

Moral Psychology

Session 8a
Wrap-Up of Christian Spirituality

Upcoming Classes

- This Wednesday
 - Basic web publishing training with Dan Schnaidt of ITS (here, usual time)
 - For fancier, more hands-on training, go to one of the training sessions ITS offers (Nov 2, 11). <http://www.wesleyan.edu/litt/open.htm>
- Next week's readings in Riker. Following two weeks in a coursepack available at the Mail Center.

Theophan Overview

- A task of bringing together a number of very different kinds of things
 - Christian doctrines of sin and salvation (not articulated in theoretical terms originally)
 - Almost two millennia of Christian spiritual practice
 - Theoretical accounts of human psychology and the nature of the good for human beings.

Fundamental Themes

- Relationship to God
- Sin/sanctification approached through metaphor of illness and health of the soul
 - Contrast alternative metaphors available to Christians, emphasized by some traditions
 - Obedience/disobedience/punishment
 - Wrongdoing/judgement/forgiveness

Relationship to God

- Arguably, the fundamental theme of Bible
- Interpreted by Theophan in terms of a view of the self:
 - Body
 - Soul
 - Spirit -- specially bestowed by God
 - Must function properly (enlightened) to bring order to the rest of the self
 - Only functions properly in contact with God.

Relationship and Health/Illness

- Separation from God's spirit causes darkening of human spirit so it is unable to govern rest of self
- Appetites, reason, passions are left a disordered mess (like a mother trying to take care of one crying child while the other five are tugging on her apron and wailing!)

The Good News

- The “cure” of the condition is re-union with God, which is available through the appointed means of Jesus
- When this happens, God’s spirit reinvigorates our own, change happens of its own accord.
- Yet because God respects human freedom, we have to cooperate in an ongoing way in our sanctification.

Rationale for Spiritual Practices

- Key is relationship
 - Need to do things that nurture that relationship
 - Prayer as contact with God
 - Remembrance of God’s presence (Jesus prayer)
 - Need to avoid things that distract us from that relationship (asceticism)
 - Practices of silence, solitude (extreme of desert)
 - Weeding out things in our lives that distract us
 - Re-train the parts of our selves that have inordinate attachments to things that distract us.

Sources and Precursors

Doctrines of sin and salvation	Christian scripture
Spiritual Practices	1800 years of Christian Spirituality, special influence Of desert
Model of self, with a part (spirit, nous) that is divine in origin, needs to be set Aright to regulate self	Plato, Platonic influences On 5th. C. Christian writers
Opposing a particular passion by Practicing its opposite	Reminiscent of Aristotle -- virtue is The mean between two extremes
Vigilance in self-examination, always Watching one’s own thoughts	Part of Desert spirituality Also found in Stoics

Reactions?

- How does this material strike you?
 - Useful and edifying?
 - Way, way out in left field?
 - Interesting, but too closely tied to things you don’t believe to be of use to you?
- How does Theophan relate to previous understandings of Christianity you have encountered?

Looking Ahead

- Psychoanalysis and psychology of the unconscious -- Freud, Jung
- Some relating themes:
 - Metaphor of inner health and illness “psychotherapy”
 - Coming to health requires dealing with hidden parts of the self that work against our interest and need to be transformed.