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Theses on Trinitarian Anthropology and Violence

We Are Able to See the Dimensions Displayed in Human Behavior Patterns

LET US SUPPOSE, FOR THE SAKE OF DISCUSSION, THAT HUMAN BEINGS have difficulty inhabiting the three dimensions of reality in an expansive and balanced way, that we often focus our energies on one dimension to the relative exclusion of the others. This lack of balance twists and warps the structure of human life in its various dimensions. The result is three master types that can be described as the God-centered personality (vertical), the Self-centered personality (temporal), and the Society-centered personality (horizontal).
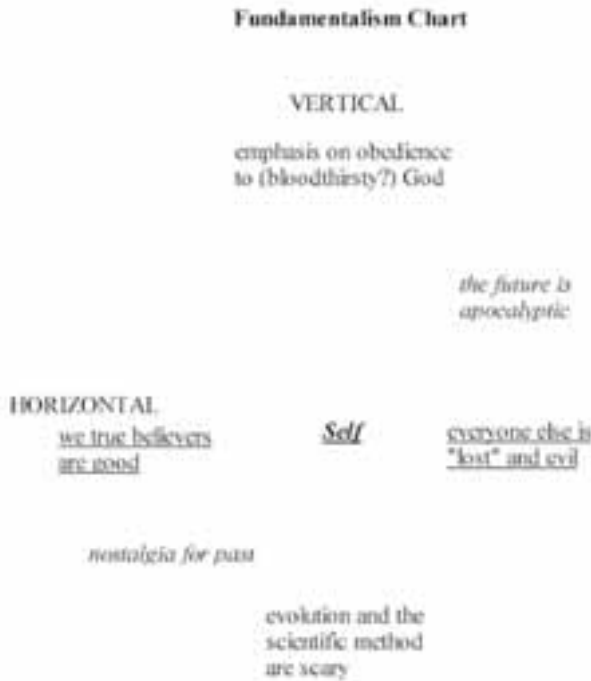
I will use the term *fundamentalism* as a label for the God-centered personality type. This pattern of thinking and living will place the emphasis on living in response to what it perceives as the will of God. It will have an understanding of God that is based on reading a sacred scripture. God and God's Word decisively shape how human selfhood and society are evaluated. The Truth is understood to come from above, from on high. The word "absolute" is often attached as an adjective: "We believers adhere to the Absolute Truth in an age of relativism."[1] The highest virtue is obedience to divine directives. This emphasis on the upper half of the vertical axis contrasts with deep suspicion regarding the lower half of the vertical axis, the domain of nature as it is studied

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1. For an expansion of this topic, see Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, chapter 2. The entire book is relevant as an analysis of fundamentalism. Similar overviews, focusing on the Muslim world, have been provided by Abdelwahab Meddeb in *The Malady of Islam* and by Khaled Abou El Fadl in *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*.

by the natural sciences. The idea of evolution is obviously very disturbing for fundamentalism. Modern science, with its *a posteriori* method of investigating evidence, is threatening to scriptural inerrancy's *a priori* method of logical assumptions that are believed before any evidence is considered. This leads to the development of what Eric Voegelin calls a "dogmatomachy," a war of ideologies between fundamentalists and their rival siblings the atheistic scientists (such as Richard Dawkins and his ilk). This war brings the vertical axis into our field of vision very clearly.

The person living in this pattern will typically inhabit the temporal trajectory of selfhood by placing the emphasis on *the past*, which is seen as a Golden Age when the scriptures were revealed. In contrast, the present, modernity, is a troublesome time, which is characterized mainly by apostasy from the Truth that has been revealed. The future is usually perceived by this personality type in one of two ways, both of which are apocalyptic. There may be (1) a vision of Armageddon, when the world as we know it goes up in flames, to be replaced by a new world that comes down from heaven; or (2) a vision of a remaking of this world through the political ascendancy of the people of faith (a theocracy). Both of these possibilities interpret the social, horizontal plane along lines that are sharply dualistic. Humanity is divided into two camps: the children of light and the children of darkness. The fundamentalist will, of course, always see him or herself as being on the side of the Good people, who are involved in cosmic conflict with the Evil people.[2] The Good will win the conflict in the end, because they are the true servants of the Almighty God. This apocalyptic thought pattern is expressed effectively in the "Left Behind" novels (which have sold millions of copies).

2. An excellent example of this type of thinking is seen in MacArthur, *Terrorism, Jihad, and the Bible*.

Fundamentalism Chart

VERTICAL

emphasis on obedience
to (bloodthirsty?) God

*the future is
apocalyptic*

HORIZONTAL
we true believers
are good

Self

everyone else is
"lost" and evil

nostalgia for past

evolution and the
scientific method
are scary

For those who inhabit another pattern of thought and life, which I will call *modernist individualism* or *aestheticism*, the most important thing is their own existence in the present moment. For them, every moment in time is "Me Time." Their primary concern is for themselves; they tend to use other people as means to their own ends. Living within the modern world suits the individualists well, because modernity is their Golden Age. More personal space and "freedom" are available to them now than have been in most ages in the past. Individualistic aesthetes are usually secularists, in the sense that they are allergic to "organized religion," though it may be the case that some form of disorganized religion suits their "spiritual needs." The idealized connection with God, that forms the core of fundamentalism, is cut off, to be replaced by the *self that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates itself to itself*. While the fundamentalist received truth from a sacred scripture, the concept of truth is interpreted pragmatically by the individualist as "whatever works for me" or "whatever I feel like believing at the present

moment in time." The modern university and various forms of media such as magazines, television, and movies have been very effective conduits for the spread of individualistic aestheticism throughout Western culture.

The main element of this personality type is an individualistic focus on the self. Community, in the form of "religion" is seen as oppressive by forcing the individual to conform to restrictive moral codes and bizarre dogmas from past centuries. The past is identified with backwardness, ignorance, repression, intolerance, superstition, oppression, etc. All of this needs to be *left behind*, which is the liberal form of apocalyptic thinking. The only scenario that constitutes a bright future for the modern individualist is one in which more and more people become modern individualists by abandoning their superstitions and hang-ups. Community, in the form of the "state," is also a menacing threat in that it may take away the "rights" and "freedoms" that are so cherished by the individualists. Of course, the philosophical incoherence that results from cutting oneself off from transcendence and from the whole human past means that one is not able to articulate why human beings should have "rights" and "freedoms" at all,[3] but that minor point does not trouble the modern individualist. As long as one keeps telling oneself that "individual autonomy" is the highest value, then eventually one may believe that the concept makes sense.[4]

The individualist may seem to be non-religious, but this is an illusion, in that the Self has now become the idol for itself. In the words of Eric Voegelin, the "epiphany" of God has been replaced by "egophany."[5] The human Ego is now the center of meaning and value in the universe. The vertical dimension used to mean that the self was underneath the

3. For an expansion of this point, see G. P. Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*.

4. My comments here are obviously sketchy and simplistic. For a more sophisticated analysis of modern thought, see Manent's *City of Man*: "One is tempted to say that with Kant's moral philosophy, modern man has achieved clarity on what he had been seeking since the beginning of the modern movement. At last he can think what until that time he could only will: he can now think that he is neither a creature of God nor a part of Nature, that he is in short born of himself, the child of his own liberty" (189).

5. ". . . in the state of perfect self-reflection (Hegel) God is dead (de Sade, Hegel), and if he is not dead enough he must be murdered (Nietzsche), so that the egophanic God-man or superman (Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche) can establish the final realm of freedom in history. A radically egophanic 'history' is constructed with the intent of leaving no room for theophanic experiences and their symbolization." Voegelin, *Order and History, IV* (CWEV, 17:327).

reign of God; now that God is out of the picture, the self rises up in stature in its own eyes to fill the vacuum of sovereignty. Instead of God having the power of life and death, now it is the autonomous Ego that is all-powerful in deciding who lives. The individualistic suspicion of community indicates a contraction of human life into a very small box. Within the trajectory of time, the focus on the present, cut off from the past and the future,[6] combines with this contraction on the horizontal plane to replace dimensional complexity with a vision of the human person as a dot. Thomas Paine put it best: "My own mind is my own church."

Individualism Chart

VERTICAL

alienation from God

future is good if individualism expands, scary if fundamentalism expands

HORIZONTAL
alienation from
organized religion

SELF
the present is
all that matters

the state is a threat
to individual
freedoms

*past is backwardness
and oppression*

science can increase
the will's mastery
over nature

The society-centered or horizontal personality is seen in *political utopianism*, which in many ways is a mirror image of nostalgic fundamentalism. We can summarize utopianism by saying that it agrees with individualism that the past of the human race should be seen in basically negative terms, while it puts forward a vision of a socially engineered Golden Age in the future. The past represents religious superstition and economic oppression; "we revolutionaries," on the other hand, are able to understand the truth because we are "modern" people who
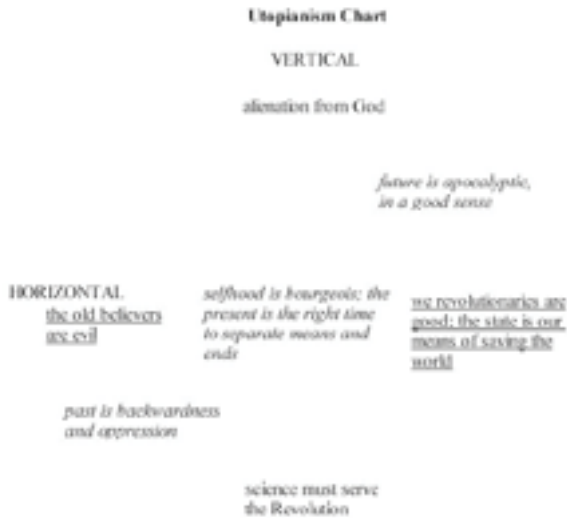
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6. I have in mind here those arguments concerning abortion that assume that the future trajectory of the fetus has no moral relevance.

can envision a new world that we can make through our own efforts. The truth has come to birth for the first time in our thinking, and this truth is not based on learning anything substantive from history other than its errors.

From the point of view of the utopian, the fundamentalist is a hopelessly ignorant person who uses religion to keep people in a state of slavery and degradation by promising them rewards in the afterlife. "Religion is the opiate of the people," said Marx. The modern individualists are hardly any better, because even though they have escaped from dogmatic religion they are too selfish to see the need for a restructuring of society so that all people may enjoy the benefits that the elite take for granted. Their focus on themselves and the present moment in time is too narrow. In order for "autonomy" to be more than just a luxury for the rich, there must be a revolution that uses violence to remake society from the top down so that equality will replace the inequalities that result from free market economics. There must be a temporary tyranny of the leader of the revolution in order to bring an end, once and for all, to all forms of tyranny.

While the fundamentalist tries to revive a dead past, and the individualist seeks to maintain a self-centered present, the utopian is clearly pouring his or her energies into dreaming up a different future. "Liberation" is the new mantra, replacing the fundamentalist's "obedience" and the individualist's "autonomy." The state, if it is captured by the revolutionaries, becomes a positive value once again, in an interesting echo of the fundamentalist's fleeting dream of theocracy.

The utopian impulse in the modern world has a tendency to reduce the complexity of human consciousness for the purpose of gaining political control over the future. Our history books recount this story in depressing detail. The ideology claims that a new world order of justice is being fashioned, yet to the extent that this order is shaped by the eclipse of God and the rejection of the wisdom embodied in traditions of faith, it is not actually just at all. If one no longer respects the dignity of human lives and considers them expendable, then a pall is cast over everyone who survives the revolutionary apocalypse and has the good fortune to live in this new order of "justice."

Utopianism Chart

VERTICAL

alienation from God

*future is apocalyptic,
in a good sense*

HORIZONTAL
the old believers
are evil

*selfhood is bourgeois; the
present is the right time
to separate means and
ends*

we revolutionaries are
good; the state is our
means of saving the
world

*past is backwardness
and oppression*

science must serve
the Revolution

Individualistic aestheticism and utopianism are in agreement that the dead weight of the past is something you need to grow out of. The past is something you have to escape from like a snake has to shed its skin as it grows. Glenn Hughes describes the tendency of some people to have a view of history ". . . where the human past is seen primarily as a long passage through blindness and folly from which we have only recently begun to emerge, and our cultural heritage felt to be an imposition of authority from which we must struggle to liberate ourselves."[7] In other words, there is a great advantage to being born later in history, because you have the ability to participate in this awareness of the newly born truth that people in the past didn't have. But this perspective is simply another form of narrow arrogance in which the modern Self places itself in a position of power so that it may dominate reality.

Unbalanced Forms of Consciousness Can Be Understood and Critiqued By Persons Whose Consciousness Is Attuned to the Process of Human Maturing

In the previous section the portraits of personality types were generalized to such an extent that they bordered on being caricatures. In this

7. Hughes, *Transcendence and History*, 218.

section I will make the analysis a bit more concrete by referring to particular individuals and patterns of thought. I will also draw on authors who have a higher level of spiritual maturity and philosophical comprehension that enables them to see through the spiritual derailment that characterizes the unbalanced personality types.

Osama bin Laden and the 9/11 hijackers are examples of the fundamentalist (vertical) personality type. In 1998, Osama bin Laden and other Islamist leaders issued a fatwa that included statements such as these:

> The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it. . . . We—with God's help—call on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God's order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it. We also call on Muslim religious scholars, leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U.S. troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them so that they may learn a lesson. . . . Almighty God also says "O ye who believe, what is the matter with you, that when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of God, ye cling so heavily to the earth! Do ye prefer the life of this world to the hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the hereafter. Unless ye go forth, He will punish you with a grievous penalty, and put others in your place; but Him ye would not harm in the least. For God hath power over all things."[8]

This statement paints a picture of God that is delineated in clear terms: God is almighty; God will humiliate those infidels who are currently humiliating the true followers of God; it can be clearly known that God has ordered the killing of Americans; it can be clearly known that America is serving Satan, God's arch enemy. The faithful and zealous follower of this God believes that he is commanded by God to kill all those people who are viewed by the follower as infidels who are not true worshippers of God. Civilians may be killed in these efforts, though the preferred targets are those non-Muslim soldiers and their leaders who are viewed as having declared war on God, his messenger, and Muslims. The faithful followers of God are acting *defensively* in response to the

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8. To find the full text, do an Internet search for a phrase from the selection I have presented.

terrorist acts of the Americans. Those who carry out these killings will be rewarded by God. If a Muslim who is able to carry out these killings does not do so, he will be punished by God.

In their own eyes, Osama bin Laden and his followers are the "good guys" and Americans are the "bad guys." This observation may appear obvious and banal, but how often do we reflect on its meaning? Consider *The Lord of the Rings*, for example. Its basic plot depicts a battle between the "good guys" (humans, hobbits, Gandalf, dwarves, and elves), and the "bad guys" (orcs, Saruman, Sauron). From the perspective of the 9/11 hijackers, they formed a "fellowship of the ring" to attack the Great Satan, the United States. They succeeded in bringing down two towers, which is parallel to Frodo making it into Mount Doom to destroy the Ring. If you compare the cinematic image of Sauron's Tower crumbling after the Ring is destroyed with images of the Twin Towers in New York collapsing, the effect is chilling. Of course, I am not suggesting that the 9/11 hijackers were "good guys" because this analogy can be drawn. I am suggesting that a way of thinking that divides the world simplistically into good and evil people is the problem, not the solution. Unfortunately, Tolkien's basic plot mirrors this simplistic way of thinking rather than challenging it. In this sense, Middle Earth is a pre-Christian vision. Where Christianity has had a decisive impact, awareness of the sinfulness of *all* human beings breaks down simplistic self-righteous dichotomies.

The letter found in the luggage of 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta is noteworthy.[9] Instead of quoting from the letter itself, I will draw on psychologist Ruth Stein, who has written articles that pinpoint precisely the psychopathology that was at work in the 9/11 hijackers as a warped relation to God and the vertical dimension of reality.

> The letter to the terrorists does not speak of hatred. It is past hatred. Absurdly and perversely, it is about love. It is about love of God. We can sense the confident intimacy of a son close to his father and the seeking of a love that is given as promised and no longer withheld. . . .
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> The thought that there might be a root affinity between the theme of a son's love to his divine father and the underlying theme of the letter feels quite unpleasant. Do these motifs—of religious devotion and intimate communion and of using "God"

9. The text of the letter is reprinted in Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 93–98.

to inflict mass killing and destruction—spring from the same psychic source? . . . Is there any similarity between the father of freedom and creativity, and the father who loves those who kill his enemies, and chooses those killers as his accepted sons? In both cases, the "father" not only dispenses empowerment and inspiration, he also imparts a sense of joy and fulfillment, the joy of deliverance from too enclosing a life and the opportunity to identify with ideals. . . .

We also get the sense that such love, rather than expressing itself on a "horizontal axis" of compassion, nurturance, attachment, and the like, runs along a "vertical" axis of self-worth and unworth, which spans affects such as shame, humiliation, degradation, pity, awe, and veneration. A first step in understanding this affective syntax is to consider the blend of contempt and "love" found in the most blood-curdling sentence in the letter: "*You must not discomfort your animal during the slaughter.*" This phrase is well beyond anger or hatred. It is the utmost in disparagement. . . .

. . . a certain "God" has taken over and is monopolizing the psyche, and He now commands the would-be terrorist to kill the "infidel" part, so that He, God, will be content. The terrorist feels that God is pleased when his sons/followers annihilate His enemies. *But this is precisely why the terrorist loves God: because God allows, wants, sanctifies, the killing of the "bad part"* and, in addition, allows, desires, and sanctifies the orgiastic pleasure of disinhibited murdering and destruction. God is loved both for His licensing the ecstatic killing and for His offering a solution to the conflict-torn psyche at war with itself and with the complexity of life. . . .[10]

These passages from another article by Ruth Stein broaden the analysis to the topic of fundamentalism:

Verticalization of difference engenders vertical desire. Vertical desire is the mystical longing for merger with the idealized other who requires abjection. On this view, the starkly opposing terms and polarizations with which fundamentalist thinking is suffused come to assume positions of higher and lower on a vertical axis. Since such binary oppositions, as we know, always result in inscribing inequality, *fundamentalism is not only a psychic mode of separation, it is also a psychic mode of inequality.* Within this mode the nonbeliever is profoundly unequal to the

10. These paragraphs are abridged from Stein, "Evil as Love and as Liberation," 393–420.

believer, man is eternally unequal to God, and woman is unquestionably unequal to man. Fundamentalism is about inequality. When we think about fundamentalism, we tend to be aware of woman's inequality to man and the nonbeliever's inequality to the believer, but we tend to forget *the believer's inequality to God.* In fundamentalist regimes, God rules over men, while men rule over women. Being oppressed by God, oppressing women, fundamentalism is an *oppressed oppression.*[11]

In religious fundamentalism the figure of the father is perverted: A father who liberates his sons (and daughters) into social life, into taking initiative, and into the joy of competence and the entitlement to pursue their desires in life, becomes the Father who liberates his sons (and daughters) from "themselves," that is, from their individuality, human compassion, and the moral impulse. Love for this father liberates his sons to humiliate, kill, and destroy "His" enemies. The persecutory father, who is an inner "gang leader" is rephrased as a loved and loving father, although this father is obviously a vengeful killer. Obviously, what subtends this love of God is tremendous, transformed hatred, a kind of *loving paranoia.*[12]

Stein's analysis reveals very clearly the pathway to comprehending the roots of fundamentalist violence. She is describing what happens when the dimensions of self (temporal) and other (horizontal) become anxiety-producing, distressing, overwhelming. In this situation, the vertical relation to God becomes the escape valve that allows one to transcend this world of materiality. She does not use the term "Gnosticism," but she is describing its spiritual core: the desire to escape to a higher world of spiritual perfection beyond the physical world we know.[13]

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We have considered a particular form of terrorism as an example of unbalanced consciousness that is a God-centered, vertical idolatry. As

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11. Stein, "Fundamentalism, Father and Son, and Vertical Desire," 209–10.

12. Ibid., 224.

13. Barry Cooper has provided another key commentary on the psychopathology of Al Qaeda in his book *The New Political Religions*. Cooper expresses well the idea that the "nostalgia" of the fundamentalist personality type is an optical illusion. The longing for the past is a mask covering up an alienation of the self from the authentic reality of the tradition.

we shift our attention now to the Self-centered personality type, we ask in what sense it leads to morally problematic situations.

There are some clear examples of pathological behavior that we can point to. A person robs a convenience store, killing the cashier. The person is desperate for money to support a drug habit. In a case such as this, selfhood has collapsed into an egocentricity that is so intense that it has no ability to be concerned for the welfare of other human beings. Rape is another example of this sort of pathological behavior.

The shooting rampage at Virginia Tech University on April 16, 2007, is an even more dramatic case. The mentally ill gunman killed thirty-two people before committing suicide. In Kierkegaard's terms, suicide can be understood as the final act of a completely collapsed self in despair. The pain of existence caused by the pressure to grow psychologically becomes unbearable; the pain is ended through suicide. In Girard's terms, the more common pattern of violence is a lynch mob attacking an individual, but in some situations the dynamic flips over and the individual attacks the "crowd" that he delusionally believes is persecuting him. The gunman's videotaped comments revealed that he saw himself as a scapegoat, dying "like Christ." This incident is a powerful illustration of Girard's concept of the satanic roots of violence. The lynch mob has a satanic structure, but in some cases the demons of violence congregate in one person and then explode into the world like a bolt of lightning.

It is easy to point to examples such as this without being made uncomfortable because the "I" who is doing the pointing is usually an average, law-abiding citizen; but we really ought to be uncomfortable. I say this because in the contemporary West the cultural atmosphere in which we live is dominated by the assumptions and myths of modern individualism, and these assumptions are problematic.[14] If human beings are atomized individuals fundamentally separated from each other, then there is no intrinsic obligation for human beings to be concerned about the welfare of others. We may share our financial resources with

14. See Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, 171: "The notion of the self as subjective consciousness displaced the centrality of mutual participation, both in the doctrine of God and in the Christian understanding of human community. The outcome is visible all around us; in its glorification of the isolated individual, our culture is profoundly antitrinitarian. At every level, through practically every system and structure, we are discouraged from allowing our lives to become too tightly intertwined with those of others."

others or spend everything on our own desires, as it suits our whim. We can spend our time helping to build houses for the disadvantaged, or waste it all playing violent video games, as it suits our whim. We can educate ourselves about the impact our consumerist lifestyle has on the environment, and change our habits accordingly, or bury our head in the sand, as it suits our whim. We can be actively engaged in thinking about and discussing with others how humanity can be transformed for the better, or we can live lives of intellectual sloth, as it suits our whim. I could go on building this list, but I will stop there, the point having been sufficiently raised. I am suggesting that the most extreme forms of pathology are canaries in the coalmine rather than unpredictable aberrations from normality. To the extent that atomized existence is considered the normal and normative way for human beings to live, the criminal is simply taking the way we live to its logical conclusion. As one of Bruce Cockburn's songs says: "the trouble with normal is it always gets worse."

If individuals commit illegal acts, we call it *crime*. But if a society functions in a manner that ignores, humiliates, or discriminates against a part of that society, then it is called *injustice*. Consider the manner in which African-Americans have been treated in the United States for hundreds of years. The issue I am raising here is that the philosophy of modern individualism is *intrinsically unjust* because it teaches people that they have no obligations whatsoever to be concerned about the welfare of other human beings. In order for society to be fundamentally just, it must be made up of persons who understand that the lives of all human beings are interconnected.[15] We are not atomized units of selfish desire, but social creatures who thrive when we live *with* and *for* others. Karl Barth expresses this idea powerfully, illustrating effectively the interconnection of the dimensions of reality:

> [Man's] ignorance of God culminates and manifests itself in his ignorance of his fellow man. He regards him as an object to whom he as subject may or may not be in relation according to his own free choice and disposal. . . . By chance or caprice or free judgment he can just as well be to him a tyrant or slave as a free supporter, just as well a hater as an admirer, a foe as

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15. Linell Cady helpfully develops this line of thought in chapter 3 of *Religion, Theology, and American Public Life*. See especially 83–84, where she argues that the atomization of society lays the groundwork for totalitarianism.

a friend, a corrupter as a helper. He can be one thing to one person and another to another, or now one thing, now another, to the same person. In relationship to his fellow man, also, he exists in total ambivalence, . . . If man knew the true and living God who himself became man in the one Jesus Christ, who in divine faithfulness gave himself to all men, and united himself with them, then only faithfulness (and not a faithfulness which is constantly accompanied and shot through with unfaithfulness) would be possible between his fellow man and himself, himself and his fellow man. Recognizing themselves in the God who is true God and true man, man and fellow man can wish to live not without or against one another, but only with one another. If they can be and, in fact, always are so divided in their relationship to one another, if man can be important to man, a neighbor, friend, and helper, and yet at any moment indifferent, a stranger, enemy, and corrupter, if he can be and actually is to him more of a wolf than a person—all this is a manifestation of the ambivalence in the relationship to God.[16]

If we think that being simply "left alone" to pursue our own individually chosen ends is the ultimate high point of human culture, then we are failing to recognize that we will reap what we sow. A society of atomized individuals is going to have all of the pathologies that ours has. In the language of the dimensions of reality, to try to live solely in the selfhood dimension, while alienating ourselves from our sociality and from nature and from God is a warped and unbalanced way of living. It is not the high point of human evolution but a side eddy that can and has turned into a destructive vortex leading either to mindless and false forms of "happiness" or to the despair seen in the drug addict and the crazed gunman. Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* is describing *us*.

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The controversy regarding abortion is pertinent here, though I need to tread very carefully in what I say. I must either write a full book-length treatment of all of the complexities of the issue, or say next to nothing. I have chosen the latter path.

When a person such as Paul Hill murders an abortion doctor, believing that he is obeying the will of God, the vertical psychological pattern is essentially the same as that which I have described in connection

16. Barth, *Christian Life*, 131–32.

with the 9/11 hijackers. Mark Juergensmeyer's book *Terror in the Mind of God* has interviews with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim fundamentalists who have either engaged in acts of violence or have supported those who did. I recommend that work to fill out this aspect of the picture.

The Roe v. Wade decision was one of those rare moments in history when the shifting of power from one dimension of reality to another takes place, making visible what is usually unseen. In the American and French Revolutions, we could feel the balance of power shifting from the monarchic principle to the democratic principle (from the vertical to the horizontal), and in Roe v. Wade we could feel another seismic shift to the individualistic principle (the temporal trajectory of selfhood). In a certain sense, those who argue for these shifts are conscious of what they are doing; but in another sense they are not, because they do not see the bigger picture of the three dimensions of reality. They are partisans of a narrow principle, without seeing their role in the larger drama that is the human condition.

The picture of the dimensions of existence that I have been sketching in this book enables us to understand why there is such a wide variety of views in the modern world regarding what constitutes "tyranny." We can note, for example, that the arguments in favor of choice focus on the tyranny of the state in denying individual rights, or of religious people imposing their views on others, or of men seeking to control women. We can note on the other side the arguments that use phrases such as "the slaughter of the innocents" to evoke the tyranny of King Herod. The abortion debate is so intractable because people who are struggling against tyranny are by definition righteous in their own eyes. The evil is always on the other side if one is struggling for freedom and against tyranny.

If one considers American history in general, such language is always used in large-scale moral and political events. The American Revolution threw off the tyranny of the King of England. The Civil War was an argument between those who saw slavery as tyranny and those who rejected federal tyranny in favor of "states rights." The twentieth century saw wars against Axis tyranny and Communist tyranny. The twenty-first century has emerged as a war against "Islamo-fascist tyranny." Everyone is enthusiastic about labeling other people as tyrants,

but it is psychically impossible to see oneself as a tyrant.[17] In the context of this book, the salient point is that when people "climb out on a limb" by emphasizing one dimension of reality to the exclusion of others, they develop a vision of what constitutes tyranny *from their perspective . . . on that limb*. The normative concept that we ought to work with is that any progress toward social healing in relation to the very painful topic of abortion is only going to come from an increasing ability to see things from multiple perspectives and to hold the dimensions in creative tension.

I invite my reader to reflect further on the arguments that swirl around the abortion debate, while keeping in mind the anthropology I have been developing in this book. He or she will likely find that to be a very thought-provoking exercise.[18]

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I turn now to comments on Nazism and Marxism as examples of the horizontal personality type. In my earlier book, *The Genealogy of Violence*, I argued that the scapegoats killed by the Nazis represented the future, the possibility of spiritual transformation, and that the scapegoats killed by Stalin represented the past, the underdevelopment of humanity that was supposedly being left behind by the Revolution.[19] Living in the future means that one is distancing oneself from the divinely judged sinfulness of the past, while living in the past means that one is rejecting God's call of forgiveness and new life. I still consider my intuition along those lines to be accurate, but I can now place the analysis within the broader context of the dimensions of reality that have come into focus for me since I wrote that book.

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17. I developed this paragraph's analysis of tyranny and abortion in an MA thesis I wrote at the University of Virginia, "Abortion and the Struggle Against Tyranny in American History." The gist of the thesis is available online as "Questions on Abortion and the Struggle Against Tyranny," http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle .asp?title=1777.

18. Lloyd Steffen's edited anthology, *Abortion: A Reader*, is a good place to start. Other essays that I find insightful include: Ward, "Abortion as a Sacrament: Mimetic Desire and Sacrifice in Sexual Politics"; Swope, "Abortion: A Failure to Communicate"; Neuhaus, "The Religion of the Sovereign Self"; Callahan, "Abortion and the Sexual Agenda"; Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*; Manent, *The City of Man*, chap. 6; and Hart, "God or Nothingness."

19. Bellinger, *The Genealogy of Violence*, chap. 8.