimate values within their own hearts:

"The schools should be helping the children to look within themselves, and from this self-knowledge derive a set of values. Yet values are not taught in our schools today. This may be a holdover from the religious wars in which the church and state were made separate and the rulers decided that the discussion of values would be the church's concern, whereas the secular schools would concern themselves with other problems."²⁴¹

This approach is claimed to generate an entirely new concept of the self, one that affirms its essence, its "intrinsic nature," its specieshood.²⁴² Ultimately, this new education is designed with the hope of "a great flowering of a new kind of civilization."²⁴³

On one basic issue we can agree with Maslow: *Education is never neutral.* It is never free of values in any area of the curriculum. That is exactly why Van Til, in *Essays on Christian Education*, argues so forcefully for the necessity of education that is *Christian* to the core. The current presence of alien religious teachings in our public schools is a witness to the truth of his argument. The increasing tendency of Christian

²³⁸Maslow, *FR*, p. 179.

²³⁹Maslow, *FR*, p. 182-3.

²⁴⁰Maslow, *FR*, p. 184-5.

²⁴¹Maslow, *FR*, p. 185.

²⁴²Maslow, *FR*, p. 186.

²⁴³Maslow, *FR*, p. 195.

parents to homeschool is another evidence of the impossibility of neutrality. The antithesis, in the past, was perhaps not so obvious. Today it could only be avoided by blindness or appalling ignorance.

Van Til emphasizes the antithesis in educational philosophy, which must be either theistic or antitheistic. Even Maslow himself recognizes this antithesis:

"Whether character education can take place in the classroom...whether sermons and Sunday schools can produce good human beings, or rather whether the good life produces the good man...these are the *alternatives* presented by adherence to one or the other theory of character formation in and of education."²⁴⁴

Alternatives indeed! The antitheistic educational alternative seeks to cultivate the "self-sufficient free human personality."²⁴⁵ Similarly, "as all non-Christian culture is accomplished *for* the glory of man so it is done *according to* a law or standard created by man."²⁴⁶ This is precisely what Maslow advocates in his educational philosophy! His godless system is one that introduces pagan religion into public schools, proposing to teach ethics and values while denying the possibility of sin against the Creator. Ethical distinctions are reduced to metaphysical distinctions; what "is" is what "ought" to be.²⁴⁷ Ethics and values are cut from their only possible foundation.

The "Surrogate Religion" -- Maslow's Religious Agenda

Maslow openly admits his goal of replacing religion with a "surrogate." He believes that his "psychology of being" is leading toward yet another level, "transpersonal, transhuman, centered in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interest, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualization."²⁴⁸ At this advanced level, mankind is offered a completely new religion to substitute for the superstitions of the past:

²⁴⁴Maslow, *MP*, p. 66, emphasis added.

²⁴⁵Van Til, *Essays*, p. 5.

²⁴⁶Van Til, *Essays*, p. 6.

²⁴⁷Van Til, *Essays*, p. 191. Earlier we reviewed Maslow's fusion of facts and values.

²⁴⁸Maslow, *PB*, p. iv.

"These psychologies give promise of developing into the life-philosophy, the *religion-surrogate*, the value-system, the life program that these people have been missing. Without the transcendent and the transpersonal, we get sick, violent, and nihilistic, or else hopeless and apathetic."²⁴⁹

Maslow believes we need something "bigger than we are"... "to commitment ourselves to in a new, naturalistic, empirical, non-churchly sense."²⁵⁰ This "religion-surrogate" is his answer for modern man. The inherent idolatry of his thought emerges when he describes the emotions of the "peak-experience" as "wonder, awe, reverence, humility, surrender, and even *worship*."²⁵¹ The *object* of such "worship," however, is not God the Creator but man himself, the creation. The erasure of the Creator-creature distinction is basic to Maslow's thought.

In Maslow's religion, failure to *worship* results in guilt. Maslow distinguishes "neurotic guilt" from "real guilt," also described as "Fromm's 'humanistic guilt.'"²⁵² The latter is a crime against Maslow's idol, *self*:

"Real guilt comes from not being true to yourself, to your own fate in life, to your own intrinsic nature."²⁵³

Biblical guilt, against God the Creator, is wholly replaced by a "guilt" defined solely with reference to self.

The borrowing of distinctly Christian terms contributes to Maslow's "religion surrogate." He calls the "peak-experience" a "rebirth":

"The peak-experience itself can often meaningfully be called a 'little death,' and a *rebirth* in various senses."²⁵⁴

Maslow calls the "serious people" of the world, who are coming together in terms established by modern psychology, science, and theology, a "saving remnant!"²⁵⁵ The "peak-experience" includes a sense of luck, fortune, or *undeserved grace*,²⁵⁶ along with "a

²⁴⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. iv, emphasis added.

²⁵⁰Maslow, *PB*, p. iv.

²⁵¹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 65.

²⁵²Maslow, *PB*, p. 121. See my paper, "Blasphemy From Fromm," describing Erich Fromm's proposal that man must become autonomous, achieving a "radical freedom" from any sort of theism.

²⁵³Maslow, *PB*, p. 121.

²⁵⁴Maslow, *RVP*, p. xv.

²⁵⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. 56.

²⁵⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 68.

feeling of gratitude, in religious persons to their God, in others to Fate, to nature, to people..."²⁵⁷ The cognition and behavior during that experience is seen as "more created out of nothing."²⁵⁸ Maslow's "B-love" is described as being like "the perfect love of their God that some mystics have described."²⁵⁹

The terms heaven and hell are ripped from their biblical context and supernatural overtones are discarded. "Heaven" and "hell" are states of the human psyche for Maslow, determined by need gratification,²⁶⁰ existing *now* rather than at some future time:

"Religion's Heaven, which one is supposed to enter after life is over--life itself being meaningless--is actually available in principle all through life."²⁶¹

By this point, Maslow's *religious* agenda is no secret. He wishes to replace Christian theism with a universal, naturalistic religion where God and autonomous man are identified as participating in the same *being*. Maslow wants a religious pluralism that is inclusive of all--all, that is, except "the faith once and for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). *This* religion, maintaining the Creator-creature distinction and acknowledging man's covenantal relationship to God, Maslow cannot tolerate. His system is yet another example of the unbeliever "holding down the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).

A Naturalistic Value System: By What Standard?

All of the various themes in Maslow's anti-theistic system converge at one key point: the establishing of a universally applicable, "naturalistic," value system. Maslow has promised this. Can he deliver?

Maslow is aware of the autonomous man's continuing attempt to establish values without reference to God:

"Humanists for thousands of years have attempted to construct a naturalistic, psychological value system that could be

²⁵⁷Maslow, *PB*, p. 113.

²⁵⁸Maslow, *PB*, p. 108.

²⁵⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 43.

²⁶⁰Maslow, *MP*, p. 75; *PB*, 142.

²⁶¹Maslow, *FR*, p. 112.

derived from man's own nature, without the necessity of recourse to authority outside the human being himself."²⁶²

Believing that external value systems have all failed, he expresses concern about "the total collapse of all sources of values outside the individual."²⁶³ Such a state is "psychopathogenic" because:

"The human being needs a framework of values, a philosophy of life, a *religion or religion-surrogate* to live by and understand by, in about the same sense that he needs sunlight, calcium or love."²⁶⁴

Dismissing God's revealed "external" value system, Maslow concludes that "there's no place else to turn but *inward, to the self*, as the locus of values."²⁶⁵ At the very close of *Psychology of Being*, he admits to the radical nature of his thesis when he states that his book is:

"...a clear confrontation of one basic set of orthodox values by another newer system of values which claims to be not only more efficient but also more true. It draws some of the truly revolutionary consequences of the discovery that human nature has been sold short."²⁶⁶

Maslow desires "spiritual values" divorced from the Spirit of God, "spiritual values" that are "not exclusively identified with churches" but rather are purely humanistic:

- (1) They have a "naturalistic meaning."
- (2) They are "not the exclusive possession of organized churches."
- (3) They "do not need supernatural concepts to validate them."
- (4) They are "well within the jurisdiction of a suitably enlarged science."
- (5) "They are the general responsibility of *all* mankind."²⁶⁷

Because such "spiritual values" are removed from the church, Maslow believes that teaching them in public schools will not breach the separation between church and state. He objects to the

²⁶²Maslow, *PB*, p. 149.

²⁶³Maslow, *PB*, p. 10.

²⁶⁴Maslow, *PB*, p. 206.

²⁶⁵Maslow, *PB*, p. 10, emphasis added.

²⁶⁶Maslow, *PB*, p. 222.

²⁶⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. 4.

general assumption that the organized church is *the* locus of spiritual life.²⁶⁸ However, he seeks to impose his *pagan religious values* on others through the avenue of the school. In the process he fails to identify a universal standard that justifies the enforcement of these particular values. On the contrary, he admits that there is flux in his system, an inescapable relativism:

"Any ethical code will have to deal with the fact of constitutional differences not only in chickens and rats but also in men...some values are common to all (healthy) mankind...some other values will *not* be common to all mankind, but only to some types of people, or to specific individuals."²⁶⁹

If this is true, then what is Maslow's basis for the imposition of a particular set of values on all who enter through the gates of the public school system?

Again there is tension in Maslow's thought. He is a relativist at points, immersed in irrationalism. But elsewhere he says that humans still long for certainty, even after "the religious establishments have failed [*by what standard?*] to do the job."²⁷⁰ Maslow thinks he can provide that *certainty* for which man longs. He hopes that perhaps his "Being-values" "may supply us with a perfectly naturalistic variety of 'certainty,' of unity, of eternity, or universality" once claimed by organized religions. He also hopes for "a possible resolution or transcendence of the dichotomy between relative and absolute, historical and eternal."²⁷¹ He goes on to call such values "ultimate truths" that are "true for the human species," perhaps the "defining characteristics of humanness in its essence," "absolutes of a kind, a humanly satisfying kind."²⁷² The climax, "self-actualization" is *the* value that Maslow considers "normative for the whole species rather than for particular times and places."²⁷³

The rational-irrational dialectic strikes again. Maslow wants certainty, unity, eternity, and universality without the eternal God whose all-controlling counsel is back of every fact in the world. But he wants to look solely within the would-be

²⁶⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. 4.

²⁶⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 151-2.

²⁷⁰Maslow, *RVP*, p. 95.

²⁷¹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 95.

²⁷²Maslow, *RVP*, p. 95-6.

²⁷³Maslow, *PB*, p. vi.

autonomous man, where all sorts of varying values might be found, and chance rules the day.

Psychotherapy and Values. One of the key issues with modern psychotherapy is its pretension to be "scientific," to remain neutral on questions of religion and values.²⁷⁴ Maslow admits the fallacy of that claim. He notes that Freudianism denies any concern with spiritual or ethical values, as well as religious dogmas.²⁷⁵ Other scientists, philosophers, and psychologists, including the positivists, dichotomize facts and values such that "all values are turned over by default to non-scientists and non-rationalists." According to them, values cannot be scientifically validated, nor can they be disconfirmed; thus they are simply ignored as beyond the realm of science.²⁷⁶ To be sure, this claim to neutrality is a false one. Maslow warns that:

"Psychoanalysis often comes perilously close to being a nihilistic and value-denying philosophy of man."²⁷⁷

Modern psychology wages war against true religion. One of its tactics has been the deceptive claim to scientific neutrality. Another is to deny the basic overlap between its realm and that of the Bible's truth about man. Maslow at least acknowledges that psychotherapy necessarily involves values. He even calls it an "ethical quest, even a religious quest in the naturalistic sense."²⁷⁸ Perhaps an *honest* enemy--and Maslow is definitely an enemy of Christianity--is better than one more subtle.

But beware. Maslow speaks from both sides of his mouth. He often advocates a type of "uncovering therapy" or "Taoistic therapy" that supposedly *does not* impose the values of the therapist on the person being counseled. He asks whether the promotion of "self-actualization" by a therapist might not be "a covert smuggling in of the arbitrary, concealed values of the therapist." Good question! Maslow insists that the "idiosyncratic values" of the person in therapy are often so very different from those of the therapist, that "uncovering therapy is

²⁷⁴Victor Frankl's logotherapy, where man creates his own meaning, stresses this claim repeatedly--and inconsistently!

²⁷⁵Maslow, *RVP*, p. 6. Nothing could be further from the truth! Freud wrote hundreds of pages attacking Christianity on the basis of his psychoanalytic theories. One of his major life goals was the destruction of Christian theism.

²⁷⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 6.

²⁷⁷Maslow, *RVP*, p. 7.

²⁷⁸Maslow, *FR*, p. 112.

truly uncovering rather than indoctrination."²⁷⁹ We must press him, however. The underlying assumption is that the values uncovered are the *right* values. Suppose murderous values are "uncovered"? Does Maslow leave these alone? The lack of an ultimate, *external* standard leaves him no basis on which to challenge such a choice.

There is a point where Maslow himself acknowledges this critical problem but has no basis for an answer other than to blindly assert the inherent goodness of man. Maslow briefly critiques the Freudian view of reaction formation, where love might be merely "a reaction formation against my rage to kill." He asks why it couldn't be reversed:

"Somehow there is the begging of the question that is so obvious now. Why did he not say, for instance, that maybe killing people was a reaction formation against loving them?"²⁸⁰

Without man's Creator, there is no basis for either view. Maslow can only propose an irrational "transcendence" of dichotomies, where, quite frankly, good and evil merge as equally ultimate aspects of "being."²⁸¹

The Goodness of Man. One of the pillars of Maslow's system is his assumption that man's inner nature is inherently good. Having denied God, man's Judge and Lawgiver, sin evaporates. Maslow boldly asserts:

"It is already possible to reject firmly the despairing belief that human nature is ultimately and basically depraved and evil."²⁸²

That belief, according to Maslow, "must therefore be considered to be a personal projection rather than a reasoned philosophical or scientific position."²⁸³

In addition to being blatantly unbiblical, denying the reality of man's fall into sin, this basic presupposition crumbles internally. Maslow must presuppose some higher, *external* standard of good and evil in order to make the judgment that man is good. Only Christian theism provides that standard. Maslow must

²⁷⁹Maslow, *RVP*, p. 97.

²⁸⁰Maslow, *FR*, p. 174.

²⁸¹Maslow, *FR*, p. 194-5.

²⁸²Maslow, *MP*, p. xi.

²⁸³Maslow, *MP*, p. xi.

presuppose the eternal values of Christianity in order to shake his fist in the face of God and declare man inherently "good."

Maslow's Choice of Values. It is from this assumption of innate human goodness that Maslow launches his program to establish a universal human value system:

"Once granted reliable knowledge of what man *can* be under certain conditions that we have learned to call good, and granted that he is happy, serene, self-accepting, unguilty, and at peace with himself only when he is fulfilling himself and becoming what he can be, it is possible and reasonable to speak about good and right and bad and wrong and desirable and undesirable."²⁸⁴

Maslow anticipates our philosophical objections, our question of ultimate standards:

"If it is objected by the technical philosopher, 'How can you prove that it is better to be happy than unhappy?' even this question can be answered empirically, for if we observe human beings under sufficiently wise conditions, we discover that they, *they* themselves, *not* the observer, choose spontaneously to be happy rather than unhappy."²⁸⁵

This is nothing more than an arbitrary "declaration of independence" from God. Man is the ultimate reference point for values. Maslow assumes man's autonomy, assumes that whatever man values is ultimately right and good.

Moving right along, Maslow promotes a list of "Being-values, such as "truth, goodness, beauty, wholeness, dichotomy-transcendence, aliveness, uniqueness, perfection, necessity, completion, justice, order, simplicity, richness, effortlessness, playfulness, self-sufficiency or autonomy. He says of these:

"The described characteristics of Being are also the values of Being. These Being-values are perceived as ultimate and as further unanalyzable (and yet they can each be defined in terms of each and all of the others)."²⁸⁶

These values "are qualities for which we admired the great men of human history...even our Gods."²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴Maslow, *MP*, p. 272.

²⁸⁵Maslow, *MP*, p. 272.

²⁸⁶Maslow, *RVP*, p. 91.

²⁸⁷Maslow, *FR*, p. 109.

Maslow believes these "B-values" are paralleled by the goals of "ideal humanistic education" and "uncovering psychotherapies," as well as "the far goals and the expression of some kinds of religion."²⁸⁸ According to Maslow, these values are "not mutually exclusive" but rather they "overlap or fuse with each other...they are all *facets* of Being rather than *parts* of it."²⁸⁹ In addition, these "eternal values" are affirmed by "the great religionists and philosophers," the "most serious thinkers of mankind."²⁹⁰

Along with all of this, Maslow desires a particular kind of neutrality that excludes any sort of authoritative, theological doctrine such as Christianity affirms:

"Clearly 'objectivity' and 'disinterested observations' are phrases that need redefining. 'Excluding values' meant originally excluding theological and other authoritarian dogmas that prejudged the facts. This exclusion is quite as necessary today as it was at the time of the Renaissance because we still want our facts as uncontaminated as possible."²⁹¹

This exclusion of theological dogma, this objectivity, is a covert exclusion of Christianity. Maslow wants "uncontaminated" facts in the sense of submitting to *God's* authority, yet he hardly objects to "contaminating" the facts with man's autonomous choice of values. He wants a "scientific" or "naturalistic" ethical system that is absolute and universal, one that begins and ends with the creature but excludes the Creator. This he cannot have, because he must unwittingly presuppose a system of universal moral absolutes in order to make the judgment that what man chooses freely really *is* good.

Conclusion -- The Crumbling of the "House of Cards"

Professor Cornelius Van Til has drawn our attention to three fundamental assumptions of modern philosophy and science:

1. Man is autonomous, the ultimate reference point, not the image-bearer of God.
2. The world of particular facts is ruled by chance, not by the counsel of God.

²⁸⁸Maslow, *RVP*, p. 91.

²⁸⁹Maslow, *PB*, p. 84.

²⁹⁰Maslow, *FR*, p. 108.

²⁹¹Maslow, *MP*, p. 6.

3. Any principle of unity must be pure form, not the plan of God.²⁹²

Modern *psychology*, similarly, is rooted in these anti-theistic presuppositions. Maslow's humanistic psychology repeatedly illustrates all three points, resulting in a continual swing between rationalism and irrationalism. He finds unity in monistic assumptions that would destroy all individuality and lump together the religions of the world for scientific study. At the same time, he posits a diversity such that no two persons share the same religion, and such that no unifying principle could possibly relate any of the facts of the world.

Meanwhile, as a sinner, Maslow has made his declaration of independence from God, hoping to establish universal moral absolutes by studying the "free choices" of the would-be autonomous man, the "healthy" man. Not only does this violate biblical truths about man's sin and God's authority. It also crumbles internally, because Maslow is forced to presuppose an ultimate standard--such as only Christian theism provides--in order to have a basis for such study in the first place.

As we come today to the close of the twentieth century, we ought to be alarmed, as Christians, at the pervasive impact of modern psychology in the church.²⁹³ Sanctification has been ripped from its biblical roots, sold out to the theories of unredeemed men who, like Maslow, harbor hostility toward the sovereign Lord who alone establishes universal moral absolutes for the lives of men. We dare not underestimate the epistemological antithesis between believer and unbeliever in this battle. Although common grace softens many of the consequences of sin, and delays God's final judgment, it does not eliminate the unbeliever's ethical and *intellectual* darkness. The believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit and the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:12, 16); the unbeliever has neither. He is unable to discern spiritual matters (2 Corinthians 2:14), being darkened in his understanding and futile in his thinking (Romans 1:21).²⁹⁴ We cannot look to such a man for new "insights" on human nature, needs, ultimate values, or how men ought to live.

²⁹²Van Til, *Christian Theistic Evidences*, p. 133.

²⁹³David Powlison's chapter in *Power Religion* ("Integration or Inundation?") gives an insightful survey of the historical background for this very serious situation.

²⁹⁴Gaffin's article, "Some Epistemological Reflections on 1 Corinthians 2:6-16," was helpful in formulating some of these thoughts.

Our survey of Abraham Maslow--his view of man's innate goodness, religious pluralism, "naturalistic" values, and educational agenda--shows with frightening clarity the fact that modern psychology is at war with Christian theism. Believers must question the increasing trend to integrate the theories of unbelievers with God's sufficient Word. Specific issues in the study of man need to be addressed *biblically*, with careful and thorough exegesis of relevant texts. At the same time, the religious presuppositions of men like Maslow must be exposed. When they are, it becomes apparent that the "house of cards" crumbles under its own weight.

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