

## Starting From Scripture

By Mark Talbot

Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, Inc -

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How . . . can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? . . . Consequently, faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ [**Romans 10:14, 17**].

From the start, Christianity has been recognized to be a religion of revelation: God acted in Christ not only to redeem us and to put us on the path to future glory, but also to reveal to us life's most fundamentally important truths (see Heb. 1:1-3; Mark 9:7; John 18:37; Gal. 1:11f.; 2 Tim. 1:8-11; Pelikan, 1971, p. 152f.; Kelly, 1978, p. 29; Gilson, 1936, chapters 1 and 2). Being a Christian certainly means much more than just accepting these truths and trying to live according to them, but it also never means less (see John 3:16-21; Gal. 3:1-14; Justin, 1948, p. 51; Kelly, 1978, p. 40). For Christian faith starts in hearing and accepting the word of Christ (see also Eph. 1:13). Christians center their lives in the truths most fully and most perfectly disclosed in the life, death, and resurrection of the eternal and incarnate Word of the Father.

The good news of the gospel was foreshadowed in the Jewish Law and Prophets, proclaimed openly by Jesus Christ, echoed faithfully by His apostles, and finally enshrined in Scripture. So Scripture, as all the church Fathers agreed, is "the foundation and pillar of our faith" (Irenaeus in Richardson, 1953, p. 370; and see Kelly, 1978, pp. 37-39). Centering our lives in Christianity's revealed truths means centering our lives in the truth of Scripture. For Scripture gives us God's most explicit and complete "word" on things.

This includes God's "word" on matters psychological. Of course, the Bible is not a work of psychology; and even committed Christians can wonder how the claims about human personality found in such an ancient text can be relevant to a distinctively modern discipline like it (see Wolterstorff's worries as reported by Roberts, this volume a). Yet psychology allures us by promising to help us understand ourselves -- to understand what it means to be human, where our fulfillment lies and how to get it, and why things go wrong with us as well as how to fix them. Scripture obviously addresses the same issues. So Christian psychologists should start from what Scripture says about these things. Its principles ought to govern and guide all their thinking about human beings.

But are Christian psychologists really warranted in starting from Scripture? A Christian's appeals to Scripture can all too easily appear as *ad hoc* threats to psychology's integrity. In this paper I shall argue that any school of psychology -- even one attempting to understand human beings wholly naturalistically -- grounds itself in a "word" like Scripture's "word," a "word" about what human beings are and the kind of world they live in. (For more about the Christian "word," see Roberts, this volume a.)

Vitz (this volume), Griffiths (this volume), and Roberts (this volume a) point out that diverse "words" form the bases for different personality theories and their related psychotherapies. Roberts (1993) has shown in detail how six contemporary psychotherapy models diverge from one another and from Christianity in their basic conceptions of human nature, in their diagnostic categories of mental unhealthiness, and in their therapeutic prescriptions. Much of the disagreement among these models really boils down to disagreements about who has the correct "word" on human life. In arguing that some "word" underlies any psychology, I shall also argue that some of these "words" are more adequate to human life than others, and that the Christian "word" is as adequate as any.

Any adequate "word" will acknowledge that we approach relatively mature human beings differently than we do almost anything else. Societies aim at making human beings into full-fledged *persons*. Persons are *agents* who perform *actions* that are not reducible to mere bodily behaviors or even to the goal-directed behaviors of the higher animals. Actions are understood by agents to have some *significance*. Properly human agency, I shall argue, is always exercised within some framework of values that is held in place by an agent's hearing and accepting some "word" on life and reality that gives his acts their specific significance.

Some of the values underwriting human agency are practically non-controversial: virtually everyone everywhere agrees, for instance, that each of us should respect the needs and interests of others (see Wong, 1993, p. 446f.; Lewis, 1947, pp. 95ff.). Of course, we may disagree about some of the details. For example, most but not all of us believe that it is not only wrong to steal or to attack someone for no good reason or to deceive someone for gain, but also to discriminate against someone on the grounds of, say, race or gender or ethnic origins.

In America, various public rights and duties make up virtually the whole of what we call "morality." In some societies, "morality" also addresses what people do privately. But no matter how widely or narrowly "morality" is defined, in everyday situations virtually everyone assumes that human beings ought to act morally. Given the normal development of some basic human capacities, we expect each other to do what is right and to avoid what is wrong. Those doing right merit our praise, while those doing wrong deserve blame. Some accounts of human behavior exclude or radically reinterpret these features of human agency (see Johnson, this volume; Jones, this volume), but no one can avoid assuming them in everyday life. The most rigorous behaviorist will blame her children for irresponsibly disturbing her train of thought -- and not just because she believes (as a good behaviorist should) that her doing so will condition her children not to disturb her again, but also because she actually perceives (as a good behaviorist shouldn't) their behavior as irresponsible, and hence as truly worthy of blame (see Strawson, 1974, pp. 1-25). In my first section, I focus on the kinds of cognitive and volitional capacities we assume people to have when we consider them to be responsible moral agents. I then argue that our discovery of various "determinants" of human behavior can modify how we think about these capacities but cannot reasonably challenge our belief in them.

Full human agency, however, requires more than responsibility and minimal morality. We need a wider evaluative framework that supplies us with ideals that focus our lives and make them seem worth living. In my second section I argue that our cognitive and volitional

capacities make it absolutely essential for us to have such a framework; and I show how we get one.

But there are rival frameworks, based on different "words" about the world and human life. Yet effective and confident personhood develops only within a stable framework, and our awareness of the rival possibilities can destabilize our sense of agency by making our framework seem to be just a product of imagination. For instance, Richard Rorty (1989) thinks we construct these frameworks not merely in the sense in which any human theory is constructed -- as a product of our thinking that may or may not be adequate to the reality it purports to explain -- but in the sense that constructing these frameworks actually invents the human reality they are about. (It is somewhat like living in a world of "make-believe.") So, Rorty argues, each of us ought to be tolerant of everyone else's value system. But, in fact, this pluralistic posture is one which neither Rorty nor anyone else can sustain. Rorty himself mercilessly attacks the "word" underlying the Christian evaluative framework. And, as I show in my third section, we all inevitably take at least parts of our wider evaluative frameworks to be based in more than mere preference. We cannot help believing that it really would be better if everyone adopted at least some of our non-moral ideals and led their lives accordingly.

But if none of us can avoid acting from some particular framework grounded in some particular "word," and if the various secular schools of psychology and psychotherapy are allowed to ground their particular frameworks in their distinctive "words," then Christian psychologists ought to be allowed to ground their framework in their "word." For starting from Scripture is not in principle any different than starting from any of these other "words." Consequently, it alone cannot keep Christian psychologists from doing genuine, academically respectable psychology. For Christian psychology, as for every other kind, the proof is in the pudding: Does starting from this "word" lead to new psychological insights, to new academic and clinical advances in psychology?

Yet resistance to Christians doing psychology as Christians remains very high. So in my fourth section I shall say a bit more about why we should not be too troubled by continued and vehement opposition to our project of developing a thoroughly Christian psychology.

### **Responsible Agency**

Psychology attempts to understand actual human behavior rather than some burlesque of it. Yet avoiding these burlesques is more difficult than it would seem. So let's start with a case of typical human irresponsibility before us, one such as we might encounter on any given day.

Suppose I borrow \$10 from you. And suppose that every time I have another \$10, I fritter it away. Sooner or later, you will be inclined to blame me for ignoring my obligation to repay you. For you will think that I *ought* to have given the task of repaying you higher priority.

Your thinking so depends on your having a certain view of human agency. You are assuming that I possess certain *cognitive capacities*. You think that I possess the capacity to know -- and in fact do know, probably by having been told -- that borrowed money ought to be repaid pretty quickly. And you are assuming that I remember -- or at least ought to remember -- that

I borrowed \$10 from you. If I lack these capacities, you won't blame me for not repaying you. For instance, if you discover I have Alzheimers disease, and you're a reasonable person, then you won't blame me, because you'll realize that I probably don't remember having borrowed the money from you.

Blaming me also assumes I possess enough *volitional capacities* to have some control over what I do. More specifically, it assumes that I could have chosen not to frivol my money away. This depends on my being able to stand back and take stock of my various desires and drives, deciding which among them I should satisfy or fulfill, and when. Not to do this, when I possess the capacity to do so, is what elicits blame. Suppose I know I won't have another spare \$10 until well beyond the time when I should have repaid you, and then Roberts points to a couple of beautiful Macunudos in a tobacconist's window and suggests that we find a park bench and smoke the \$10 away in the cool Spring twilight while discussing the psychology of responsibility. I now must choose between the desire evoked by this diabolical proposal and fulfilling my obligation to you. If I succumb to the devil's blandishments, then so long as you think that I knew what I should do and could have done it if I wished, you will blame me for not repaying you.

Whether we possess all the cognitive and volitional capacities we need is not completely up to us; early upbringing and environment loom large in their development (see Neal, this volume; Johnson, this volume; and my later reference to the British documentary *28UP*). If you think I lack the capacity not to frivol \$10 bills away because my extremely penurious childhood has made me a pathological spendthrift, then you won't blame me for not repaying you. If you discover that I have grown up in some odd subculture where borrowed money is not quickly repaid, you may judge me less capable of discerning exactly what I owe you and thus be less inclined to blame me for not promptly repaying you. There are no doubt many gradations of volitional and cognitive incapacity here, and thus many degrees of responsibility.

We can, of course, wonder whether we really do possess all these capacities. In fact, one problem with our culture's increasing tendency to look at human beings psychologically is that, as various determinants of our behavior are identified by psychology and the other social sciences, doubts arise about our capacity to act responsibly (see Jones, this volume). Doesn't the discovery of such determinants warrant the belief (or at least the expectation) that finally all responsible human behavior may be explained away?

No, it does not, for some aspects of distinctively human behavior cannot in principle be explained deterministically. Sometime ago in Saint Louis, after a bus carrying five passengers had been hit by a car, fourteen bystanders boarded the bus before the police arrived and began complaining of back injuries (see Braybrooke, 1987, chapter 1). When we hear this, we assign to the bystanders' behavior a specific kind of significance: in our society, people are entitled to sue for financial remuneration of damages incurred while riding in a vehicle involved in an accident; the bystanders saw an opportunity to become party to such suits by claiming to have been physically injured in the bus accident; and so with that intention they boarded the bus and began to complain. So a correct understanding of the bystanders' behavior requires knowing that they, by making certain sounds, meant to be making particular claims, and that those claims, in that context, had a particular significance. (For an argument that speaking itself requires recognition of and conformity to norms, see

Wolterstorff, 1987.) Understanding the behavior requires understanding our society's rules about who stands responsible for what in circumstances like these.

So understanding and accounting for specific kinds of human behavior requires grasping how the human beings involved interpret it. What is the framework of meaning within which, for this agent, this act, done in these circumstances, takes on a specific significance? The same behavior, in other circumstances or other societies, can mean something quite different. Wearing certain colors in an inner-city American neighborhood may get you killed, while wearing the same colors in Kenya means nothing, because the gangs there don't "read" those colors as meaning certain things. In social-science jargon, knowingly to don a certain-colored jacket in the American neighborhood is to perform a specific *act*. That act has a kind of significance undiscoverable if we approach it solely by methods adequate to understand the movements of electrons or even the somewhat more purposeful behavior of rats. It involves a deliberate response to the norms articulated by those gangs about human life. Understanding it requires awareness of that normative framework. We need to see an agent's activities from "inside" his framework of significance, if we are to understand what he is doing.

Only behavior not completely circumscribed by the kinds of determinants sought in the more naturalistic social sciences has fully human significance. Acts, by their very nature, *signify* something; and while wholly determined behavior tells us something about the lets and hindrances placed on someone's agency, it is only the behavior shaped by the agent that can signify how this particular person is approaching things.

It is part and parcel of human society to take human beings to be agents who act in significant ways. The "socialization process" we put children through aims at developing the cognitive and volitional capacities that will allow them to think and then act in socially significant ways. The existence of enduring and cooperating social groups depends on their members knowing that they should control themselves in various ways as well as on their being more or less capable of behaving as they know they should. (Even moral relativists concede this; see Wong, 1993, p. 446f.) So if a normal child has not learned how to control herself to the degree that we expect of someone her age, *someone* is going to be blamed -- either the child herself or those responsible for her training.

Moreover, much psychology -- and especially much applied psychology -- takes it for granted that human beings are, or are supposed to be, agents who are capable of acting meaningfully. Of course, many popular therapies say we must free ourselves from norms that have confined us in unhealthy ways (see Roberts, 1993, on Albert Ellis's "masturbation" and Carl Rogers's "introjection"). Yet this only shows they think we are capable of living within normative frameworks, for ill as well as for good. Again, when psychoanalysis aims to free its patients "from the tyranny of [their] inner compulsions" and give them "a power to choose that is not otherwise [theirs]" (Rieff, 1966, p. 93), it is assuming, at this most crucial point, our everyday view of human agency.

Psychoanalytic terminology -- those under the "tyranny" of compulsions that limit their choices are "patients" in need of psychoanalytic "cures" -- emphasizes that we take normal human beings to possess capacities allowing us to address each other in distinctively personal ways. We often judge human behavior by how it affects human life. Insofar as we take those involved to be responsible for the good or ill produced, we regard them as meriting praise or

blame. Our gratitude or resentment, our forgiveness or anger -- the "*reactive* attitudes and feelings" (Strawson, 1974, p. 6) we experience toward each other every day -- are just part of our "commitment to participation in ordinary interpersonal relationships" (p. 11). Respecting other human beings, regarding them as persons, approaching them as something more than merely objects "to be managed or handled or cured or trained" (p. 9), means taking them to possess the capacities that make them proper objects of such feelings and attitudes, and thus proper recipients of praise or blame. It means taking them to be *addressable* in distinctively personal ways. Persons, we assume, possess the capacities needed to judge for themselves the significance of specific sorts of acts and then to decide whether or not to act in those ways. As such, they can be asked to consider the significance -- the value or disvalue -- of doing various kinds of things. In addressing other persons -- in saying things like "Please don't do that!" or "Will you consider this?" or "You shouldn't have done that!" or in simply saying "Thank you" for a job well done -- we pay them the compliment of assuming that they possess the capacities needed to shape their lives responsibly.

Normally, we want to be addressed this way. For we recognize that our value lies in our decisions counting for something, in our being originative sources of value and disvalue and not just hapless flotsam in the scheme of things (see Nozick, 1981, pp. 291ff.). Indeed, we become more convinced of this the more the "socialization process" succeeds, for it trains us to think of ourselves as exercising some control over our lives -- as being able to respond to life's exigencies in various ways (see Nozick, 1981, pp. 304, 307). Successful socialization encourages us to think that if someone is regarded as no more than a nexus of external determinants, then that person is being devalued and disrespected in the most fundamental of ways. Sometimes, of course, this is unavoidable (see Strawson, 1974, pp. 6-13). Christians, of all people, should recognize that responsible human agency can be undercut in any number of ways. (See Jones's survey of acceptable and unacceptable theological positions on human freedom in this volume.) But when our agency is undercut, things are "not the way they are supposed to be" (see Plantinga, 1995).

Of course, some social scientists have claimed that we no longer can afford to think of ourselves as addressable beings: to gain control of human behavior before it is too late, we must abandon our belief in responsible agency (see especially B.F. Skinner, 1971). They hold that science has already shown us to be wholly the products of various genetic or environmental determinants, but that we resist acknowledging this because we still like to think of ourselves as free. Strawson would counter that our commitment to interpersonal relationships is just "too thoroughgoing and deeply rooted" for us to take these claims seriously (p. 11); it is impossible for any theory to overturn our belief in responsible human agency; and even if we did have a choice not to continue addressing each other in the common ways, "we could choose rationally" whether or not to do so "only in the light of an assessment of the gains and losses to human life, [the] enrichment or impoverishment" that would result (p. 13). Adopting a wholly deterministic attitude toward each others' behavior would, he argues, immensely impoverish our life together because we would no longer be justified in feeling resentment, gratitude, forgiveness, anger, or distinctively human love towards each other. A moments thought about the cases where we do view some particular human beings behavior as completely or even just largely the product of various determinants should make it clear how bleak our lives would be if we were to start viewing all humans in the same way. The logical end of denying responsible agency is the sort of

devastation a determinist ought to feel if he could keep his convictions in mind as he took the love of his life into his arms.

### **Orientation in Evaluative "Space"**

Morally significant actions especially prompt our praise or blame. But in our pluralistic culture we really have two bases for praise and blame, two frameworks for evaluation. There is what we call "morality," which we take to consist in respecting the rights of others, and which we take to be objective at least in the sense that a tolerable social order cannot exist unless most of us are willing, for whatever reasons, to observe its dictates. But "morality" in this narrow sense does not supply the kind of value-orientation needed for full-fledged personhood. Mature persons have an evaluative framework enabling them to make general sense of their lives. Such a framework supplies them with ideals that help them to chart meaningful courses through life. So, in addition to "morality," there are "values." Each of us needs such a framework if we are to lead a full and satisfying life, but because widespread acceptance of any particular framework seems unlikely, we declare these values to be matters of mere personal preference. I shall now focus on what it is about us that requires these richer frameworks for the full flowering of our agency and on how we get them. In the next section, I argue that these richer frameworks cannot and should not be thought of as matters of mere preference.

Consider, once again, our cognitive and volitional capacities. Human beings, unlike even the higher animals, are spiritual creatures in this sense at least: our "psychology" is not nailed down to our physiology. We are much more than the sum of our physiological drives, as the failure of various research programs in psychology has made clear (see Johnson, this volume). We can, and as we mature we inevitably do, consider more than our immediate wants and needs: I may feel rested, well-fed, and satisfied right now, but worry about what will happen to me in five years. You may be plagued by your past, even though to your acquaintances you appear as a picture of success. We are capable of living -- and indeed encourage each other to live -- within a "world" that stretches back into a now-but-remembered-or-related past and that anticipates a not-yet-experienced future: Mommy tells Bobby that Christmas is coming and that Santa is likely to bring him the bike he wants, especially if he is good; Sarah considers her family's illustrious history at Wheaton College, and finds herself moved to work hard while she is there so that she too may do well. Such is the stuff of human life -- stuff that depends on our distinctive cognitive and volitional capacities. Once the cat is fed, she doesn't have a care in the world; we don't encourage our dogs to behave better by promising them Milk-bones for Christmas; and a great ape is not motivated to make something of himself by remembering who his great-grandfather was. Our cognitive and volitional capacities give us a freedom from the immediate present that forces a certain range of questions on us -- questions about how we shall approach life -- questions that require us to get ourselves oriented within some more than merely "moral" evaluative space. (My talk about evaluative "space" adapts Charles Taylor's talk about moral "space" in 1989, chapter 2.)

Psychology itself witnesses that we flourish only within richly articulated evaluative spaces. As Christopher Lasch has observed, "[e]very age develops its own peculiar forms of pathology" (1979, p. 41f.). Our age's character disorders involve a sense of deep futility or feelings of numbing emptiness or a crippling loss of self-esteem. These disorders have

increased with our century's growing "disenchantment" -- with its dissipation of any commonly accepted perspective within which we see our world as possessing some significant meaning. Disenchantment destroys the evaluative spaces within which people live (see Taylor, 1989, pp. 17, 19). Clinical depression, now alarmingly prevalent in the industrialized, disenchanted West, can almost be defined as the loss of a sense of purpose or meaningful agency (see the DSM-IV, pp. 320ff.). Its onset often involves an individual's failure either to find something that makes life worth living (as happens particularly in children's depression) or to retain a sense of life's meaningfulness as the years ring their changes (as when the loss of a child or a spouse makes life seem no longer to be worth living).

Psychology's popularity corroborates our need to get oriented within such a space, since it presents itself as the science of human flourishing. We turn to it for guidance about how we should live our lives because it promises to enlighten and enrich us in scientifically respectable ways. It offers us "a normative order of life, with character ideals, images of the good life, and methods of attaining it" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton, 1985, p. 47). It promises to help us flourish by supplying us with the non-moral coordinates by which we should live.

So how do we get such coordinates? Initially, it is not a matter of individual choice, since we first borrow our identities from others. Persons are called forth by interaction with the more developed persons around them (see Roberts, this volume b): very young infants start the journey toward developed personhood through making and enjoying visual contact with their mothers' eyes; their slightly older siblings learn to speak by playing games with their parents that identify objects and isolate gestures and tones in ways that make language-acquisition possible (see Bruner, 1983); and, once linguistically equipped, we get our biggest boost towards fully oriented personhood through hearing those closest to us talk about -- and then watching them pursue -- whatever it is that gives purpose and meaning to their own lives. We first get a fix on life by riding piggyback on those around us who already have a clear sense of where they are going in evaluative space. (See Roberts, 1993, pp. 133ff., on Kohut's theory of the development of a self; Taylor, 1989, p. 35.)

If all goes well, we come to know who we are as individuals by finding our place within some well-defined social space. Already, in watching babies squeal with delight as they peer around obstacles to find their mothers' laughing eyes, it is apparent that individual satisfaction comes primarily from fitting within a social space. Judicious use of blame -- "You shouldn't be so concerned about getting that toy!" -- and praise -- "That's a good girl! You've eaten your beans!" -- helps us to chart life-courses by encouraging us to internalize some "word" about how our lives ought to be led. Children who have been inadequately socialized, who have not been taken in hand and helped to internalize some "word" for living, show by their unsettled behavior that they just don't know where they fit.

Internalizing a livable "word" also involves getting some scale of goods that helps us to avoid just frittering life away. Rich evaluative frameworks proscribe certain ways of living, even though those ways are not immoral in the narrow sense. You may be scrupulous to pay your debts promptly, but willing to waste hours in front of a T.V. Even if wasting time doesn't involve a "moral" breach, many of us would hold that there is something wrong with doing too much of it. For our frameworks lead us to believe that, if everything else is equal, it

is objectively better to have something to show for one's time than not. Thus most of us admire someone who has used her leisure hours to write children's stories or to sew quilts. Again, most of us would agree that possessing some degree of ambition and stick-to-itiveness is good. Yet, as the British film *28UP* documents (see Schoeman, 1987, p. 10, n. 7), the development of these traits is very largely dependent on the kind of social environment we spend our early years in. Whether I will stick with a project once it becomes difficult is usually connected with the value-scales I did or didn't internalize -- and the corresponding volitional capacities I did or didn't develop -- in my first few years.

So we come to know who we are, not so much by knowing our names and genealogies, as by understanding "what is of crucial importance to us. To know who I am," as Charles Taylor says,

is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose [1989, p. 27].

Getting one's bearings within such a space is even intimately connected with getting and keeping our bearings in physical space. We can get a perceptual fix on our physical environment only when we (or at least *parts* of us -- our *eyes*, especially) are moving (see the studies cited in Hodges, 1986, pp. 60-64, and especially Gibson, 1979). But we move primarily to seek various kinds of satisfactions, and so only agents on the hunt for goods make clear sense out of physical space. (My new granddaughter, Rebekah, likes splashing the cool water in the toilet bowl, and her valuing that experience has led her to identify where the bathroom is so that she can get at that bowl whenever her parents have left the bathroom door unlatched.) Indeed, extreme cases of the "narcissistic personality disorders" -- all of which involve radical uncertainty about oneself and what one values -- can result in a loss of spatial orientation (see Kohut, 1977, pp. 153-156).

### **Our Inevitable Realism about Our Evaluative Space**

The last sentence alludes to another feature of the evaluative frameworks required for full-fledged personhood. Effective and confident human agency can only be exercised within some *settled* and *stable* evaluative space. If I am sufficiently unsure I have the right framework, then it does not matter how richly articulated it is. For then I am unsure that what it identifies as worthwhile really is, and that takes me to the borders of psychopathology.

What holds our evaluative frameworks firmly in place? Different parts are held in place at different times in different ways. Initially, we just swallow a framework more or less whole as we are inducted into a family. But once we are old enough to reflect on what we have previously accepted more or less unquestioningly, we may conclude that parts of it are matters of preference or taste. For instance, it would be foolish for you to insist that my family should enjoy camping just because yours does, since liking to "rough it" is pretty clearly not grounded in anything essential to human beings.

By contrast, there is an implicit "must" in the blame we attach to moral violations -- a "must" attesting to our conviction that we should not harm others or infringe on their rights. This

"must" is always grounded in an appeal to some aspect of reality and the place of human beings within it. Particular appeals vary widely and often conflict, but some appeal to reality is needed to ground the moral "must" (see Taylor, 1989, chapter 1).

We also need to be confident about the objectivity of our non-moral evaluative frameworks. Suppose I am debating whether to get on my Schwinn Air-Dyne or to spend the hour lounging in my easy chair. If I choose to exercise, it will be because I think the reality of ill-health is likely to catch up with me if I don't do some hard aerobic exercise at least four times a week. We are realists about the core non-moral coordinates of our evaluative space partly because we recognize that reality forces itself upon us in various ways. Anticipating a decline in my life's quality if I don't do something now to avoid clogged arteries in twenty years, I look to medicine for objective standards of healthy living.

Yet the conviction that our core ideals are grounded in reality is what cultural pluralists deny (see Rorty, 1989, chapters 1-3). They insist that there are no objective non-moral standards; they celebrate the freedom they say we have to chart whatever course we want through evaluative space. They defend their position by pointing out that the core coordinates of any rich evaluative space are always anchored in a contestable metaphysics or ontology; and they conclude it is irrational and immoral for anyone to think that his non-moral coordinates possess objectivity.

But the landmark sociological study *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* corroborates that no one can live in such an ontologically unanchored evaluative space. It opens by recounting how four Americans have made sense of their lives. The values of each differ remarkably from those of the others, and each gives careful lip-service to the live-and-let-live language of American cultural pluralism, even as each obviously takes his or her own way of life to be based on real insight into the way a human life ought to be lived. Brian Palmer, a top-level manager in a large California corporation, has become more of a family man, and more interested in thinking, reading, and classical music, after a divorce. He avoids calling his earlier singleminded pursuit of material success wrong, because his social and business environments encourage him to describe his new allegiances as changes in personal preference (see Bellah et al., 1985, p. 6). Yet his real feelings come out when he says, "I don't think I would pontificate and say that I'm in a position to establish values for humanity in general, *although I'm sufficiently conceited to say that if the rest of the world would live by my value system it would be a better place*" (p. 7; my emphasis).

Obviously, there is an implicit "should" here, even if Palmer himself feels bound to deny it. He knows, moreover, that such "shoulds" need to be backed up by reasons. And so he is distressed when he cannot explain why personal integrity is good and lying is bad. He speculates that such standards are grounded in the Judeo-Christian heritage, but he retreats from citing that heritage as a reason why everyone should subscribe to them. (He may suspect that to tag what ought or ought not to be done to a specific tradition would require him to defend why we should follow that heritage by making some claims about that tradition's truth, which would involve invoking an eminently contestable view of reality.) In the end, he abandons the task of explaining why dishonesty should be universally proscribed: "Why is integrity important and lying bad? I don't know. It just is. It's just so basic. I don't

want to be bothered with challenging that. It's part of me. I don't know where it came from, but it's very important" (p. 7).

As the authors of *Habits of the Heart* observe, "to hear [Brian] talk, even his deepest impulses of attachment to others are without any more solid foundation than his momentary desires," and so his "justification for his life . . . rests on a fragile foundation" (p. 8). A public commitment to cultural pluralism can thus force us to "live out a fuller sense of purpose in life than [we] can justify in rational terms" (p. 6). When this private, fuller sense of purpose conflicts directly with our public commitment to the nonobjectivity of almost all of our values, the cognitive dissonance between what we actually believe and what we think we should believe becomes harshly evident.

Psychology can appear to give us a way around this difficulty by presenting itself as the value-neutral "science" of human flourishing. Psychologists sometimes offer to supply us with rich and stable evaluative environments merely by investigating "the facts" about human beings. Therapists can think that all we need to discover is what each of us *really* desires, in the most distinctively individual parts of our beings, and that then the knowledge of those desires will automatically orient us in a personally stable and richly articulated evaluative space. Such therapists pride themselves on not being "judgmental" by helping us to seek the most effective ways of satisfying our deep desires, *whatever* they may be. Thus we get "the triumph of the therapeutic" (see Rieff, 1966), where questions about what is *truly* good, and about how human beings *should* live -- in short, questions about the *proper ends* of human life -- are taken to be rationally unresolvable. Non-moral values then become matters of preference and taste. Individual wants and needs become primary, unchecked by any generally accepted societal standards about what desires, drives, urges, wishes, projects, and so forth, are *worth* satisfying. Each of us becomes autonomous, having the right "to discover fulfillment independent of the restraints of precedent and community" (Lundin, 1993, p. 41). Only acts that infringe on the rights of others to pursue and enjoy whatever they wish are then recognized as really wrong. And so *blaming* someone for her non-moral choices becomes almost unforgivable.

Initially, shrinking the sphere of objective valuation would seem to give us new opportunities for unfettered personal growth, but in fact nearly the opposite is true. For our "spiritual" nature, with its inevitable hopes and fears, always seeks the reassurance that can only come from grounding our basic values in some account of the nature of things.

This is true even for the psychotherapist Margaret Oldham, another interviewee in *Habits of the Heart*. Oldham has definite standards by which she herself lives; "she feels," e.g., "that one of the most important things she learned from her parents was the value of hard work -- 'not just work, but taking pride in your work and being responsible for your work and doing it as well as you possibly can and doing a lot of it'" (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 14). At the same time, she values tolerance very highly, so she regularly lets her clients' ideas challenge her own. She believes everyone aims at individual fulfillment, and so the fact that different individuals value different things means that her therapeutic role is just to help her clients understand themselves better "so that they may deal more realistically, and perhaps more fruitfully, with life and realize their personal preferences" (p. 15).

Of course, Oldham has some idea of what realistic and fruitful living consists in. She thinks "the happiness of a fulfilling life cannot be won without a realistic willingness to make the effort and pay the costs required" (p. 15) and that "[i]n the end, you're really alone and you really have to answer [just] to yourself" (p. 15). But many of her clients, she thinks, are unwilling to recognize these truths and then do what is necessary to achieve their own happiness. So in spite of her explicit commitment to respect her clients' values and experiences, her therapeutic practices are not in fact value-free. A client expecting her to solve his problems for him is acting "childishly" (p. 16). "People want to be made happy, instead of making themselves happy" (p. 15). Taking responsibility for our own lives is, in fact, one non-moral value she finds rooted in reality: "What I think the universe wants from me is to take my values, whatever they might happen to be, and live up to them as much as I can. If I'm the best person I know how to be according to my lights, then something good will happen. I think in a lot of ways living that kind of life is its own reward in and of itself" (p. 14f.).

As unsophisticated as this is (what does it mean to say that the *universe* requires something of someone, and why believe that good things will happen to responsible people?), this is the "word" about human life and reality that underlies the core coordinates in Oldham's own evaluative space. And even her self-conscious pluralism does not stop her from judging the courses of others' lives according to it.

Even Richard Rorty, as a much more sophisticated proponent of tolerance and cultural pluralism, has a definite "word" behind the core coordinates of his own evaluative space, although he maintains he does not. Rorty's "liberal ironist" believes that "an ideal . . . society is one which has no purpose except freedom" (1989, p. 60); he desires above all else that all suffering and cruelty will cease (see p. xv). And yet he faces up to the contingency of even these, his own most central beliefs and desires, because he is "sufficiently historicist and nominalist to have abandoned the idea that [his] central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance" (p. xv). Rorty does not deny that we need to be able to adhere "unflinchingly" to our core convictions (see pp. 44ff.). He acknowledges that each of us has a "final vocabulary" -- "a set of words which [we] employ to justify [our] actions, [our] beliefs, and [our] lives" -- "words in which we formulate praise of our friends and contempt for our enemies, our long-term projects, our deepest self-doubts, our highest hopes[,] . . . words in which we tell, sometimes prospectively and sometimes retrospectively, the story of our lives" (p. 73). Yet he thinks that if we are to be as free as we can be, and if our intolerance and inhumanity to each other is to cease, then we must resolutely reject the idea that any "final vocabulary" is grounded in reality. We must learn to live committed lives without having to believe that our "word" gives us some once-and-for-all truth about the world and human beings. Then and only then are we likely to stop persecuting others for valuing things differently.

If we could learn to live like this, then the world would be 'de-divinized' (see p. 21). We would be at that liberating point where we would "no longer worship *anything*, . . . where we [would] treat *everything* -- our language, our conscience, our community -- as [just] a product of time and chance" (p. 22). And living this way, Rorty maintains, would not involve making any illicit assumptions about reality. For it would not involve a claim that its own "final vocabulary" is any closer to reality than any other (see p. 73). Indeed, Rorty knows that the

one thing he must avoid is even hinting that his proposal "gets something right, that my sort of philosophy corresponds to the way things really are" (p. 8). For that would drag the whole idea of a vocabulary fitting reality back in. Yet Rorty's brand of cultural pluralism does rest on an eminently contestable view of reality. It is a view that believes that there is no truth about the way things are, because, since God does not exist, human beings may say whatever they want about the world (see Rorty's whole first chapter). But surely this idea -- that we are the final arbiters and creators of truth -- is a highly contestable view of reality, and an arguably *untrue* one at that!

So Rorty's own evaluative framework stands or falls with his assertion that our world is *not* "the creation of a being who had a language of his own" (p. 5). His standards are credible only if he is *right* that our world is not God's project. If he is wrong about that, then even he will have to admit the folly of his ways. So even a really sophisticated version of cultural pluralism rests on a contestable "word" about the kind of world we live in.

### **Confidence in the Christian Framework**

In "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids," Rorty recounts how he got to his brand of cultural pluralism after starting from a Trotskyite childhood and youth. One phase in his development stands out: as a University of Chicago undergraduate, he tried "to get religion" because of T.S. Eliot's suggestion "that only committed Christians (and perhaps only Anglo-Catholics) could overcome their unhealthy preoccupation with their private obsessions, and so serve their fellow humans with proper humility" (1992, p. 144). But he couldn't stomach reciting the Episcopal General Confession with its rich language about the depths of our wickedness and sin. So he quit trying to make sense of his life on Christianity's terms and fell back on "absolutist philosophy" (p. 144), initially by turning to Plato and his ilk.

Rorty's self-described "prideful inability" (p. 144) to believe what he was saying when he recited the General Confession highlights one more fact about our evaluative frameworks and the "words" underlying them: the traffic between our beliefs and our values doesn't go just from believing to valuing. Rorty is attracted by a radical freedom and creativity, and so comes to believe that no god is the author of things. Indeed, as Rorty's values became "more and more raucously secularist," he found even nontheistic attempts "to hold reality and justice in a single vision" to be beyond belief (p. 147).

We can remain more confident about the Christian "word" if we keep this in mind. For remembering that what someone treasures in his heart of hearts affects what he believes can keep us from being too troubled by continued and vehement opposition to our project of developing a thoroughly Christian psychology.

It is important to see that the Christian "word" meets all the requirements for an adequate "word" mentioned so far. It acknowledges that we approach relatively mature human beings differently than we do almost everything else. It encourages us to address each other as responsible moral agents. It supplies us with a set of ideals so we can make general sense of our lives. And it grounds all this in a detailed view of reality.

It is also important to realize that the "words" underlying many of the psychologies and psychotherapies are less adequate to the lives we actually live. For instance, some of the

more deterministic and behavioristic schools of psychology ignore the more distinctive elements of human agency. Enamored by the successes of natural science, they try to understand human beings entirely "from the outside," without recognizing our need for conscious significance. So they try to understand all human behavior on a model that is better suited to understanding the movement of electrons or the behavior of rats and chimpanzees. Again, some of the applied psychologies -- such as Carl Rogers's "nondirective counseling" and Albert Ellis's "Rational Emotive Therapy" -- downplay the importance of moral standards in our lives; and some therapists mistakenly claim as well that they can practice therapy in a way that is "value-free." Sometimes, moreover, as we have seen, the more tolerant and pluralistic among us even falsely maintain that their own values presume no particular "word" about reality.

With much of this, the Christian psychologist can afford to be tolerant, for her "word" on human life is broad enough to acknowledge that there is something in each of these approaches to human beings. Her "word" doesn't require her to deny that some aspects of human behavior are best understood naturalistically. She can acknowledge that the proper functioning of our distinctively human capacities is tied to the proper functioning of our bodies as natural systems. And she may also believe that sin makes human behavior unnaturally subject to -- and thus explicable by -- the lower creation's laws. It may constrict our options and thus make our behavior more open to analysis in terms of this or that "determinant" (see Lewis, 1940, chapter five, following Hooker, 1865). Again, her "word" does not prohibit her from admitting that a lot of damage can be done by those (like the New Testament Pharisees) who approach life too "moralistically." And, again, if she has thought her theology through, she will realize that while the Scriptures encourage her to recommend her values and her faith in the appropriate settings, she should do so without insisting that others see things her way. For she knows that we embrace the core coordinates of our evaluative frameworks with our whole selves and that such wholehearted acceptance neither should nor can be forced. So sometimes the best she can do for a non-Christian is just to help him to clarify exactly what he desires and believes.

Nevertheless, Christian psychologists will believe and maintain that, while each of these approaches can cast some light on human life, none of them should be taken as the final "word" about human beings. For none of them can furnish us with a fully livable evaluative space. Each, when taken as the whole story, burlesques human life as it is actually lived.

In maintaining this, Christian psychologists have not even gotten to articulating their specifically Christian "word" on human life and reality. Yet they will already face strong opposition, for human beings can have many reasons for wanting to deny that persons can flourish only within some stable and highly articulated evaluative space. For instance, psychological naturalism can be attractive to any of us in certain situations for the ways in which it can let us off the hook by diminishing or dismissing our responsibility. Again, Carl Rogers's "client-centered therapy" can allure us with its promise that no matter what we believe or feel we shall be accepted nonjudgmentally and empathetically -- that we need not be inhibited by being forced to "introject" anyone else's "conditions of worth" (see Roberts, 1993, chapter 2).

Yet the greatest opposition to Christians doing psychology as Christians is undoubtedly tied to claims intrinsic to the Christian evaluative framework and its underlying "word."

It would take another paper to specify adequately what it is about the Gospel that is likely to rub non-Christians the wrong way. John Stuart Mill and Stanley Fish, as well as Rorty, are classic liberals who elevate above almost any other value the individual's right to choose how he wants to live. So all three object very strongly to the Christian ideal of godly obedience (see Mill, 1912, *On Liberty*, chapter 3; Fish, 1996; Rorty, 1989, chapter 2). Rorty adds that "moderns" like himself consider the Christian doctrine of sin -- which involves the notion that "there is a Being before whom we humans should humble ourselves" -- to be "a really terrible idea" (Rorty, 1996). Of course, opposition like this to Christian values and beliefs is exactly what Scripture itself tells us to expect. The apostle Paul declares that "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing" (1 Cor. 1:18). He adds elsewhere that the Gospel's messengers have "the smell of death" to those who will not believe (2 Cor. 2:16). The Christian "word" is often utterly incredible to those who value things differently. And if what we value affects what we believe, what else should we expect? Christians and non-Christians often value remarkably different things, and if someone is indifferent or hostile to Christian values, she may very well ignore or oppose or even be unable to consider the Christian "word" about reality and human beings.

Moreover, Scripture does not see the failure of non-Christians to believe the Christian "word" to be prompted by their just valuing things differently than Christians do. It declares them to be valuing the wrong things or to be valuing some of the right things *inordinately*. It also implies that when we misvalue things, we somehow know that we are repudiating what we were made for, that we have at least a dim awareness that in forsaking the proper standards we are forsaking the very basis of proper personhood (see Baillie, 1942, chapter 6; Talbot, 1996b). And it takes such misvaluing to be endemic to the human race (see, e.g., Rom. 3:9-20). A central claim of Scripture is that each of us has at least some awareness that God exists and that he wants us to live in specific ways (see Talbot, 1989). Christians and Jews and Muslims all believe that we become aware of our responsibilities not simply because other people address us but because God himself is addressing us, through nature and our consciences as well as through the words of other human beings (see especially Rom. 1:18-2:16; Wolterstorff, 1996). They believe that our becoming fully fledged persons depends on God's addressing us, on God's calling us into being as persons by speaking to us in these ways (see Talbot, 1996a). They also believe that each of us knows that if we do not do what God says, then we sin and become liable to his punishment (see especially Rom. 1:18-32).

If our values manifest themselves in our desires and feelings, and if both our desires and feelings affect our beliefs (see de Sousa, 1987; Damasio, 1994), then we ought to expect, as Rorty's case corroborates, that persistent misvaluing may very well lead to progressive unbelief. For it is with our hearts we believe (see Rom. 10:10). In Scripture, the heart is the whole person -- a person's inner life or character, the center of his or her personality (see Prov. 27:19 and many other passages, including Gen. 6:5; Ex. 25:2; Deut. 4:9, 29; 13:3; Ps. 14:1; 20:4; 51:10; 86:11; 139:23; Matt. 5:8 and 6:21). While it includes many of the rational powers we usually attribute to a person's mind or "head," it is the seat and source of all our powers -- rational, volitional, emotional, and spiritual -- and as such it ultimately determines what we believe, feel, do, and say (see Sorg, 1976).

Consequently, change of heart is singled out throughout the Scriptures as the central and decisive factor in genuine acceptance of the Christian "word" on reality and human beings

(see Ps. 119:32; Acts 16:13-15; Eph. 1:18). It involves changes in our desires and feelings (see Gal. 5:16-24) that enable us to recognize truths about ourselves and our world that we otherwise do not clearly see or that we have deliberately avoided acknowledging (see Eph. 2:1-3). Ultimately, Scripture declares, our ability to believe the Gospel is God's gift (see Eph. 2:8-10): God plants faith in us by giving us new hearts (see Eze. 36:26f.; 11:19f.; Jer. 24:7). The proclamation of his "word" is the instrument God uses to effect this change: God's Spirit, running along the pathway that the proclamation of his "word" creates, changes our hearts in a way that makes that "word" believable and allows us to desire and hope for the goods it proclaims (see Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Pet. 1:3-6).

So Christian psychologists should not be shocked or shaken or dismayed when they find continued and vehement opposition to their project of developing a thoroughly Christian psychology by starting from Scripture. Indeed, practicing psychologists and psychotherapists, both secular and Christian, should be the last of all people to succumb to the blandishments of "Whig psychology," with its bogus belief that psychology is the sort of value-free discipline that, if properly pursued, will make slow but steady progress toward an unchallengeable body of truths (see Van Leeuwen, 1985, pp. 5-7; Rudner, 1953). For they see, almost every day, just how radically our desires and feelings can affect our beliefs. Occasionally, Christian psychologists may even be justified in claiming -- in a way closely akin to some psychotherapeutic claims -- to see exactly how someone's desires and feelings have gone so wrong as to have made him epistemically blind to such truths as God's existence and his own wrongdoing (see Talbot, 1984, 1985, 1989; Schlesinger, 1984; Basinger, 1988). Yet in doing so, we must not say or imply that he is a worse sinner than we are. For it is part of deep Christian experience to confess that we too were once blind even if now, by God's grace, we can see some things (see John 9:25).

Recognizing the inevitable influence of our values on our beliefs, we can recognize as well that non-Christian psychologists will inevitably disagree with many of our claims, but provided we work out those claims with intellectual rigor and empirical honesty, we have no reason not to bring them to psychology's table. Indeed, many psychological staples began their life in the Christian tradition. The Puritans pioneered the study of self-deception (see Martin, 1986, p. 32f.) and even Freudian theory has some Christian underpinnings (see Vitz, 1988). As the history of intellectual development has shown (see, e.g., Gilson, 1936 and 1941; Cochrane, 1940; Pelikan, 1965; Foster, 1935 and 1936; Taylor, 1989; MacIntyre, 1981, 1988, and 1990), and as this volume itself should corroborate, Christians, by starting from Scripture, often bring unique delicacies to the academic feast.

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Mark Talbot is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Wheaton College, and is a member of the [Alliance Council](#)