The Ellul Forum

for the Critique of Technological Civilization

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Ethical Relativism and Technological Civilization

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From the Editor

Welcome to issue number 12 of the Ellul Forum. Our focus for this issue is ethical relativism in a technological civilization. It contains an essay by Peter Haas of Vanderbilt University and another by myself. Peter and I met at the international Holocaust conference held at Oxford University in 1988. At that time his book *Morality After Auschwitz* had just been published by Fortress Press. My two recent books *Narrative Theology After Auschwitz: From Alienation to Ethics* and *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalypse or Utopia?* were first conceived at that conference. It was there that as a result of conversations with people like Peter and Richard Rubenstein, Marc Ellis and Irving Greenberg that I first wrote the outline for these books. (Actually, it was originally planned as one book but grew too long. so at the suggestion of Fortress Press I divided into two books, even though this required about 30 pages of overlap between the two.)Later, Peter and I met a second time when we were both invited to speak on ethics after Auschwitz at a conference in Washington D.C. He graciously agreed to my recent request that we continue our dialogue in the pages of the Forum. Please note that we have also reviewed each other's books. I have turned my review of his book into an essay introducing the Forum for this issue (seepage 3). His review of my book *Narrative Theology After Auschwitz* can be found in the Book Review section(see page 17). You will also find two reviews of my book, *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima* by Richard A. Dietrich and David P. Gushee. We ended up with two reviews because when one wasn't sure he could make the deadline a second was sought, then both arrived on the same day. I have never met either reviewer. Both seem to me to offer critical yet fair reviews. Their contrasting perspectives may be of interest.

This issue gives me the occasion to focus attention on some of the core themes of my two volume project on ethics after Auschwitz and Hiroshima. When Ellul's ethics of freedom came out, he promised to follow it up with an ethic of holiness. I still hope that someday that volume will be published. This project is my own attempt to construct an ethics of the Holy in response to the sacral ethic of a technological civilization. My attempt has been to construct a cross-cultural ethic, using a narrative ethics approach in combination with a theology of the history of religions. In my view, the experience of the holy is an experience of a wholly other reality which can neither be named or imaged, an experience marked by the creation of a religious community separated from the larger society which gives rise to a two kingdom ethic whose defining feature is hospitality to the stranger. A sacred society, by contrast (like that which emerged in Nazi Germany), has no place for such "separated" or holy communities and a sacral ethic treats the stranger as an enemy. My argument is that those holy communities that are defined by narratives of hospitality to the stranger are traditions that recognize the human dignity precisely of those who are not part of their own community and its story. After Auschwitz and Hiroshima, I believe our best hope lies in an ethical coalition of such communities (especially Jewish, Christian and Buddhist) to promote an international ethic of human dignity, human rights and human liberation. Such a coalition can tolerate a great deal of ethical diversity so long as each shares a common concern for the stranger, the downcast and the outcast.

Bulletin Board

Colloquium Held In Bourdeaux: "Technique and Society in the Work of Jacques Ellul"

By Joyce Hanks

A significant milestone has been reached: the first conference with Jacques Ellul as its focus occurred in Bordeaux on November 12-13, 1993. Some twenty invited specialists from France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, the Ivory Coast, Mexico, Canada, and the United States deliberated for two days before an audience that averaged about 100.

Ellul himself attended the final sessions, in spite of illness, speaking after Ivan Illich's touching tribute. He emphasized his debt to his father, who taught him honor: not to lie to himself or anyone else, to have pity for the weak, and to be inflexible towards those in power.

Technique in general, and its autonomy in particular, proved central to many of the papers given, several of which took issue with Ellul. Others compared Ellul to Karl Marx, Alexis de Tocqueville, Martin Heidegger, and Bernard Charbonneau (whose son Simon attended the conference and often represented his father's point of view during question periods). The Bible, the Personalist movement, art, politics, and the sacred--each provided the focus of one of the sessions.

Roughly half of these took place in the new "Ellul Auditorium" of the Institute for Political Studies on the campus of the University of Bordeaux in Talence (a suburb of Bordeaux). Fittingly, when Ellul made his appearance at the colloquium, he was ushered into this auditorium named for him, which he had not previously seen. Ellul was one of the founders and professors of the Institute for Political Studies, which sponsored the gathering, along with the Association Jacques Ellul (see information about Association membership elsewhere in this issue), the Society for Philosophy and Technology, and the School of Law and Social and Political Sciences at the University of Bordeaux. Local newspapers featured articles and photographs from the conference.

Following the first day's events, attendees gathered for a showing of the impressive new film by Serge Steyer, "Jacques Ellul: L'homme entier." Filmed primarily in France, but partly in Chicago, it is already available for viewing in French (with some interviews in English) at the Wheaton College Archives (Wheaton IL), and should eventually be translated into English, as funds for the project become available.

Frequent simultaneous sessions obliged those in attendance to choose one speaker over another, but such decisions proved easier than expected, thanks to the abstracts of papers gathered by the organizing committee and distributed to everyone. The committee performed many complex tasks extremely well--from transportation and book table to lodgings, subsidies, and meals. For speakers and guests, a dinner invitation to the famous institution in downtown Bordeaux, "La Maison du Vin," proved a delicious and memorable highlight of the proceedings.

Speakers from the western hemisphere besides Illich included Carl Mitcham, Langdon Winner, and Pierre de Coninck. As those in attendance considered the importance of celebrating a second Ellul conference, some speculated that it might well take place in the United States or Canada, and focus on Ellul's contribution to theology.

New Film on Ellul

A new film on Ellul entitled," Jacques Ellul, l'homme entier," was screen at the Bordeaux conference. It will cost about $5000.00 to produce a version with English subtitles. Anyone interested in contributing to this project should send a check to Joyce Hanks, made payable to her and designated for *Ellul Film projects*. When this project is complete there are plans for a larger project producing several film interviews with Ellul which are already complete but must be edited.

L'Association Jacques Ellul

During the past year, Ellul family members and colleagues have joined together for the purpose of preserving the collection of his writings and manuscripts, and making his work better known. The Association has now been legally registered in France, and will soon be ready to invite interested citizens of other countries to join. If you would like more information about the Association as it becomes available, please send your name and address to: Joyce M. Hanks, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Scranton, Scranton PA 18510-4646. If you wish to join please send her a check made payable to Joyce M. Hanks for $15.00. Joyce is willing to register all American applicants and saveus from the hassle of having to change our American dollars into French francs.

Narrative Theology After Auschwitz
From Alienation to Ethics

by Darrell J. Fasching

A critique and reconstruction of Christian theology and ethics in the light of Auschwitz through a dialogue with the Jewish narrative tradition of *Chutzpah* (i.e., audacity). It proposes a shared ethic of audacity in defense of the dignity of the stranger, as a response to the threats of our techno-bureaucratic world.

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Forum: Ethical Relativism and Technological Civilization

Morality After Auschwitz by Peter Haas (Fortress, 1988)-- *An Essay Review* by D. Fasching

This is a very good book with a somewhat misleading title, for the discussion of morality after Auschwitz comes up only briefly in the final pages at the end of the book. A more accurate title would have been *The Morality of Auschwitz*. For what this book really deals with is the way in which a society can adopt an ethic which permits it to redefine human values so as to make evil seem good and vice versa. The author's thesis is simple and profound: "Auschwitz" and "ethics" are not the mutually exclusive terms they might appear to be. On the contrary, had the Nazis not developed an ethic, the pursuit of genocide as a societal policy would have been impossible. Everything the Nazi's did was ethical, says Haas, even though not everything that is ethical is necessarily moral.

I share Hass' concern to understand how techno-bureaucratic nation-states are able to subvert and redefine ethical values to serve their own ideological interests. I also want to know how we can make moral judgments of such societies in a world that has largely capitulated to ethical relativism. Indeed I have made an attempt to respond to these issues in my own recent works: *Narrative Theology After Auschwitz: From Alienation to Ethics* and *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalypse or Utopia?*

Haas and I both make a distinction between a society's system of values or "mores" and critical evaluative judgments of those mores. He chooses to call a society's mores its "ethic" and the critical judgment of that ethic, "morality." In my work I have made the same distinction but reversed the terms. We are both struggling to use a vocabulary that has not been adequately differentiated to deal with this distinction and therefore we were each forced to improvise.

Setting aside that merely nominal difference in the usage of "morality" and "ethics," we share the conviction that every society has an ethic which shapes and encourages specific human behaviors and that such an ethic can easily transform evil into good and good into evil. We also share the conviction that the Nazi Holocaust is the most dramatic example of the power of an ethic to justify human atrocity. Finally, we share the view that if we can understand how the Nazi ethic came to assume this role in German society it should provide us with important ethical insights into the nature of evil in every society. This in turn should help us devise ways to subvert such evil in the future, before it escalates to the level of another genocidal project.

Morality After Auschwitz then is not a book about philosophical or theological theories of ethics, nor does the book present an ethical theory of its own. It is rather a socio-historical analysis of how a society adopts and implements a new ethic. Its greatest kinship is with the sociology of knowledge (in this case applied to ethical knowledge) and it uses the Holocaust as its case study.

The book begins with an introduction followed by twenty chapters divided almost equally into four parts. Part One, examines "The Intellectual Matrix of an Ethic." It traces the dissolution of the "old ethic" as the Wiemar Republic collapsed. At the same time, it traces the weaving of a new ethic out existent strands of religious and racial antiSemitism, and Fascist ethnic nationalism -- the latter rooted in a Romantic historical particularism which distrusts all international movements. Part Two: "The Growth of an Ethic" examines the expansion of the Nazi ethic from its sectarian base in a small political party (the National Socialist Workers Party) to its growth into a trans-societal cultural ethos covering most of Europe under Nazi rule. In this part we learn that bureaucracies of professionals played a key role in the development of a genocidal government policy and that everything that was done was both legal and ethical by the standards German society had adopted. Moreover, we learn that what enabled professionals to participate was the development of highly efficient and impersonal bureaucratic policies for implementing mass death accompanied by the development of the capacity to lead a double life, compartmentalizing and separating personal life from public duty. Indeed it was their ethic of public duty which enabled them to do what oftentimes revolted them on the personal level (86-90).

Part Three, "Ethics and the Shaping of Social Institutions" then examines the bureaucratization and politicization of this ethic as it became embodied in the institutions created by the 3rd Reich. It traces the political and bureaucratic growth of the National Socialist Workers party from its beginnings as a drinking party into a national political movement that overtook first Germany and then most of Europe. We are led through the process of "Gleichshaltung" or bureaucratic coordination where, by 1934, all institutions of German society were systematically disestablished and/or taken over and integrated into the Nazi party machine until there was virtually no institution or organization "outside" the party in a position to critique or subvert it. The state and the party were one. Drawing on Richard Rubenstein, Haas shows how the German bureaucracy coopted even the bureaucracy of the Jewish Councils to efficiently organize a system of mass death that was able to overcome all resistance.

Finally, in Part Four, "Responding to an Ethic: The Loss of Evil," Haas reviews the response of insiders and outsiders to the Holocaust, the failure of law to provide justice at Nuremberg. Then in the last fifteen pages he surveys the ethical responses of post-Holocaust Jewish theologians. It is in this last section that Haas draws a very troubling conclusion, namely, that "the search for an absolute standard by which to indict the Holocaust ends in failure" (9).

The Holocaust, he tells us, is "not the result of absolute evil" but of an ethic that conceives of good and evil in different terms. . . . That is why the horrors of Auschwitz could be carried on by otherwise good, solid, caring human beings" (170)."

The critique of an ethical system, Haas argues, can only come from outside the system, from those who are alienated from the system and experience themselves as outsiders, even though they may be socially located inside the system. Moreover, the existence of such critics is itself one of the products of the genesis of any societal ethic.

Every such ethic is created out of theological, historical, social and economic trends. "Like any ethic, the Nazi ethic produced its few fanatic and self-righteous adherents, its mass of unreflective supporters, and a subclass of dedicated and deviant opponents. In this, Nazism was no different from any other ethical code. Each person would, over a lifetime, establish a certain relationship to the regnant ethic, a relationship that grew not out of philosophical analysis but out of that person's personality, character, and social situation. In other words, conformity or opposition to an ethic is rarely, if ever, a matter of philosophical analysis. It is almost always a matter of accident, of where one happens to find oneself along the way. That means that it is wrong to judge people as evil simply because the conformed to the Nazi ethic, or as saints simply because they ended up opponents or rescuers. Their activities one way or the other were generally the result of mixed and unreflective motives" (181).

This is quite an astonishing statement, and one that I find very troubling. Haas goes so far as to compare a mediocre Nazi bureaucrat in the German Foreign Office by the name of (natu-

rally) Martin Luther with the French pastor, Andre Trocme, who led his village in the saving of some 5000 Jews. Luther advanced his career by currying the favor of the SS as they rose to power in order to bring about his own advancement in the Foreign Office. In order to curry this favor he went to the SS with a proposal to solve the problem of Jewish emigration by simply shooting them. Haas' conclusion is that it is wrong to see Trocme as better than Luther, each is simply a reflection of trends they had no control over -- of the accidents of time and place they found themselves in. Thus Luther is not evil and Trocme is no saint, each simply reflects some random variable in the statistical distribution of responses to the Nazi ethic, responses that would have their analog in relation to any societal ethic we care to study. (189)

Thus we are told that when Trocme, took in his first "starving and barefooted woman in 1940" it was no more an act of courage than Luther's first step to curry favor with the SS." Both operated out of simple impulses that are at work in all of us. (189)" Only by hindsight do we consider one a hero and the other a villain. The truth, says Haas is that **neither could conceive of acting differently than they did**. Each did what their character shaped by social context and tradition required them to do.

Haas goes on to argue that the Nuremberg trails demonstrated that the human capacity to redefine good and evil showed itself to be "beyond the reach of any legal system" since the trials focused on individual responsibility and never addressed the issue of the formation of an institutional context that legitimated genocidal behavior (210).

In the Epilogue Haas surveys the responses of Jewish theologians to the Holocaust -- Rubenstein, Berkovitz, Fackenheim, Weisel -- only to show that their responses too fall in line with the sociological patterns of response any ethic will generate. Finally, in a two page "Afterword" Haas tells us that he has tried to avoid two pitfalls of past treatments of the Holocaust: one the one hand trivializing the Holocaust by treating it as just another example of human inhumanity to humans and, on the other hand, of exaggerating the enormity and uniqueness of the Holocaust to the point where it cannot be compared to anything else in history.

We can learn nothing useful from either extreme. If we treat the Holocaust merely as the product of typical human failings of greed, jealously, etc. we will miss the specificity of its forms of evil, rooted deeply in historical antiSemitic stereotypes. If, on the other hand, we treat the Holocuast as absolutely unique and incomparable in its evil, there is no lesson we can take from studying its forms of evil and apply to our own time and place.

What is needed is a detailed study of how a societal ethic can sociologically legitimate human atrocity, one that takes account of the unique particulars of this history and yet can generalize so that we can actually learn something useful for our own time and place and its societal ethic. What is frightening is that "these people were not unintelligent, amoral, or insensitive. They acted consciously, conscientiously, and in good faith in pursuit of what they understood to be the good" (233). The lesson to be learned, we are told, is that events take on a life of their own which no one can imagine at the beginning and hence the Holocaust "became what it did not start out to be."

While I find Haas' attempt to give an account of the Holocaust that steers clear of a trivialized commonality on the one hand and an exaggerated uniqueness on the other, I find little help for the ethicist in his account. For while he gives us a detailed analysis of the particulars that made the Holocaust a reality and he does it in such a way to enable us to learn lessons that should be transferable to other situations (all of which I applaud), he does it at the cost of reducing the ethical life to a reflection of sociological trends which finally absolve everybody of responsibility, so that it seems to make no difference whether we choose to emulate the banal bureaucrat, Martin Luther, who seeks only his selfinterested advance through the death of Jews or the selfless rescuer, Andre Trocme who risks his own life to save Jews. Hass is a an ethical relativist and a sociological reductionist plain and simple: "Our own ethic is shaped by the social, economic and political grid from within which we make sense of the world" (233). It is hard see how one can build a critical morality within such a deterministic worldview.

Everything in his book points to such a conclusion, and yet curiously Haas ends the book with a quote from Albert Speer, in which Speer says: "It is true that I did not know what was really beginning on November 9, 1938, and what ended in Auschwitz and Maidenak. But in the final analysis I myself determined the degree of my isolation, the extremity of my evasions, and the extent of my ignorance" (233). These final words, with which the book ends, stand totally at odds with the entire thesis of the book. For the first time we get a hint that there is such a thing as individual responsibility for our actions, even though our lives are profoundly shaped by sociological influences. To read the book backwards from this final quotation is to engage in a deconstruction of its essential thesis.

Perhaps Haas deliberately put this statement at the end in order to suggest that we must not take the sociological perspective as absolute, that by its very nature it is an inadequate methodology for getting at individual freedom and responsibility and that therefore the sociological perspective must be supplemented by other perspectives. This, of course is the method Jacques Ellul uses in his analysis of technological determinism. For Ellul at the sociological level everything is determined, and yet at the level of concrete lived experience what the individual does remains decisive and can transform everything. But if this is Haas' strategy, the only evidence for it is the final quote from Speer.

Haas' treatment of the Holocaust reminds me a great deal of Richard Rubenstein's book *The Cunning of History* -- which I consider perhaps the single most important book on ethics written since World War II. It is important however, because it outlines the major ethical issues which must be dealt with by Western civilization -- indeed all civilization -- with brutal honesty. It is a book, however, which offers not a single clue as how to constructively respond to such a world and neither does *Morality After Auschwitz*. Such books make an important contribution to contemporary ethics, but they are only one piece of the puzzle and their value is in the challenge they present to anyone who would attempt to do ethics after Auschwitz. After Rubenstein and Haas, all glib solutions will be seen for their shallowness.

And yet there is a grave danger in the kind of socio-historical determinism we seem to find in Haas' book. If taken literally it may in fact convince us that ethical reflection is pointless -- that what we do is always merely a product of the accident of time and place. From my perspective, the limits of social analysis and all social determinism are amply evident in a fundamental observation of the social sciences, namely that no society has ever succeeded at totally socializing any of its members. We are all to some degree social deviants who are capable of calling into question "the way things are" and in that sense everyone of us has the capacity to call into question and transcend the cultural currents that attempt to shape us and in so doing assume responsibility for our actions. To reduce social deviance to statistical randomness and dismiss it as just one more outcome of social conditioning or accident of time and place is to obscure the very evidence that would demand that one reformulate one's theories so as to take into account the individual responsibility without which the moral life cannot make sense. My own position worked out in my two most recent books is that all genuine ethical criticism begins in experiences of alienation which enable us to call into question and transcend the social and political currents that shape our behavior.

In the essays that follow both Peter Haas and I, attempt to deal with ethical relativism, "after Auschwitz," in a techno-bureaucratic world. Here Haas tries to go beyond his book and turn ethical relativism into a constructive option. While agreeing with him about the importance of ethical diversity and the importance of the Other, I suggest an alternative that I believe is a less reductionistic way of approaching these issues.

Moral Relativity in the Technological Society

by Peter J. Haas

Jacques Ellul has done as much as any contemporary theologian to make us think about the moral implications of the modern, technological age. For Ellul, if I understand him correctly, it was not merely the vast new powers available to people that was cause for concern, but the whole new way that technologically-based, modern societies came to regard the world. Technology creates, as it were, its own reality with its own rules, rituals and imperatives; in short, its own ethic. Ellul's call for us was to move beyond the horizon of technology to a vision of the holy (by which he meant, in essence, Christianity) in order to secure (or retrieve) a vision of the human condition and of hope that both challenges and transcends the ethic of the technological. Over the past half century, we have come to know all too well the seductive power of technology to create its own ethic: whether in Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, or the situation in the Balkans. Ellul's insight into the potential wickedness of the modern world has been all too firmly confirmed.[1]

What remains unresolved so far is whether the second half of Ellul's formula can be so easily confirmed. That is, can a religion (say, Christianity) or religion in general offer us a way to resist the siren call of the ethic of the technological world? The answer I want to suggest in the following is that while we do need an ethic that can challenge that of the technological society, a simple appropriation of some traditional, logocentric religious view will not do. We can not successfully transcend the ethic of the technological by positing another monolithic albeit non-technological ethic. In this way we simply trade off one orthodoxy for another. Rather, the opposing ethic that we need to posit must take into account the truths about the structure of the universe that the modern age has revealed. That is, we need to incorporate the scientific and technological paradigms of our time into the counter-ethic if we hope to achieve a new synthesis. In essence, then, we have to rethink the whole notion of what constitutes an ethic. This will have to be an ethic that will take relativity and indeterminacy seriously. We can no more ignore that we live in an Einsteinian and Heisenburgian universe than Enlightenment theologians could forget that they were living in the wake of the Enlightenment.

In the following I want to move through three arguments in offering a suggestion as to what such a new metaethic might look like. First, I assert that any ethic that will capture the imagination of an age must finally be based on the currently regnant notion of the nature of physical reality. Second, I want to argue that the alternative ethics (such as that of the Nazis) that have emerged in the modern period have succeeded precisely because they have drawn on a more modern, more up-to-date theory of the nature of physical reality than had the inherited religious ethics. That is, I maintain that the Nazi worldview, for example, was able to define the moral agenda for a whole modern, technological society because it was able to present itself as in accordance with the latest scientific theories of the day and so more in tune with what was then regarded as really real than was true of traditional religious ethics. Finally, I want to launch a preliminary investigation of what a new religious ethic might look like, one that both transcends the pragmatism of a purely secular, technological ethic, but still draws on the post-modern understanding of the nature of the cosmos.

Ethics and the Scientific Paradigm

My first step is based on the assumption that morality and moral philosophy in any age are always based on, and draw from, a deeper understanding of the nature of reality. In short, the scientific view of what is and the moral demands of what ought to be are always linked. This is not to claim that one can adduce specific oughts from specific cases of what is. It is to say that at some point we must all feel that the moral life we are called to lead is consistent with what we understand to be the nature of reality. That is, at some level our ethics and our science must both live together in a coherent understanding of what is true. Part of my concern with Ellul is that by positing a holy out there that can act as a counterpose to technology, he is still assuming a world of objective reality, a world now denied by physics. To mount a successful challenge to technology, an entirely different stance, one consistant with a non-logocentric universe, will have to be formulated.

A striking example of how closely ethics and science have always been linked, at least in the West, is the work of Aristotle. Aristotle was both a scientist in that he developed a theory about how the physical universe operates, and a moral philosopher in that he articulated a basis for determining rationally what constitutes the right and the good. These two different areas of contemplation were of course not totally separate and distinct in his mind. In fact, Aristotle's ultimate enterprise was to arrive at an understanding in which what ought to be and what is are mutually supportive. His notion of the physical structure of the universe was that each element had its essential character and its rightful place in the scheme of things. This allowed him to account for why the universe seems to operate as it does. He could explain why stones fell and heated air rose: the one was seeking its natural position in the earth, the other as a mixture of fire and air was seeking its natural place in the air or the ultimate sphere of fire. In other words, each item in the material world has a certain basic form or essence that not only makes it what it is, but that also determines how it will behave in the physical world. It does what it ought to do (unless blocked) because of what it is.

To be sure, it was a bit more complicated to apply this to human beings, who after all think about how to act. We do not act with the unreflective spontaneity of a rock, for example, or with the instinctive reaction to stimuli as animals often seem to. This, for Aristotle, is where science comes to the aid of ethics. If we know what we are, then we will by that very fact know also what we ought to do. By contemplating our essence as human beings we will be able to see our ultimate end or telos, and so have a vision of what we ought to be and so do.

Aristotle offers one striking example of how closely scientific notions of reality and ideas of what constitutes morality have been. To give but one more example, we can look at the so-called Copernican revolution in astronomy as a challenge not only to Aristotelian astronomy and physics, but also by that same token to Aristotelian ethics (and theology).[2] That is why these new ways of seeing the heavens were so threatening to the Church. If Aristotle were overthrown in the sciences, then his ethics were undermined as well. If his notions of telos and virtue could no longer explain the observed physical universe, then they could not be trusted to yield a reliable model for moral behavior either.

What Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and others gave us was a universe in which motion was a function not of essence but of the interrelationship of opposing forces. This was given its paradigmatic articulation in the physics of Isaac Newton. But this new way of viewing and organizing physical data established a need to consider moral truths in the same way. At a deep level of conception, Newtonian physics and the new morality worked out by philosophers especially in Britain share similar basic convictions.[3] Both assume that no behavior on the part of an observed individual is determined by its essence in isolation. Both saw the individual working out its destiny in the context of its role as part of a larger aggregate. The motion of a ball in flight is at each instant a combination of diverse, albeit objective and quantifiable, forces (impetus, momentum, gravity) just as the act of an individual person can be understood as the result of a combination of forces acting upon him or her in the social realm. Democracy represents an expression of these forces averaged out in the social world just as the path of the ball does in the physical world. To be sure, there was seen to be a strict mathematical logic in the cosmos according to which the ball must act, just as there is a logic of human happiness or self-preservation in the social and political realm which determines basic human rights and social conventions. Thus the change in how people regarded human activity mirrors the change in how people regarded the functioning of the physical world (and vice versa).[4] Moral philosophy came to look at behavior less as a matter of fulfilling a given telos and more as a matter of what was appropriate or one's duty in a particular situation.

I give this brief look at Western ethics and science to illustrate a point which I am going to take for granted from here on, namely that moral philosophy and the natural sciences always share at a deep level some deep conviction about the nature of reality. It is irrelevant to this argument whether the scientific view influences the philosophical, or vice versa. What is important to see is that they operate in tandem. What is and what ought to be are always linked at some conceptual level. This does not mean that one is derivable, or at least easily derivable from the other. It does mean that the way we look at the cosmos to get scientific answers is the same way we look at the universe to get moral answers.

The Scientific Paradigm of the Nazi Ethic

This brings me to the second part of my argument, namely that the modern technological world has developed both its own notion of the nature of physical reality and along with that a concomitant notion of what morality requires. Ellul was right to see that, although I remain unconvinced that he analyzed the problem correctly. I want to test his insights, as it were, by taking as a test case, the nature of what I am calling the Nazi ethic. I will show that it is linked to a certain postmodern scientific hypothesis and not to the nature of technology today. I will then be in a position to turn to my third point, an argument that a better ethic is available on the basis of more contemporary scientific paradigms and that such an ethic is possible in the technological world and does not require a leap out into a counter-science ethic posited by a static notion of the holy.

The entire Nazi enterprise was held together by an elaborate ideology that was itself based on the nineteenth century scientific study of race. The interest in racial studies grew out of a number of different intellectual trends in the nineteenth century, including the confrontation with colonial societies, the historical theories of the Hegelians, linguistic and philological studies, and the growth of the science of genetics. These areas of study coalesced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into a multifaceted study of human genetics and race. In the context of the social dislocations caused by industrialization and the modern urban environment, these studies offered a coherent and scientific theory of how to manage social development. I want to describe briefly the major elements of this view and then show how it laid the foundation for the Nazi ethic of the 1930's.

As Hannah Arendt has pointed out, one of the great intellectual challenges of the nineteenth century was to come to an understanding of the variety of peoples and cultures that Europeans were encountering during their colonial expansion.[5] It became a matter of considerable interest to understand why such variety existed, why some social groups seemed to be trapped in simple, rural economies while others had forged ahead to create the elaborate industrial and urban societies of Europe. In the same vein it became a matter of speculation as to why some societies had developed rational religions based on the belief in one god while others seemed to still be practicing a mixture of magic, pagan polytheism and superstition. Under the influence of Hegelian thought, the common conviction emerged that the level of civilization reached by a particular population was a reflection of the population's innate abilities. That is, in every case a society was a perfect reflection of the inherent character of its people. From that idea it was but a short jump to the notion that the civilizing genius of a people or nation was genetic. At this point a second conviction came into play. This conviction grew out of both the philosophical construct of Hegel and the theories proposed by Charles Darwin to account for the diversity of life forms in the natural world. Hegel had proposed that the human insight into the world, the Spirit, grew progressively more insightful over time in a dialectic movement in which the inadequacies of each stage were taken up and resolved in the next epoch. We can trace the trajectory of this process in the progression of civilizations from age to age as each reaches new depths of self-awareness and understanding. This descriptive model of human history provided a framework for the creation of a social science. That is it allowed for the methodologically critical -- that is, scientific -- use of art, literature, religion and social structure to chart the ongoing progress in the human understanding of the ultimate. Historical, literary and aesthetic studies were no longer merely descriptive but could take their place in the larger scientific endeavor to chart the ever-deepening human enterprise to perceive the Truth.

The idea of the Hegelian dialectic was given concrete expression in many people's minds by the theories of Charles Darwin. Darwin's original purpose was simply to propose that the diversity of life forms found in the natural world were a result of spontaneous changes that gave certain forms of a species an advantage within a certain niche. Gradually that permutation would come to dominate in that niche and a new sub-species will have emerged. There was in this no sense that one subspecies was objectively better or worse than others, only more or less adapted to a particular environment. But in the popular mind this became assimilated to the Hegelian notion of evolution to yield the idea that life forms were constantly evolving not only into different forms, but ultimately to objectively better forms. These better, or objectively fitter forms, were destined by the very laws of nature to dominate all others and survive. In short, both the natural sciences and philosophy seemed to be pointing to the same powerful truth, namely that life evolved to ever fitter forms and that those populations at the forward edge of the process would naturally dominate and eventually drive out those less advanced. Or, to say the same thing from a different perspective, a population that appears endangered or is in decline is one that has been left behind in the grand march toward superior forms.

Once we have arrived at this point, it is easy to see that the science of genetics could become a major force in the nineteenth and early twentieth century attempts in the West to achieve a scientific understanding of the engine driving human destiny. If human society and civilization were merely outward expressions of the innate character and civilizing genius of the population, and if these characteristics were genetically determined, and if such innate characteristics evolve over time to yield superior forms, and finally if the sign of this superiority is dominance, then

genetics ultimately holds that key to the nature of human civilization. I submit that it was just such an understanding that supplied the popular culture with a seemingly scientific way of accounting for the world. It explained why some cultures dominated others, for example. It was simply the natural destiny of some to overtake others, just as close observation of the natural world would demonstrate.

There was another ramification of this as well, however, a ramification that was much more sinister. If genetic advance was reflected in a culture's dominance and well-being, then a culture's sickness and decline must also be a function of genetics, in this case genetic stagnation or even degeneration. It follows that if society is declining, if it is manifesting pathologies, then genetic science could provide an objective way of assessing the underlying cause and offer a methodology for engineering a recovery.[6]

At this point one only needs to think of the malaise that gripped German society in the wake of the First World War to understand the intellectual fascination with genetics in the form of racial science. We today have a perspective on the dissolution of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany that was simply not available at the time. We can see the problems in terms of social structure, economics and so forth that those going through the wrenching changes of industrialization simply were in no position to do. We can hardly be surprised that the thinkers and shapers of society turned to what scientific models were available to them.

Racial science provided both a diagnosis, an explanation of what was happening, and also a remedy, a strategy to turn the crisis around. If the social pathologies confronting German society were seen as symptoms of an underlying genetic decline, then the rational, scientific response would be to manage a regeneration of the genetic pool. This would of course take the form of social policies designed 1). to identify the carriers of inferior genes: the congenitally diseased, the racially inferior, the disabled; and 2) to identify the carriers of the superior genes. The former would have to be weeded out of the population while the later would have to be nurtured. The racial policies of Nazi Germany can thus be seen as systematically growing out of a particular scientific view of the world.[7] Given the presupposition that genetic science, with its Hegelian and Darwinian components, offered a true insight into the dynamics of human cultural change, the ethic of a racial social policy makes a certain sense. To be sure, racial science of this type was based on a number of erroneous presuppositions, not to mention a massive misreading of Darwin. But nonetheless, the point remains that we can explain the widespread support Nazi racial policy had at least in its abstract expression by its grounding in what were regarded as established scientific principles.

The Moral Paradigm of Scientific Relativity

The questions we are now left with are 1). what scientific paradigm is available for the construction of a post-modern ethic; and 2). how is an ethic to be adduced from that paradigm. The first question is the easier one. The governing model of our time, clearly, is Einstein's Theory of Relativity. It is the first major advance since the work of Isaac Newton towards formulating a comprehensive theory that explains why the universe functions as it does. Not only has the Theory of Relativity revised our notions of time and space, but it has changed in the popular mind how we understand perceptions and so how we evaluate the status of our descriptions of everything from natural phenomena to cultural creations. The more difficult question is what kind of ethic can be constructed on this foundation.

In fact, we do not need to start out de novo in building such an ethic. The basic conviction of Relativity that there is no objective reality out there to be observed but only descriptions from certain human perspectives had already been an established part of Western thought by the time Einstein published his theory. It is what lay behind the nominalist/realist debates of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[8] Immanuel Kant in the late eighteenth century used the difference between perception and reality as the very basis of his epistemology.[9] By the late nineteenth century, the very idea that there was a reality out there that the phenomenal world was reflecting or tending towards was demolished in the natural sciences by Charles Darwin and in moral philosophy by Friedrich Nietzsche. By the early twentieth century, when Einstein began publishing his speculations, structuralist and Semiotic studies were showing that human culture was nothing other than a set of signifiers which have no meaning outside their interpretation among a population. The adoption of Relativity as a basis for cultural studies and ethics is thus hardly without some precedents in Western thinking.

I now wish to turn to the second question, what the nature of such an ethic might be. The basic point to make is that while Relativity does eliminate all sense of a universal telos or of a single objective reality, it does not do away with all absolutes. Thus an ethic based on Relativity is not one in which everything goes or in which all viewpoints are equally valid. While an ethics of Relativity can be tolerant of many different types of perspective, it need not be equally tolerant of all of them. Let me explain.

According to the Theory of Relativity, it is not possible, for example, to claim that there is an absolute and objective speed of the moon. The speed of the moon, like any speed, is a matter of a relationship: how fast one thing is moving in contrast to another. Thus the speed of the moon will be different if measured from the sun, for example, than if measured from the earth. It is part of the work of the scientist to become aware of his or her point of observation and take that into account. It is in fact now taken for granted that the scientist's choice of question will pre-determine (in a sense) the answer that will emerge. This is the point eventually enshrined in the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle.[10] According to this new physics, there can in fact be several simultaneous right answers to any question, even right answers that appear to be mutually exclusive. This is so because the answer is always a function of the experiment or rhetoric we set up.

My point here is that this epistemology does not claim that any and every answer is true by the mere fact of its existence. It is always possible to produce wrong answers because the experiment was poorly planned, because the instrumentation was not accurate or simply because the experimenter has mismeasured. Thus, while it is possible to measure the moon's speed from a variety of equally valid perspectives, it is also possible to pick an irrelevant perspective for what the scientist wants to know, or to have an appropriate perspective and measure the speed incorrectly. Thus the modern scientific paradigm, while allowing for several concurrently right answers to any question about the universe, also recognizes that there are wrong and dysfunctional answers as well.

There is a second ramification of the Theory of Relativity that I wish to explore here. From the claim that there is no absolute space or time it follows that everything has a location and a velocity only in terms of an Other. And it follows further, from Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, that if we destroy or factor out this Other, then some aspect of the thing we are studying is thereby also by nature eliminated. It is this feature of Relativity that has not yet been taken seriously in the creation of a new ethic. The paradigm of Relativity offers the possibility of constructing an ethic that is consistent both with the regnant view of physical reality and with the multicultural and pluralistic global community we are now inhabiting. In the next few paragraphs I want to think through at least the broad outlines of how the contents of such an ethic might be adduced.

The foundational principle of the new physics is that any measurement is a matter of relationship. My argument here is that on the basis of a Relativity based ethic we need to make that same claim for moral imperatives. The scientific paradigm suggests that just as no scientific model or reality is self- standing and

ontologically grounded, we should be able to concede that in the same way no ethical system is a self-sufficient construct that has an objective claim to ontological superiority. Each ethic is the result of a particular cultural and historical encounter with life, and that the ethic that emerges out of the encounter is, at least potentially, a valid reading from that perspective. This does not mean that anything goes or that any personal set of feelings has to be recognized as a complete and coequal ethic. There are, as in physics, appropriate and useful places from which to take measurements, there is a need to be consistent about the perspective if the data are to mean anything, and there is a need to take care that the measuring is done accurately. There is still room to reject a Nazi type ethic that is based on poor science. Yet given proper context, consistency and rigor, differences can still be mutually tolerated.

A further implication of basing an ethic on Relativity is that each individual and society manufactures its own self- identity overagainst some Other.[11] In a more logocentric universe, this leads to the implication either that if my perspective is right then that of the Other must be wrong, or that the Other represents the perfect ethic which I and everyone else must emulate. The end result is to commit one to eliminating, or at least superseding, the ethics that do not meet the ideal. What the paradigm of modern physics teaches us is that that is not the case. In fact, the Other does not exist except as a projection of ourselves and we in fact only take on definition in terms of the Other. That is, if we eliminate the Other (whether by merging with it or by eliminating it), we have in fact thereby eliminated ourselves as well. In short, for any perspective, the Other is both necessarily different, but also necessary. An ethic based on eliminating or superseding the other is by the very nature of things, self-contradictory and so self-destructive. From the vista opened up by Relativity, I submit, we can perceive a way of establishing a moral rhetoric that demands that we recognize and even support the Other while not at the same time abdicating our ability to recognize that certain ethical stances can still be wrong.

Conclusion

It is not possible in this forum to develop fully the contents of such an ethic or to delineate how to know when the requirements of the perspective have been compromised so that the contents are incorrect. What I hope to have accomplished is to articulate a way of thinking about ethics that abandons logocentricity while still being consistent with the best of our scientific view of the structure of reality. It seems to me that placing relationship rather than being at the center of focus is the hallmark of post-modern scientific thought. It allows for greater latitude in recognizing the validity of various points of view and of the importance of these differences in maintaining a meaningful cosmos. By linking our understanding of good and evil, right and wrong, with this scientific paradigm, I believe we will be able to open ourselves up to the possibility of a new metaethic that will allow greater appreciation of the variety of ways people can choose to be ethical in the increasingly complex, pluralistic and technologically sophisticated post-Modern world we inhabit. The need is not to transcend this world, but to see in it the possibility of a new morality. In this way we might be able to develop as moral beings in the kind of world that so challenged Jacque Ellul.

Notes

1. I depend for my understanding of Ellul on Darrell Fasching, *The Thought of Jacques Ellul: A Systematic Exposition* (NY: Mellen, 1981).

2. See for example Anthony Alioto, *A History of Western Science* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1987), pp. 191-204.

3. These connections are drawn in Larry May, "Hobbes" in Robert Cavalier, ed., *Ethics in the History of Western Philosophy* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 125-126 and David Fate Norton, "Hume" *Ibid.*, pp. 156-158.

4. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame press, 1984), pp. 235-237.

5. "Imperialism" in her *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (NY: HBJ, 1973).

6. Much of this is drawn from Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* (NY: A. Knopf, 1985).

7. This is shown in detail by Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis* (NY: Cambridge UP, 1988). See also Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics Between Unification and Nazism 1870-1945* (NY: Cambridge UP, 1989).

8. This argument can also be seen in Copernicus, who did not so much claim that the earth actually revolved around the sun as he claimed that by making this assumption he could simplify the mathematical description of the planets observed orbits. Galileo created a problem only when he claimed that Copernicus' hypothesis was not merely a matter of mathematical convenience, but was in fact an accurate description of reality. See Alioto, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 146ff.

9. Kant, of course, did finally think that there was a reality out there that was available to human comprehension, albeit only through the power of pure reason. It is generally regarded to be Nietzsche who discarded entirely any need for logocentric presuppositions.

10. The Uncertainty Principle states in its simplest form that one can not determine simultaneously both the location and the velocity of an electron. The reason is that both location and velocity of electrons are artificial human constructs placed on the electron by the nature of the measuring device. An experiment designed to adduce one of these descriptions can never have "access" to the other. The formulation of this principle ended a long debate that engulfed late nineteenth and early twentieth century physicists. On this see John Gibbin, *In Search of Schrodinger's Cat: Quantum Physics and Reality* (NY: Bantam, 1984), pp. 2-3. Einstein's argument for rejecting the existence of a truth independent of the experimenter is discussed in Gerald Holton, *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973), pp. 232ff.

11. This is the basis of Martin Buber's epistemology. I establish the nature of the "I" on the basis of the relationships established with the "its" and the "thous" out there. By establishing those relationships, I am in fact giving content to the "I".

Beyond Absolutism and Relativism: The Utopian Promise of Babel

by Darrell Fasching

Adapted from *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalypse or Utopia?*, SUNY Press, 1993

Narrative Diversity and the Dignity of the Stranger

The story of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) is a story which seems uniquely suited to illuminating the ethical challenge of our time. According to that story the citizens of Babel sought to grasp transcendence by building a tower to heaven. Transcendence, they apparently believed, could be brought under human control through conformity to a common language. Transcendence was equated with the technical and social power which can be martialed by a society unified in its language, meaning and values. By sharing a common story, they seem to believe, transcendence could be domesticated and made subservient to human desires. But God, seeing the idolatry in what the citizens of Babel had in mind, confused their tongues so that they no longer were able to understand each other. They became strangers to each other and so had to abandon the dream of technical control over their destiny. There is a great deal of Babel's spiritual pathology present in our own MAD apocalyptic world. We also are caught up in such technological fantasies. There is much in us that still longs to return to the imagined days before Babel's disintegration, when everyone in the public square had a sense of belonging to the same sacred society, speaking the same language and sharing the same values.

In our pluralistic world we long for the common morality of a sacred society and lament our fragmented ethical diversity and the confusion it seems to bring. We wish for everything to be once more clear and unambiguous. From such a perspective the actions of a God who would deliberately make a sacred community into a society of strangers seems at best perverse -- a perverse judgment on human effort. But for a God who is infinite or Wholly Other, whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways, such an act might seem to be not a curse but a blessing. For it is through the stranger that the infinite enters the finite and closed world of a sacred society, calling it into question and opening it up to its utopian possibilities. For those who have the ears to hear and the eyes to see, Babel may not be so much a curse as a gracious opportunity filled with utopian promise. If we are to realize this promise, however, we must be prepared to break with those fantasies of a linguistically and technologically unified world which typified Babel before its fall. We must shatter the linguistic imperialism of secularism and techno-bureaucratic rationality in order to make a place for human dignity and human rights -- especially those of the stranger.

There is a significant difference in the way Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas approach narrative ethics within our modern technological city of *Babel*, with its ethical pluralism and narrative diversity. For it seems to me that MacIntyre bewails this diversity and prepares for us for a new "dark ages" by settling into the one story which he wishes were universal, whereas Hauerwas does not retreat into the particularity of his Christian narrative tradition but rather embraces its particularity while insisting that other narrative traditions may have something to teach us as well. The difference in attitude to the narrative pluralism of our world can be traced to Hauerwas' strong emphasis on the Biblical ethic of welcoming the stranger. For how can we welcome strangers without being interested in their stories? To welcome strangers entails an ethical encounter in which we must inevitably be open to their stories and traditions apart from which they would not be who they are. To welcome the stranger inevitably involves us in a sympathetic passing over into the other's life and stories and a coming back into our own own life and stories enriched with new insight. To see life through a story which requires us to welcome the stranger is to be forced to recognize the dignity of the stranger who does not share our story. We are forced to recognize the humanity of the one who is wholly other -- whose ways are not our ways and whose thoughts are not our thoughts. In our time, we must seek to build an ethical coalition for the defense of human dignity and human rights at the intersection of those narrative traditions that (like Judaism and Christianaity) emphasize welcoming the stranger or the (like Buddhism) the outcaste.

To welcome the stranger requires seeing Babel not as a curse but rather as a blessing. Indeed, the story of Babel offers us a clue not only to the relation of transcendence to the stranger but also how that relation can alter the techno-bureaucratic ideology which threatens to submerge us in the suicidal abyss of the demonic.

Let us recall the story once more. According to the book of Genesis:

> Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. . . . Then they [the citizens of Babel] said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which mortals had built. And the Lord said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:1, 4-9)

The story of Babel is especially interesting for what it suggests about the linkage of language, technology and the quest for self-transcendence. Technology is viewed as the mediator of the human quest for transcendence. That is, technology is thought to enable humans to reach heaven and be like God -- as they imagine God, that is, in total control. And even as technology is viewed, within the story, as mediating transcendence, language is viewed as mediating technology. It is by virtue of sharing one language, one worldview, that this transcendence or total control is viewed as possible. God's intervention, confusing their language so that the building project is interrupted, is usually interpreted as a curse or punishment for the sin of pride.

Perhaps that was the meaning of this ancient story before it was incorporated into the biblical narrative traditions. However,

in the Torah the command to welcome the stranger occurs more often than any other command -- some thirty six times.[1] In the light of this emphasis I think another conclusion must be drawn. God's confusion of human language must be understood not as a punishment but as a blessing. Humans, unable to imagine the infinite as anything other than the infinitizing of their own finitude, seek to appropriate transcendence through the linguistic ideology of a single worldview as the precondition for total technical control of their lives. But rather than punishing them for seeking transcendence, God intervenes to redirect them toward authentic self-transcendence, which can occur only when their are strangers to be welcomed into one's society. For strangers speaking different tongues, telling different stories and communicating different values are an invitation to self-transcendence, opening up our closed world to the infinite and the possibility of utopian transformation. In place of the totalitarian language of one world view, Babel offers us a plurality of languages and world views, each offering the possibility of a finite insight into the infinite -- insights which might be mutually enriching. Such a plurality of insights is appropriate to our finite condition. What is inappropriate is the pretension to omniscience. Rather than making ethics impossible, because the definitive (omniscient) answer cannot be given, it renders ethics a human task of questioning and questing for insight and the sharing of that insight. Ethics, so conceived, is a common quest to understand what is truly good, in which the good manifests itself not so much through absolutely *right* answers as through a shared commitment to be *responsible* for each other. As such, Babel redefines our relation to technique. Rather than a managerial/public policy ideology of total control over society, it suggests the more modest goal of a society of pluralistic institutions each with a limited area of authority and each exercising responsible self-control. Babel replaces the closed totalitarian world of *sameness* (i.e., of the false infinite) with the finite and unfinished world of human finitude and human diversity -- a world which is utopian because it is unfinished. A world in which the finite, without ceasing to be finite, is open to the infinite and hence further transformation.

Like Jeffrey Stout, I would argue that,

> our problems do not result from the confusion of tongues in a society that has fallen from the coherence and community of an earlier age. The plurality of moral languages in our society is closely related to the plurality of social practices and institutions we have reason to affirm. Our moral languages exhibit a division of conceptual labor, each doing its own kind of work. But they also sometimes get in each other's way. Some languages, in particular those of the marketplace and the bureaucracies, creep into areas of life where they can only do harm. They tend to engulf or corrupt habits of thought and patterns of interaction that we desperately need. Protecting them is a grave problem, worthy of the best social criticism and political experimentation we can muster.[2]

The problem then is not the pluralism of languages but the imperialism of some institutional languages, especially techno-bureaucratic and economic languages. For the imperialism of these languages tends to destroy the complex socio-linguistic ecology which sustains human dignity by reducing the individual to a component in a complex bureaucracy to be manipulated for the achievement of maximum efficiency at a minimum cost. The problem is, as Peter Berger suggests, that technical bureaucracy has replaced the sacred canopy as the organizing principle of modern social life since it is experienced as the power which transforms chaos into cosmos.

Both Ellul and Richard Rubenstein, suggest that the demonic power of a technological civilization lies in creating a bureaucratic society of total domination. Such a society is a total reversion to that mythic time before Babel when society was governed by one language and one technology which serves to absolutize its finite social order as sacred and unquestionable and seeks to eliminate all self-transcendence by substituting *sameness* for *diversity*. The question remains, however, whether a technological civilization must necessarily result in the bureaucratization of human life. Berger (Peter and Brigitte) and Kellner argue that while bureaucracy and technology are the primary social carriers of modernization, they are not the same, nor are they inextricably linked. Bureaucracy and technology are as old as urbanization itself. But the modern "technological phenomenon," as Jacques Ellul describes it, with its emphasis on efficiency and the managerial restructuring of society to promote maximum efficiency is a distinctively modern phenomenon. It is when technological efficiency becomes linked to the bureaucratic domination of life that its impact on society and personal life becomes totalitarian.

The heart of the problem lies in the transformation which occurs when modern technological consciousness is subsumed into bureaucratic consciousness and generalized to the whole of society. For there are inherent limits in technological consciousness which are removed as it enters the bureaucratic environment. In areas of genuine technological production, the materials one is working with and the goals one are trying to realize are specific. They impose discipline, limits and measurable goals on the technological process. All of these are absent when technical attitudes are carried over into bureaucratic processes. "In political bureaucracy there is less pressure from the logic of technology and therefore more of a chance for the peculiar genius of bureaucracy to unfold."[3]

As bureaucracy overtakes technology and engulfs society, the means are no longer related to and disciplined by ends beyond themselves. The whole of society becomes divided into areas of bureaucratic expertise to be regulated by the appropriate experts according to established anonymous and impartial procedures. Organization and orderliness become ends in themselves.

> Bureaucracy is not only orderly but orderly in an imperialistic mode. There is a bureaucratic demiurge who views the universe as dumb chaos waiting to be brought into the redeeming order of bureaucratic administration. . . . The engineer puts phenomena into little categorial boxes in order to take them apart further or to put them together in larger wholes. By contrast, the bureaucrat is typically satisfied once everything has been put in its proper box. Thus bureaucracy leads to a type of problem-solving different from that for technological production. It is less conducive to creative fantasy, and it is fixating rather than innovating. . . . In the technological sphere, social organization is largely heteronomous, that is , it must be so shaped as to conform to the non-bureaucratic requirements of production. This imposes certain limits on organization. . . . In the political sphere, which is the bureaucratic sphere par excellence, these limits are much less in evidence. Here, organization can be set up autonomously, that is, as following no logic but its own. . . . Paper does not resist the bureaucrat in the way that steel parts resist the engineer. Thus there is nothing that intrinsically prohibits the passport agency from deciding that ten rather than three bureaucrats must approve every passport applicant.[4]

In a techno-bureaucrat society all of life is compartmentalized and individuals are expected to unquestioningly follow procedures without necessarily understanding the larger goals to which their actions contribute. For, on the one hand, the intelligibility of required procedures is opaque since the problem it solves is not a genuine technical problem. On the other hand, one is expected to abide by regulations and procedures which are "too

technical" for the average person to understand, on the assumption that the appropriate experts understand and legitimate these ends, providing the reasons why things must be done in a certain way.

Albert Speer, reflecting on how he came to be involved in Hitler's Third Reich emphasizes just these tendencies of techno-bureaucratic order. Thus, he tells us:

> The ordinary party member was being taught that grand-policy was much too complex for him to judge it. Consequently, one felt one was being represented, never called upon to take personal responsibility. The whole structure of the system was aimed at preventing conflicts of conscience from even arising. . . . Worse still was the restriction of responsibility to one's own field. Everyone kept to his own group – of architects, physicians,, jurists, technicians, soldiers, or farmers. The professional organizations to which everyone had to belong were called chambers . . . and this term aptly described the way people were immured in isolated, closed-off areas of life. The longer Hitler's system lasted, the more people's minds moved within such isolated chambers . . . . What eventually developed was a society of totally isolated individuals . . . .[5]

Such a techno-bureaucratic society forces a demonic doubling or splitting of the self. It forces individuals to generate a plurality of selves -- a *persona* appropriate to each compartmentalized area of human life, selves which are, at best, a-moral, having surrendered the option of ethical reflection and judgment to the experts. These selves, denuded of everything which makes them truly individuals (i.e., their personal and communal histories and values) become finally dehumanized interchangeable and replaceable parts in a vast bureaucratic machine. Thus whereas technological production gives persons a sense of creativity and potency and even self-transcendence as one overcomes obstacles and realizes a goal, bureaucracy creates just the opposite, namely, a sense of impotency, helplessness and the necessity to conform to a reality so real, massive and all pervasive that "nothing can be changed." The result is a social structure which separates ends from means or the deciders from the actors, relegating all decisions to "higher levels." Such a social structure prepares the way for the demonic, preventing ethical questions from ever arising even as it creates bureaucratic individuals who feel no personal responsibility for their actions.

In such a techno-bureaucratic society, the presence of holy communities, who are in but not of the world, serve as a fence around human dignity. For these communities prevent the usurpation of human dignity by bureaucratic expediency, especially by forcing the naked self to recognize its essential interdependence with all other beings. Such communities undermine demonic forms of doubling by fostering a sense of self which breaks down the compartmentalized walls between its various role defined selves (all of whom speak only one language - "bureaucrateeze"), encouraging the reflective self to assume responsibility for all its selves.

Our capacity for ethics is rooted in our capacity to assume the place of the other who will be affected by our actions. This capacity is fostered by the experience of self-alienation which makes it possible for us to assume different roles in different social contexts. The capacity to assume diverse roles is precisely what enables us to identify with the stranger. The ethical dimension of every institutional role we assume is rooted in a feeling of obligation towards the dignity of the persons whose needs we meet through that social context. However, the tendency of virtually every social institution is to consider its purposes as sacred or ultimate. So each demands a total unquestioning commitment of the self to its goals and values at the expense of all others. To acquiesce in that demand would require a demonic doubling.

By contrast, the holy community, when it is faithful to its calling, is not just one more institution competing for theloyalty of the self but the one community which raises the question of justice. It is the one community which raises those questions which force the reflecting self to weigh and balance all the demands placed upon it by its diverse roles so as to recognize and embrace that socio-ecological balance which will best allow it to respect the human dignity of others in every social context of its life. This it does by weighing and balancing the self's diverse roles so as to promote a complex moral balance in its social ecology which does justice to human dignity in all its social contexts.

Contrary to Alasdair MacIntyre's argument, human rights claims cannot simply be dismissed as fictions invented to counter bureaucratic imperialism. Rather, they are an expression of our deepest religious and ethical insights concerning the status of the stranger. Our problem is not, as MacIntyre appears to suggest, that we no longer all share the same story as in the days before Babel. A human rights ethic does not require narrative uniformity. It only requires that our diverse stories make a place for the stranger. Indeed, as I have been arguing, human rights ethics are the result not of narrative uniformity but narrative diversity. The diversity of Babel is not a curse but a promise. It is a promise which can be realized through a process which Jeffrey Stout calls moral *bricolage*. A *bricoleur* is one who creatively makes use of what ever is at hand. "All great works of creative ethical thought . . . involve moral *bricolage*. . . . Take Aquinas,. . . . his real accomplishment was to bring together into a single whole a wide assortment of fragments -- Platonic, Stoic, Pauline, Jewish, Islamic, Augustinian, and Aristotelian."[6] While I think there can be more theoretical clarity to this process of *bricolage* than Stout's pragmatism offers, I do not find myself in disagreement with his basic premise. When it comes to discussing ethics and human rights in the naked public square, he suggests, *bricolage* can produce a very creative and functional linguistic *creole*.

> The secularization of public discourse – didn't occur in people's heads and hearts but rather into he linguistic transactions that took place, under the aegis of certain public institutions, between one person and another. What they had in their heads and hearts mattered. Luther's religious convictions about the nature of the secular order and Locke's religious convictions of conscience, as well as the convictions of eighteenth-century deists and nineteenth-century atheists, all contributed to the secularization of moral discourse. But we need also to keep in mind how heavily the need to persuade one's religious opponents without resort to war has contributed to the process of conceptual change. . . .
>
> Our secularized language of human rights seems in fact to have begun as what the linguists call *pidgin* -- a sparse dialect used entirely for communicating with members of other groups, nobody's native tongue or first language of deliberation but **a handy mode of discourse with strangers** [emphasis added]. But what used to be a pidgin can undergo further development, catch on as a language to be learned in infancy, and function as a subtle medium for deliberation and discourse with friends and family. Linguists call such a language a *creole*. A creole can become over time, as rich a moral language as one could want -- drawing vocabularies from divers sources and weaving them together, if all goes well, into a tapestry well-suited to the needs of a time and place. Need we reduce our moral discourse to Esperanto or confine ourselves to the scant conceptual resources of a pidgin to make the language of human rights our own? Not if we can give it a place within a

language sufficiently rich and coherent to meet our needs.[7]

The language and ethic of human rights which I have been envisioning approximates Stout's proposal. But the creole that I imagine would continue to be viable only if it acted as a bridge between particular traditions and their stories and not as a replacement for them. To Stout's credit he recognizes the moral discourse of the naked public square must have a place within it for religious dialects as well as secular. "If we want to understand our fellow citizens," he says (speaking for the "secularist" perspective), "-- whether they be Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jerry Falwell, the Roman Catholic Bishops, Mario Cuomo, or Elie Wiesel -- we had better develop the means for understanding the moral languages, including the theological ones, in which they occasionally address us and in which their deliberations are couched."[8] One might add, that the reverse is true also. Those who speak out of religious narrative traditions need to be able to hear and understand those who speak out of secular stories as well. For this to happen, the religious fundamentalism which characterizes many religious communities and the secular fundamentalism that pervades the naked public square will both have to be desacralized and replaced with a secular holiness which welcomes strangers and the diversity of story and tradition they bring with them. The utopian promise of Babel lies neither in a secular uniformity nor a sacred uniformity but in the possibilities for self-transcendence which occur when we welcome strangers into the public square even though welcoming them is likely to change and transform us.

The kind of *creole* Stout seems to have in mind is well illustrated by the cross-cultural human rights ethic whose emergence is symbolized by the convergence between East and West which we find in Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. Their ethic of non-violence is the product of a long history of interaction between narrative traditions East and West (going back through Tolstoy to Jesus and the Buddha) which has resulted in a powerful ethic of audacity on behalf of the stranger. Indeed, I believe the ethical *creole* which is emerging out of this multi-cultural and multi-religious narrative history is capable of embracing both religious and secular ethics to reveal the utopian promise of Babel in a unified yet pluralistic response to the silent voice which commands from Auschwitz and Hiroshima -- Never Again.

Secular Holiness in Defense of Human Dignity: The Commanding Voice From Auschwitz and the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights

If the twentieth century has been the age of the genocidal *apocalypse* (i.e., revelation) of the demonic, it has also been the age of the birth of human rights. It was Emil Fackenheim (in *God's Presence in History*) who noted that the refusal of Jews to give up their Jewishness, despite the devastation of the Shoah, suggested that they had heard and responded to a silent yet commanding voice from Auschwitz, forbidding them to grant Hitler a posthumous victory. In claiming that Jews had heard such a command, Fackenheim was not so much advancing a theological hypothesis as he was making an empirical observation. He was simply articulating and making conscious what, in fact, had already happened. For the visceral response to the Shoah by Jews, both religious and non-religious, was to continue to affirm their Jewishness.

It is not implausible to suggest that the emergence of an ethic of human rights is a similar response to a silent yet commanding voice from Auschwitz -- a voice directed, in this instance, to the whole human race. For the movement for human rights arose in response to the trauma of the Shoah after WWII and culminated in the formation of the United Nations in 1946 and the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. At the same time, the U.N. backed founding of the State of Israel. The Declaration recalls the "barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind," and affirms the unity of humanity across cultures. Consequently, this document stands against all mythologies which would divide humanity, racially or otherwise, into superior and inferior groups in order to claim the world and its resources for the superior ones, as both the German and Japanese mythologies of the WWII period sought to do. The unity and sanctity of the human community, it declares, may not be violated by any political order. Human dignity transcends all social and political orders. It is the true measure of a just society -- the limit which no political authority may transgress.

The power of the ethical vision of human dignity and human rights expressed in the U.N. document lies in the fact that it too is rooted in a visceral response, one which cuts across cultures and creeds. Unlike the language of most academic reflection on ethics which remains technical and esoteric, human rights language is a language which has spontaneously taken root in cross-cultural public discourse. The language of human rights has become embedded in the language of politics and international relations. Even if in many cases the political use of this language is hypocritical, still that is *the homage which vice pays to virtue*, which means that this standard has taken root in public life and can be used as a measuring rod (canon) for social and political criticism. To a considerable degree the world has already embraced an ethic of human rights and now scholars are scurrying to see if it is a coherent and defensible ethic.

The emergence of a human rights ethic marks the emergence of an ethic of secular holiness. It parallels the convergence of the secular and the holy which Irving Greenberg, in his essay *The Third Great Cycle*, has noted in the history of Judaism. Greenberg breaks down the history of Judaism into three stages of secularization. These stages have implications for the gentile world as well. According to Greenberg, the first era of the Jewish covenant, the biblical, ended with the fall of the second temple which in turn lead to the rabbinic era which lasted until the Shoah and the emergence of the modern state of Israel which inaugurated yet a third era. The trend in this unfolding pattern is one of the increasing hiddenness of God, says Greenberg, and of the increasing responsibility that human beings must bear for the covenant. In the first age, God intervened directly in history and bore the primary responsibility for the covenant. In the second age, God became more hidden. God went into exile and diaspora with God's people and placed more responsibility with the human side of the covenant, allowing the rabbis to determine the binding nature of covenant obligations. But now after the Shoah in which 80 % of the rabbis and Talmud scholars perished, the Talmudic age has come to an end. But even as the Shoah shattered faith, so the creation of the state of Israel stands on "a par with Exodus" as a miraculous event rekindling hope. Out of the contradiction of these two events, Shoah and Israel, neither of which is capable of canceling out the other, Greenberg argues, a new age of Judaism is being born. Living with these contradictory experiences, faith reasserts itself and yet "the smoke of Auschwitz obscures the presence of God." In this new era God is not only more hidden but religious activity has become radically secular.

The old categories of secular and religious no longer work. If in the first era God was to be found in the temple in Jerusalem, and in the second era God was found in exile and diaspora with God's people, then in the third era God is found hidden everywhere beneath the secular. In this third era, the primary responsibility for keeping the covenant has fallen on the human side of the covenant. In this era, Greenberg argues, the covenant is no longer binding on Jews. After the Shoah God cannot with justice require any Jew to keep the covenant. The covenant has become a voluntary covenant. And yet Jews are choosing to keep it of their own free will but in a radical variety of ways. In direct continuity with the rabbinic principle of pluralism in interpretation but in contradiction of the principle of majority rule, the placing of the covenant more completely in human hands means there will be

diversity both in the interpretation and application of the covenant. There will legitimately be a plurality of Jewish covenantal life-styles. It is binding on Jews to accept each other in these plural ways of keeping the covenant. For any one Jewish community to reject other Jews because of the choice of how they will keep the covenant would be a betrayal of those Jews, both secular and religious, who died in the camps. Such a betrayal only furthers the possibility of a posthumous victory for Hitler. Indeed, it is the more secular institutions of Judaism and their lay leadership,(e.g., the state of Israel and the United Jewish Appeal), not the ultra orthodox (who would refuse some Jews admission to Israel), who are championing the dignity of every Jew as created in the image of God, against all future Hitlers. These secular institutions and lay leaders represent the emergence of a new era and a new ethic of secular holiness for Jews.

In *The Secular City*, Harvey Cox once argued that the modern secular age, far from leading necessarily to nihilism, leads instead to a new pragmatic consensus on human values as exemplified in the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights. I think Cox is right to point to the human rights movement as a significant development but I think he is wrong to see it as rooted in a purely pragmatic consensus. Human rights claims suggest that we have a human dignity which must not be violated even if this consensus should change. Human rights claims are rooted in a uniquely modern understanding of the human self as making a moral claim on us by its very existence. Human rights claims are rooted in the spontaneous recognition of the transcendent dignity of the human self. The U.N. Declaration on human rights represents nothing less than a response of the human community to human dignity as an experience of transcendence which evokes a new international covenant community-of-communities.

I believe the international movement to embrace and defend an ethic of human rights, inaugurated by the U.N. Declaration in response to the Shoah, represents the emergence of a new covenant with the whole of humanity -- parallel to that of the renewed voluntary covenant of Judaism. The new Jewish covenant, as Greenberg interprets it, really has two levels. On the one hand, the vocation of witness as a light to the nations, of whether and how to be Jewish is now a matter of choice. But Jews do not have the option of not recognizing each others' diverse forms of Jewishness as authentic. The dignity of each Jew, as one created in the image of God, must be acknowledged. The new covenant with humanity represented by the U.N. Declaration of human rights parallels the Jewish covenant only at the second level. This covenant is not experienced as voluntary but as an unconditional non-negotiable demand. It is as if a silent yet commanding voice was heard from Auschwitz demanding that the human dignity of every stranger, beginning with the Jews, be recognized and affirmed as of infinite value.

This covenant is at once both holy and secular. It cuts across the sacred and the secular, winning adherents both religious and non-religious. It is unique in its ability to transcend the privatistic and relativistic attitudes of modern consciousness to elicit and create a public trans-cultural holy community-of-communities of all those *called out* to champion human dignity. It has created its own secular organizations to champion this dignity. Such organizations include the U.N. itself, especially its Commission on Human Rights and its various subcommissions, as well as the International Court of Justice and regional Conventions on Human Rights in Western Europe, America and Africa. Then there are the governmental offices of individual nations which monitor each other for rights violations and use this information to political advantage. (Motivations of self-interest aside, this political game does keep the pressure on to observe human rights.) Finally, there are non-governmental voluntary associations such as Amnesty International, the Anti-Slavery Society, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Also in this category are religious communities (churches, synagogues, etc.), labor organizations, professional associations, etc. This community of communities represents a parallel to the secular holiness of which Greenberg speaks with reference to Judaism, in which the measure of holiness is not belief but action on behalf of human dignity. At the time of the six day war, Greenberg argues, it was the atheist philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, and not Pope Paul VI, who spoke out on behalf of Jewish lives and thus Sartre and not the Pope who is the truly holy man. Likewise it is the secular Israelis who are truly holy, for it is they who insist on welcoming all Jews to Israel, not the ultra-orthodox who would turn their backs on non-religious Jews. The test is the deed. Anyone who protects human dignity and human life is a witness to its infinite value, to our being created in the image of the God without image.

As a universal response to Auschwitz and Hiroshima, and all the atrocities of WWII, the human rights movement represents a renewal of God's original covenant with the whole human race, the covenant with Noah, signified by the placing of the rainbow in the sky. In that covenant, God promised: "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind.... nor will I ever again destroy every living creature" (Genesis 8:21). But after Auschwitz and Hiroshima the responsibility for this covenant has shifted to the human side and it is the human race which must promise -- "Never Again." Human rights is the fence around this new covenant, the fence which must be erected to protect the infinite dignity of every human being and the sanctity of all creation. An ethic of human dignity and human rights is the common response of Jews and gentiles to the silent yet commanding voice which came from Auschwitz and also from Hiroshima, the voice which commands -- "Never Again."

Human rights is the name for a new covenant which has emerged through a wrestling with the stranger who comes from other cultures, other religions, other races. A human rights ethic is an ethic of audacity on behalf of the stranger. Its purpose is to protect the dignity of strangers no matter what race, religion or culture they come from. We must wrestle with the stranger as if with God -- the God who remains hidden, who refuses to reveal his name, who remains transcendent yet immanent, *God with us*, the God who blesses us and offers us a new name and a new identity. The consensus which Cox speaks of is more than a rational consensus. It is a covenantal response to the hiddenness of transcendence beneath the countenance of the stranger, a response which calls forth a secular holiness. This new identity and new covenant can only be embraced by embracing the stranger, by welcoming the stranger and by the audacity to champion the dignity of the stranger against all the dark social, political and religious forces of dehumanization.

Although this new covenant can be understood as a renewal of the Noachite covenant, it is one deeply influenced by the Mosaic and Christological covenants of Jews and Christians. For these traditions introduced an understanding of humans as created in the image of the holy and then introduced the secularizing power of the holy into the world, fostering human freedom, dignity and interdependence. And as we pass over into other religions and other cultures, we shall find kindred spirits for this new covenant of secular holiness among the members of the Buddhist sangha as well. If Auschwitz and Hiroshima are the expression of the dark and demonic side of urban secularization, the movement for human rights represents the positive side, the secularization of the ethical traditions previously carried only by holy communities. For the first time in history, the measure of human dignity is finding official embodiment in the secular political-institutional-cosmological order of society as the true measure of a just society.

From an Ethic of Honor to an Ethic of Human Dignity, Rights and Liberation

As Peter Berger has argued, there is a fundamental difference in the ethical sensibility of the modern individual as compared to the individual in a pre-modern society. "The [modern] age that saw the decline of honor also saw the rise of new moralities and of a new humanism, and most specifically of a historically unprecedented concern for the dignity and the rights of the individual."[9] The modern person, he argues, operates out of an ethic of dignity whereas the person from a pre-modern society is governed by a morality of honor. To fully understand the implications of, and reasons for, this shift we must understand the social and historical location of these contrasting ethics/moralities.

Honor and duty, says Berger, are concepts rooted in an understanding of self found in pre-modern hierarchical societies. These are precisely societies which understand both self and society as part of a sacred natural order. In such societies, the self is basically a clothed self. That is, the self is identified with or clothed in its social role which is given as its destiny at birth into a particular place in the hierarchical stratification of society. The sense of identity one has in such a society is basically collective. You would have the sense that your family and your clan reside within you, such that if you are insulted it is not just you but your whole family or clan who is insulted. Moreover, if you fail to live up to the obligations of your social status it is more than a personal failure. You bring dishonor on your whole family or clan. In both cases you may be expected to risk your life in order to reestablish this collective honor. An insult may require a duel or inter-tribal warfare. Individual failures entail a loss of face which may require reparations as drastic as suicide, as in the Japanese tradition of *hara kiri*.

It is very difficult for a modern person to understand this ethic because it is rooted in a sense of human identity totally at odds with the modern sensibility. Whereas the traditional self is from birth clothed in a culturally defined human nature (i.e., a fixed set of social roles), the modern self takes off and puts on social roles or identities as if they were different suits of clothes. For the modern person, the self is never identified with its social role. The modern self is a naked self which identifies itself not with its roles but rather with its capacity to choose its roles. The modern self is an existential self, free to choose who to become through its choice of roles. Because the naked self does not identify with its social role, it does not experience insult as a threat to its honor any more than it experiences failure as a loss of face or identity.

In a pre-modern society there is a hierarchical ordering of human selves in status and value. The hierarchical order is a normative order, reflecting the sacred order of the cosmos. Thus one's place in society determines not only who you are but what your obligations or duties are toward your peers as well as those above and below you in the hierarchy. Such a hierarchy implies levels of humanity. The operative value governing human relationships is not equality but rather "to each his due." Those in higher positions having been given more humanity also have greater obligations of duty than those who are lower in the hierarchy, having less humanity. A very clear example of such society would be the classic Brahmanic caste system in India or the classical familial-hierarchical ordering of human relations in neo-Confucian societies. In both, one of the greatest sins is to violate the sacred cosmic order of nature by the mixing of castes or roles, ignoring the proper ritual obligations of caste or social position. It is a great sin because it violates the sacred order which makes life possible, introducing disharmony into the universe and causing the disintegration of the cosmos into chaos. In all such societies myth and ritual serve to legitimate the sacred order of society, reinforcing the obligation of everyone to perform his or her sacred duty.

By contrast, the naked self transcends it social roles. It is not that such a self is ever found without some social role or other but rather that the modern self views itself as prior to its roles which are understood as diverse opportunities for self expression. As a result all human selves are essentially equal, no matter what their social status since one's humanity resides not in a role but in an essential nakedness shared with all other selves. "Modern man is Don Quixote on his deathbed, denuded of the multicolored banners that previously enveloped the self and revealed to be *nothing but a man*."[10] This is the essence of the modern understanding of human dignity which has replaced the notion of honor. "It is precisely this solitary self that modern consciousness has perceived as the bearer of human dignity and of inalienable human rights."[11] All selves have an equal human dignity and equal human rights because all selves are equally naked.

This understanding of self, while typical of modern society, says Berger, has its origins in such ancient precursors as the Hebrew Bible, Sophocles and Mencius.[12] Its modern manifestations appear in the

> formulation of human rights, from the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence to the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. These rights always pertain to the individual 'irrespective of race, color or creed' – or, indeed, of sex, age, physical condition or any conceivable social status. There is an implicit sociology and an implicit anthropology here. The implicit sociology views all biological and historical differentiations among men as either downright unreal or essentially irrelevant. The implicit anthropology locates the real self over and beyond all these differentiations.[13]

The transition from an ethic of honor to an ethic of dignity, Berger suggests, can be viewed both positively and negatively. Conservatives view the decline of honor as a profound loss, while modernists see it as a "prelude to liberation." On the one hand, the naked self is in a situation of perpetual identity crisis, marked by excessive individualism and alienation from its social roles. On the other hand, this same deinstitutionalizing of the self makes possible "the specific modern discoveries of human dignity and human rights. . . . The new recognition of individual responsibility for all actions, even those assigned to the individual with specific institutional roles, a recognition that attained the force of law at Nuremberg -- all these and others, are moral achievements that would be unthinkable without the peculiar constellations of the modern world."[14]

Berger's distinction between honor and dignity makes it possible to understand how both the desacralizing power of the holy and the desacralizing power of urbanization converge with modern consciousness to form an ethic of human rights as an ethic of secular holiness. Such an ethic, understood with the proper qualifications, might bridge the gap between religious and secular ethics. For the naked self is a product of the history of secularization both as a result of urbanization and as a result of the emergence of holy communities. These two processes converge to remove the self from the sacred cosmic and hierarchical order of nature, where identity is fixed and given, in order to place this self in the new secular world of the naked public square.

The origins of human rights thought is controversial. I do not think it is either possible or desirable to trace a human rights ethic to a single source. Human rights emerge as a distinct theme of modern ethical consciousness as the result of the influences of a variety of sources both ancient and modern, both secular and religious. I would identify at least five such sources: 1.) urbanization, 2.) experiences of the holy, East and West, 3.) socio-historical consciousness of the limits of all socialization, 4.) the experience of doubt and the questions it generates and, 5.) the experience of indignation.

The modern naked self, which experiences itself as having an inherent human dignity no matter what its race, or religion, or social and economic class, must be seen as drawing on human experiences both universal and particular -- as universal as civilization itself and as particular as individual narrative-communal traditions within civilization. The universal root is urbanization. (1) Urbanization is a secularizing process which alienates the self from the sacred mythological order of nature, stripping the self of its collective identity and leaving it naked in its new urban world. Urban individuation creates the burden of self-consciousness. The pluralistic and institutionally complex urban environment individuates human identity and fosters reflective self-consciousness. This process heightens our sense of human individuality and the unique value of every individual. However, it also heightens our sense of alienation and meaninglessness.

(2) In the ancient world, friendship between persons who were socially unequal was thought to be impossible, but it was viewed as a possibility within the holy communities of Buddhists and Jews, and later in Christianity. What these holy communities offered that was unavailable to either the early urbanized naked self (e.g., Gilgamesh) or the clothed self (the remythologized self as found in the sacred societies shaped by Taoism, Confucianism and Hinduism), was the development of a language of inwardness to articulate an experience of the holy which breaks with the cosmological imagination. This is a language for exploring the openness of the naked self to the infinite -- a wholly other dimension of experience. In the traditions of the holy communities the naked self created by urban secularization is not clothed in some new cosmological myth but rather discovers its emptiness. The consciousness of the equality of selves within holy communities is rooted in an awareness that all selves share a fundamental capacity for openness to the infinite. The self is understood not as created in the image of nature (with a natural caste or class identity) but in the image of the God who is without image, or in the Buddhist case in the image of the ultimate emptiness of all things.

The holy is that which is set apart (*qadosh*). It is that which can neither be named nor imaged. Transcendence is unimaginable (i.e., un-image-able) and hence, like the stranger whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways, can never be fully integrated into the cosmological/social order. The self, stripped of its natural identity, turns inward to discover that its nakedness is not the equivalent of an eternal self. The finite self is not confined to the finite but open to the infinite. There is no floor of Tao or Brahman beneath the self, only an emptiness which is a radical openness. It is this type of experience which leads Buddhists to speak of the self as void or empty, and Jews and Christians to speak of the self as created in the image of a God who is without image.[15]

(3) In addition to urban alienation and the experiences of the holy, the modern naked self has roots in the emergence of modern socio-historical or technological consciousness. Much of the ethical power of the human rights movement comes from a secular experience of transcendence which, in some respects, parallels the religious insight into the emptiness and imagelessness of the self. That is, once modern socio-historical consciousness emerged with the appearance of the social sciences in the nineteenth century, the inalienable or transcendent quality of our humanity became visible not only to the religious eye but also to the secular eye. Once the distinction between the self and its social roles is made and the processes by which we become acculturated and socialized can be studied, it becomes manifestly apparent to us that no culture or society has ever succeeded in totally socializing the self. There always remains some part of the self (the self as chooser of its roles) which escapes being encapsulated by society and reduced to its social roles. As every parent knows from practical experience, no child can ever be totally socialized. There is always some part of the child which remains holy (that is, "set apart"). It is that aspect of the experience of self which makes every human being a perpetual alien or stranger, both to itself and its culture. And it is that experience of alienation which enables us to doubt, question and rebel.

The modern sense of human dignity is directly rooted in these experiences of the irreducible inalienable transcendence of the self to its social identity. Such experiences are now embedded in the urban consciousness of the naked self. Paralleling the experience of the holy, the modern naked (existential) self now experiences itself as radically other -- as that which cannot be captured by the bureaucratic imagination and hence cannot be reduced to its social role. Every ideology begins by defining the human so as to separate the superior from the inferior, whether by race or sex or class, etc. Defining the human inevitably occurs only for the purpose of dehumanizing the stranger and the outcast. But the human cannot be defined. To put it another way, the human can be defined only by its undefinability. What gives us our inalienable dignity is our undefinability.

(4) Phenomenologically, the secular analog of the experiences of the holy occurs through the experience of doubt. Doubt and emptiness/imagelessness belong to the same category of experiences -- the experiences of our radical openness to the infinite which creates the gap between the self as self-transcending subject and self as a cultural-institutional role. The abyss of the self, its emptiness, can never be filled or encapsulated by one's culture or society. That is why the self can never be totally socialized. Something of the self always escapes definition and encapsulation. The Upanishads ask, "How can the knower be known?," as a way of pointing out the impossibility of the reflecting self ever being encapsulated, even by its own reflection. The thinker always transcends that which is being thought about, especially when what is being thought is one's self. The mistake is to clothe the thinker in an eternal self. Augustine of Hippo came upon this same reflective paradox. Like the Buddha and other forest dwellers he turned inward, traveling through the "caverns" of memory of past life events (more than one life in the Buddha's case) and concluded upon exploring these caverns of his own inwardness that the mind is so vast it cannot contain itself and hence is un-image-able and radically open to the infinite as wholly other. Hence the mind discovers its own contingency, its own emptiness or openness to the infinite. In Augustine's case that lead him to the conclusion that God is not the mind but "the lord God of the mind" (*Confessions,* X,25),[16] even as the Buddha came to insist that the experience of Nirvana is not an experience of an eternal self but radically other than all self-- namely *anatta* (no-self).[17] In both cases the self is left dangling over the abyss of the infinite.

Doubt emerges out of the experienced gap between the self and its social world. Doubt is the secular experience of transcendence, whose religious correlate is the experience of the holy as the experience of emptiness or imagelessness. Doubt and emptiness give birth to the utopian rebel who calls the sacred order of society into question in order to bring about a new order of things, open to the infinite. At the reflective level, the experience of doubt gives birth to the philosopher even as the experience of imagelessness gives birth to the prophet and the experience of emptiness to the sage.

(5) At the everyday level of common sense, emptiness gives birth to the unreflective rebel, who, although he or she can't say why, feels the need refuse the demand of the political, technological, economic or social order for total conformity. The rebel has an intuitive but unconscious awareness of being open to the infinite and so will not be conformed to the finite. The rebel in the street is born in response to the violation of human dignity -- out of indignation -- as an intuitive visceral awareness of the silent yet commanding voice which witnesses to the irreducible dignity which all selves have in common.

The movement for human rights is rooted experientially in both the secular and the religious forms of the experience of the holy as irreducible experiences of openness to the infinite. The secular and the holy are not alien to each other. On the contrary,

they are dialectically united in their power to alienate the self from all sacred order in the name of a hidden transcendence we call human dignity. And the demand that the human dignity of all persons be respected and protected is in fact the basis for an ethic of secular holiness, an ethic which theists and a-theists (whether Buddhist or secular) ought to be able to construct cooperatively. For unlike the experience of the sacred which treats reason as the enemy of both religion and politics (demanding instead an unquestioning obedience), the experiences of the holy gives rise to critical reason, manifest through both the experience of doubt and the experience of emptiness. Secular holiness unites religion and reason in the common task of creating a public world ordered to the "unseen measure" of human dignity.

In the ancient world there really is no such thing as social ethics in the modern managerial sense of transforming the artificial social structures of society. Whether the world was defined as one's natural fate, or the product of sin, or as a product of samsara/illusion, etc. -- it was viewed as a world which could not be significantly altered by human intentions. It is only when the peculiarly modern notion of society as artificial and technological or managerial emerged that that social ethics was born. This understanding emerged in the 19th century, as a result of the secularizing power of Greek rationalism and , Jewish and Christian historical consciousness which had converged to finally secularize human existence and expose human beings to a newly invented critical social-scientific consciousness. This is the unique contribution of the West to the emergence of human rights. And this new socio-historical or technological-managerial consciousness radically alters the situation for all religious and philosophical traditions, both East and West, to develop a new dimension -- social ethics as the ethics of human liberation.

The conjunction of experiences of the holy, secular rationality and modern socio-historical or technological consciousness with the experience of doubt is hermeneutically and socio-politically explosive. It forces human communities to move from the conviction of *the dignity of the self* to an affirmation of *human rights* and finally to audacious acts of *human liberation*. For example, in the first century, Paul could say that *in Christ their is neither male nor female*. Nevertheless, Pauline communities, and Christians in general, continued to subordinate women to men in hierarchical social roles. Why? Because the order of society was seen as an unchangeable sacred order and therefore the statement of equality was taken as an eschatological statement of spiritual equality to be realized in the flesh only at the end of time. Or again, the peasants took Luther's preaching about the freedom and dignity of the Christian to heart and were inspired to revolt against oppression. But Luther, still sharing the conviction that society is part of a sacred cosmic order, explained to them that in this world everyone must know and keep to their place, only in the world to come will they be actually equal. But today, when a believing community reads Paul's statement in the light of modern managerial/technological consciousness, that is, with the knowledge that the social order is not a sacred and unchangeable part of the order of nature but is secular and artificial or socially constructed, these members are suddenly confronted with a new level of moral obligation, the demand that society be transformed so as to allow for freedom and equality between the sexes and social classes here and now. The combination of consciousness of the holy and managerial/technological consciousness is at one and the same time both radically apocalyptic and utopian, for it leads to an ethic of human liberation which brings one's old world to an end in order to inaugurate a new creation.

Notes

1. Richard H. Schwartz, *Judaism and Global Survival*, (New York: Atara Publishing Co., 1987), p. 13.

2. Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), p. 7.

3. Peter Berger, *The Homeless Mind*, by Peter Berger, Birgitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner (New York: intage Books, Random House, 1973.), p. 42.

4. Berger and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, pp. 49-50.

5. Albert Speer, *Albert Speer, Inside the Third Reich*, (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 33.

6. Stout, pp. 75-76.

7. Stout, pp. 80-81.

8. Stout, p. 188.

9. Peter Berger, "On the Obsolescence of the Concept of Honor," in *Revisions*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair Macintyre, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1983, p.173.

10. Berger, *Revisions*, p. 175.

11. Berger, *Revisions*, p. 176.

12. By the criteria I have established neither Sophocles nor Mencius would be as important for the emergence of human rights as Abraham or Job or Jeremiah, or Siddhartha for that matter. For the traditions of Sophocles and Mencius did not give rise to holy communities which represent a continuing social and historical witness to the emptiness or imagelessness of the self and hence its dignity and equality.

13. Berger, *Revisions*, p. 176.

14. Berger, Revisions, p. 180.

15. Eventually, Christians adapted this Jewish insight to the gentile world by using the Greek language of metaphysics to speak of being created in the image of a Trinitarian God. Like a Buddhist koan, the doctrine of the trinity defied the imagination, even as the doctrine of the incarnation affirmed that the human self, undistorted by sin, is a perfect image of the God who cannot be imaged. This insight however stood in tension with the hierarchical structure of Greek metaphysical thinking. To the degree that this way of thought influenced how Christian's thought about God, Christianity drifted back into a cosmicization of the social order. This tension can be seen in the difference between Origen and Augustine's accounts of the trinity. Origen's account is ambiguous. One side of his thought suggests that since the son emanates from the father, the son is less than the father, and likewise the spirit is less than the son. Augustine, on the other hand grasps that the trinity must not be thought of in terms of physical metaphors of "emanation" (e.g., such as the sun's rays) but in spiritual terms, whose metaphors are the relations of mind to itself (e.g., memory, intelligence and will). The result is that in the trinitarian God, all persons (divine and human) are equal. But even in Augustine this realization stands in tension with a hierarchical metaphysics of creation.

16. The Confessions, p. 235.

17. In so far as Christianity and (to a lesser degree) Judaism allowed itself to be seduced by the Greek metaphysical tradition it of course tended to reduce "God" to an "Eternal Being" which denies the essential biblical experience of God as temporal-historical and without image. We find this tension in Augustine. The conflict between "Being" and the "Infinite" represents the fundamental conflict between the cosmological imagination and the experience of the holy. In Christianty, only with the Protestant Reformation did the holiness of God break free of the metaphysical imagination of being and then only partially and with ambivalence.

Book Reviews

Narrative Theology after Auschwitz: From Alienation to Ethics by Darrell J. Fasching, (Fortress Press, 1992). 198 pages.

Reviewed by Peter Haas,
Professor of Jewish Ethics, Vanderbilt University

In one way, this book can be seen simply as one of a growing number of books by Christian thinkers who are taking the Holocaust seriously as a challenge to Christian theology. On this view, the general statements in the Prologue and Chapter One about why a rethinking of Christian theology is called for in the post-Shoah age will hardly be surprising. In another way, however, the book makes a unique and important contribution to the discussion. Fasching departs from the usual path followed by post-Shoa Christian theologians of responding to the Holocaust by re-formulating the Christian story so as to avoid supersessionism and Christian triumphalism. Rather, Fasching calls for Christians to take instead a stance that questions the finality of any telling of the Christian story. His, he says, is a theology of Chutzpah (audacity). It is only by constantly being willing to question the finality of any narrative that Christianity can keep itself open to accepting, rather than annihilating, the Other.

The author constructs his argument in five stages. The first, Chapter One, is simply concerned with establishing the need for a rethinking of the traditional Christian theological enterprise in light of the Holocaust. In essence, Fasching argues that the Holocaust has revealed to Christians a side to themselves that has always been there but was never really confronted: that side that was ready to exterminate Jews in the name of Jesus. With the implications of that stance now clearly acted out in history, there is a need to transcend the myth of Christian supersessionism and find room for a new self-understanding that sees Jews (and others) as partners rather than enemies. The expected move at this point would be to retrieve those parts of the New Testament and subsequent theological writings that allow the construction of a different Christian story. This is what we find in the Eckardts, Paul van Buren and others. Fasching, however, makes another move entirely. He argues that the problem is not merely that the received narrative can no longer be tolerated, but rather the problem is the Christian propensity to accept *any* narrative as normative, that is as deserving unquestioned faith and obedience. What is needed is not a new narrative, but the articulation as a legitimate Christian posture of a stance that holds any narrative in suspicion. The dialectics of a post-Shoah Christian faith must be that as soon as a story is accepted, it be questioned and transcended.

As a model for this type of faith, Fasching points to the story of Jacob's wrestling with the angel. In the end, Jacob refused to bow to the angel but continued his struggle until he had gained a new sense of self-understanding and of course a blessing. The Christian encounter with the story should be the same; not to accept it but to wrestle and move beyond it. It is this posture toward the divine that Fasching sees in Judaism in the concept of Chutzpah, the readiness always to question, and argue with, Gd. It is when one is ready to accept a story as absolutely true that such a thing as loyalty to the SS is possible. Fasching shows how this works by examining the writings of the pro-Nazi Protestant theologian Emmanuel Hirsch. Only by questioning the absolute truth of any narrative will we be able to avoid such blind loyalty.

There is another advantage to Chutzpah that is important to Fasching. It is that by questioning any story, we of necessity keep ourselves open to the new and the different. It is through this openness that we make room for the stranger among us. To make this argument, Fasching draws on Jacque Ellul's distinction between a sacred society and a holy society. A sacred society, on this view, is one that sees itself as reflecting Gd's word and so comes to see its opponents as enemies of the Divine. In contrast, the holy society recognizes the presence of Gd in all peoples and so is radically open to otherness. By seeing any story as only partial we can protect ourselves from considering ourselves uniquely sacred and so aware of the ever greater possibilities within the holy.

The psychology of transcending the sacred and entering the holy is explored in Chapter Three. Through an examination of Albert Speer on the one hand and Augustine on the other, Fasching teases out his point. Speer fell victim to the Nazi myth because he simply had no story from which to question what the Nazi myth held out as the absolute truth. Once he accepted the Nazi version of reality as true, he had little moral choice but to accept its implications. Augustine, on the other hand, records his journey from story to story to story. According to Fasching, he avoided becoming the prisoner of any one story by being always able to see the inadequacies of each and so keeping himself open to new possibilities. It was Augustine's radical openness that led to his ultimate freedom and self-realization, just as it was Speer's willingness to accept and obey the given narrative that led to his moral fall.

The theoretical underpinnings of this are explored in Chapter Four. The explanatory model comes from Franklin Littel's study of Nazi doctors. Littel finally came to account for the brutal role that medical professionals came to play in murdering millions of people by developing the notion of doubling. By this Littel meant that medical professionals in essence compartmentalized their identities as healers and their role as members of the Nazi death machine. In practice this meant that the one side of the personality was able to deny the reality of what the other side was doing. The killing of Jews was not seen for the evil that it was, but rather was translated into a benign act that was simply the extension of the doctor's other self. In other words that overarching narrative of reality that these doctors had accepted became so inclusive that it allowed them to deny the character of their own acts. This, Fasching argues, is the ultimate result of accepting fully and without question a story of reality.

Chapter Five brings us back to the start, the need for a new posture from which Christians may approach their own story without falling into the trap of supersessionism. Again drawing on Ellul, Fasching argues that the only way of preventing this is to remain open to the dialectic that challenges and then transcends the finality of any story. The attitude is that of Chutzpah. The radical other is the Holy, that which offers a vision of a world beyond the particularities of any sacred society. Only in this way can the stranger, the Other, find a place of security within the Christian story.

In the end, this is a much more creative and promising position to take toward the Christian story than that so often followed of creating a new story, and thereby creating the foundation of a new Orthodoxy. In many ways the current climate of Political Correctness illustrates just that danger. What began as a needed change

to overthrow a ruling paradigm is in danger of becoming its own tool for controlling others. Fasching has thought through that problem and found a way of articulating a theology that has a built-in mechanism for challenging its own tendency toward orthodoxy. Fasching's radical rethinking of the whole basis of how the Christian story ought to be approached is foundational, it seems to me, for any post-Shoah Christian theology. It points to how radical in fact the challenge of Auschwitz, and modern technology, really is.

The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalypse or Utopia? Darrell J. Fasching. 1993. State University of New York Press. 366 pages.

Reviewed by Richard A. Deitrich

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This is a sequel to the his previous book entitled *Narrative Theology After Auschwitz: From Alienation to Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). That book was a restructuring of the post-Holocaust Christian narrative tradition by drawing on the Jewish narrative tradition of chutzpah (arguing with God). It had limited scope and was an "experiment in the theology of culture"; now, Fasching has written a robust Tillichian-like theology of culture. The initial effort discerned the demonic theme of "killing in order to heal"; while the sequel incorporates this theme with the Janus-faced, globalized, technological mythos that emerged out of Hiroshima — i.e., technology can bring us apocalypse or utopia.

Fasching has ambitiously attempted "to do what narrative ethicists have said cannot be done; namely, construct a cross-cultural ethic of human dignity, human rights, and human liberation that is rooted in and respects the diversity of narrative traditions." This theology of culture, a la Tillich, draws mainly on Buddhism, Christian, and Jewish narratives to counter the ethical challenge of post-modern secularization in a new and innovative way.

The book has two parts, with Part I: The Promise of Utopia and the Threat of Apocalypse containing three thirty-page chapters. It begins with the quest to find ethical norms in technological civilization (technopolis) by referring to the prescient "murder of God" passage in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* published in 1882. The Nazis fulfilled this prophecy of a normless will to power as the Übermensch — the super person (the master race) who would attempt to remake man in its image. This "killing in order to heal" as represented by Auschwitz became a global theme when MAD-ness, as mutually assured destruction represented by Hiroshima, ushered in the threat of apocalypse.

Ironically, for technopolis, this threat of apocalypse by means of technology is conjoined Janus-like with the promise of utopia by means of technology. This irony is examined with help from Harvey Cox, Richard Rubenstein, Jacques Ellul, Arthur Cohen, et al. Cox's utopianism and Rubenstein's apocalypticism serve to illustrate the poles of thought involved. A brilliant examination of the secular city (technopolis) is facilitated by the synthesis of insights from Ellul and Cohen. The author asserts that Ellul has uncovered "the sacred heart of a technical universe," and that Cohen has "linked both religion and urbanization to secularization and both to Auschwitz and Hiroshima." Fasching further explains: "Secularization is dehumanizing rather than liberating not because nothing is any longer sacred but precisely because the impersonal technical-bureaucratic order of technopolis is the new embodiment of sacral value."

Armed with this insight, chapter three relates the above "new embodiment of sacral value" to the human propensity for "doubling." Luther's two-kingdoms ethic and his understanding of faith as unquestioning obedience provide, according to Fasching, the psychological context wherein the radical doubling of Nazism occurred. Robert Lifton's study "The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide" is used to profile the "doubling" phenomenon in which one part of the self disavows another part and invokes the evil potential of that self.

With this preparation, Part II After Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Utopian Ethics for an Apocalyptic Age begins the construction of a theology of culture for a technological civilization. This is actually the construction of social ethics because it is out of religious narrative that social ethics arise. Tillich understood that our secular technological civilization (technopolis) privatizes traditional religious narrative and publicizes a new sacral religious narrative — one grounded not in nature, but in technology. Thus the contemporary ethical challenge after Auschwitz and Hiroshima is to critique this new sacral narrative which, although secular, holds religious dynamic.

Upon examination, the ethic of technopolis is seen to be grounded in a sacred order with efficiency and obedience as the primary values. Holy communities such as those in Buddhism, Christianity, and Judaism introduce a radical anthropological ethic of human dignity. The "NO!" spoken to the sacred order of technopolis is that humans do not exist to serve technical and bureaucratic social order, but that order exists to serve free and creative humans in the name of human dignity.

Chapter five begins the construction of a utopian ethics for rehumanizing technopolis and is titled Utopian Ethics: From Human Dignity to Human Rights and Human Liberation. This fifty-page keynote chapter is rich in understanding and insights. Blood-written passages explain the Jewish narrative tradition of chutzpah (audacious faith): after Auschwitz, no one should offend God with cheap, unquestioning, faith. Psychologically, after Hiroshima and under the present MAD-ness policy, we are all survivors trying to cope with the localized past opening, and with the globalized potential apocalyptic opening to the Shoah — the desolation of the demonic abyss. To withhold despair, is to not be sensitive, to not be honest, to not be human. Thus, not only the Jew, but also the Buddhist, Christian, and even the a-theistic sacralizer of technological progress have been doubt-struck. The unquestioned belief in any kind of providence (even technological providence) has been made desolate by Auschwitz and Hiroshima.

Fasching continues the movement from human dignity to human rights to human liberation by declaring that universal outrage generated by the atrocity of Auschwitz and the inhumanity of Hiroshima is energizing an ethic of secular holiness in opposition to the ethic of secular sacredness within technopolis. The U.N. Declaration of Human Rights can be seen as indicative of a global movement toward human liberation and a coupling of secular cohorts of holiness with religious communities of holiness to champion human dignity. The reason for this coupling involves the post-modern naked self which has emerged in modernity. The naked self is so, in large part, due to the desolation of the Shoah and/or to the Damocles Sword of MAD-ness. Additionally, urban alienation has released many moderns from secular sacredness, as have the religious insights of the emptiness and imagelessness of the self, made in the image of the imageless God. (My own preference is to think of self-awareness and moral concern as bearing the essential image of God.) For humans everywhere who are championing human rights the author suggests this maxim: In a sense there is only one universal right — the right to have our human dignity respected.

Chapter Six, Beyond Technopolis: The Utopian Promise of Babel, begins the building of a social ethic which can cope with and enrich the "impoverishing vision of secular technobureaucratic rationality" without identifying either with ethical relativism or ethical absolutism. The problem with the babel of modernity is

not its narrative diversity, but rather that those of the marketplace and the bureaucracies have become imperialistic. This is so because these narratives are popularly perceived as bringing cosmos out of chaos in the absence of God. To explicate the above imperialism, Fasching examines MacIntyre's pessimistic prophesy of a new "dark ages"; then he constructs a promising ethical discourse of human rights with the help of Stout, Dunne, and Hauerwas — rights fitted for the naked public square.

The final chapter, A Utopian Vision: Narrative Ethics in a MAD World, examines the naked public square with its enforced absence of religious narrative and dangerous demonic potential. Fasching calls in powerful narrators such as Neuhaus, Novak, Stackhouse, Ellul, Wiesel, et. al. to transform the naked public square into an empty (i.e., open and truly diverse) public square where the ethical narratives promoting human rights and human liberation can be effectively heard. This utopian vision sees holy communities of faith and holy movements of secularity synergistically potent in promoting human dignity and thus "welcoming the stranger." The naked public square becomes, instead, a vibrant public square wherein the threat of apocalypse with its MAD-ness is eclipsed by the promise of utopia and its glad-ness. Therein, humans can safely and sanely pass over and come back among communities in a rich ecology of diverse narratives; and happily, they will be blessed with a common narrative of ethics about human dignity, rights, and liberation. The ethical challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima must be answered.

Darrell Fasching has admirably taken up the ethical challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima and has strengthened the human resolve of "NEVER AGAIN!" His clarity of organization and thought, reliance on Tillichian content and method, and inclusion of apt and respected scholarship make this book a staple in either a Theology of Culture or a Philosophy of Technology collection. Most importantly, the author's ultimate aim of fusing religious and secular ethics (so-called) for human survival makes this well-written book inportant reading for all.

The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalpyse or Utopia? by Darrell J. Fasching, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993. 366 pp.

Reviewed by David P. Gushee,
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Darrell Fasching's new book--*The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalypse or Utopia?*--is a sprawling, ambitious, unwieldy but profound piece of work in contemporary religious social ethics. It is a book that surely will (or should) establish Fasching as a major voice in contemporary theology.

The content of the book defies easy summarization. That this is the case is evidenced by as lofty an authority as the Library of Congress, which finds it necessary to categorize the subject of *Ethical Challenge* in the following way:

> 1. Religious ethics. 2. Human Rights--Religious Aspects. 3. Technology--Moral and ethical aspects. 4. Utopias--moral and ethical aspects. 5. Holocaust, Jewish--Moral and ethical aspects. 6. Nuclear warfare--More and ethical aspects.

This vast list illustrates the breadth and complexity of Fasching's project in this book. My own summary of that project might best take a narrative form, which is particularly appropriate here, because Fasching considers himself a narrative theologian.

Darrell Fasching was born during World War II (1944). Anyone with the barest historical consciousness cannot read the date 1944 without thinking of the mountains of Jewish and other corpses piled up at places like Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec in 1944, to be "discovered" by the world a year later at the close of the war in Europe. Nor can such a person forget that during that next year the United States dropped atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing several hundred thousand Japanese in momentary flashes of light and heat and death.

In his book *Narrative Theology After Auschwitz* (Fortress, 1992), Fasching reports that he is Lutheran by background and that he is married to a Jewish woman. Fasching understands that a Lutheran Christian (and not only a *Lutheran* Christian) after the Holocaust carries a considerable burden. And as one who is married to a Jewish woman Fasching has joined his life with the life of the Jewish people, again, after Auschwitz.

Thus Fasching's intellectual project is born in the matrix of the Holocaust and Hiroshima, mediated to him quite personally by the trajectory of his own life's narrative. He is offering a response to these signal events of our time, events that quite literally threaten an end to all human events and human time.

The attempt to respond to Auschwitz and Hiroshima is one of the major intellectual/moral projects of our era. It is a project that cuts across all academic disciplines and spills well beyond the boundaries of academia altogether. It is, in fact, one of the central projects in which I personally am engaged, along with Fasching and countless others.

Fasching approaches Auschwitz and Hiroshima from the perspective of "theology of culture." He is neither a Christian theologian nor does he write from a "confessional" perspective. Instead he is a university-trained and university-situated theologian, and he sees theology as an "academic discipline within the humanities" (p.3). Theology that is done in such a setting must be, in Fasching's view, theology of culture. By this he means what Paul Tillich meant: according to Fasching, "the identification and elucidation of the relationship between religion and culture in all its diversity" (p.4).

This is no merely descriptive project but instead a "total critique of culture" (p.4). Such a critique is always needed, but especially now, because in Fasching's view Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and the more recent "mutual assured destruction" are not merely political or military realities but are reflections of the demonic religio-cultural narrative that dominates our technological civilization. He calls this narrative the "Janus-faced myth of Apocalypse or Utopia" (p.1). In essence, technology has replaced either God or nature as the sacred center of contemporary civilization. We respond to this sacral reality with the combination of fascination (technology will create a utopia and thus technological "progress" is an unmitigated good) and dread (technology will bring apocalypse upon us and there's nothing we can do about it) that the sacred always produces. This cultural narrative has already contributed to genocide, atomic bombing, and the amazing paralysis of humankind during the Cold War in the face of nuclear annihilation. Fasching fears that unless it is overturned it will indeed lead to an apocalyptic nuclear "final solution"--omnicide, the death of all things.

Part I of *Ethical Challenge* undertakes the descriptive and critical task. Fasching wants to prove that this Apocalypse/Utopia myth is the central cultural narrative of our time and that it already has contributed to Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Part II takes up his constructive project: having unmasked this demonic religio-cultural narrative, Fasching draws on Jewish, Christian, and Buddhist narrative traditions to construct "a cross-cultural ethic of human dignity, human rights, and human liberation." What these narrative strands have in common is an ethic of welcoming the stranger. For Fasching, no narrative can stand after Auschwitz and Hiroshima which does not demand that those who stand within it welcome and recognize the dignity and rights of the alien and the stranger.

To undertake this descriptive, critical, and constructive project Fasching brings together formidable intellectual resources. One sees the influence of comparative religion and history of religions (Mircea Eliade, for example). Relying heavily on Peter Berger, he makes use of the sociology of knowledge. He has read widely in Jewish and Buddhist theology, and works with a number of theological voices in those traditions as well as digging around in their sacred narratives. The work of post-Shoah Jewish theologians such as Elie Wiesel, Irving Greenberg, Emil Fackenheim, Arthur Cohen, and Richard Rubenstein receive especially close attention. The distinctive contribution of the Christian theologians of technology, apocalypse, utopia, and secularization (Jacques Ellul, Gabriel Vahanian, Paul Tillich, Harvey Cox) is fundamentally important. Narrative theology and ethics are essential to his method, and he works appreciatively yet critically with the likes of Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas.

I do not feel fully competent to evaluate Fasching's methodological synthesis of all of these various strands of thought, several of which I am only marginally familiar with. But in those areas I do know, for example post-Holocaust Jewish theology, it is very clear that Fasching has read both widely and well. I have no particular reason to doubt the competence of his handling of the other materials with which he deals, but will leave those areas to their specialists.

Beyond that, my evaluation of the book begins with a thoroughgoing appreciation of his project itself. Fasching wants to respond to Auschwitz and Hiroshima. As a theologian of culture he does so both by way of critique of demonic cultural/religious narratives and by way of retrieving and synthesizing other human-dignity-affirming narratives. He believes that the former narratives have genuinely dealt death and the latter have and may genuinely deal life to human beings. Thus one critical way of responding to this catastrophe is to work on these narratives.

One could easily imagine the political scientist, the historian, or the sociologist dismissing the significance of these narratives for the Holocaust and Hiroshima; surely political, historical, and military factors should be seen as the cause of these events, not the "deep structure" of the western world's narratives. I did at times feel that Fasching's fascination with the theological/ religious foundations of these catastrophes neglected these other very real dimensions. Surely, Fasching would agree, and would simply say that his project is the theology of culture rather than, say, a history of the Nazi movement. As a theologian/ethicist myself, I would defend both the reality and the significance of these foundational narratives.

At the constructive level, Fasching will surely be criticized for attempting to construct a cross-cultural, multi-narrative human dignity ethic. From a narrative perspective it can't be done, some will say. But Fasching wrestles with those questions directly. He believes that he can offer such a cross-cultural narrative ethic without succumbing to a thin, storyless, Enlightenment-style ethical universalism. I believe that he largely succeeds in this intellectual project, which is indeed a major accomplishment.

But now what? What particular community will embrace and incarnate this cross-cultural narrative and its ethic of human dignity? The problem with Fasching's methodology and its outcome is precisely that he does not write as one who stands within any particular story-formed community. He states explicitly that he is doing "alienated" or "decentered" theology (p.5); that is, he has left his Christian community and writes as a "free agent" (p.4), apart from any of the "holy communities" whose narratives he explores in the book. If he can be said to be a member of a community, it is that very small, specialized, and (frankly) largely culturally irrelevant community of theologians working in secular university settings.

It seems to me that Fasching's kind of narrative ethics is best described as meta-narrative ethics; he stands outside of all of these narratives (sacred or secular, religious or irreligious, modern or ancient, East or West) and examines their potential for moral productivity in a world such as this. This Olympian Freedom from a community's bonds give him the space to be relentlessly critical where criticism is needed, and to retrieve constructive narratives as freely as needed. But as a "free agent," a decentered theologian, he has no particular religious community to which he can return and in which he can put his quite profound insights into practice.

One of the problems inherent in membership in the community of university theologians is the kind of writing that such communities expect. Fasching wants to address an extremely serious cultural problem, one which pervades western civilization and could bring an end to it. But the language he uses to address this pervasive problem is the cumbersome, "academic," specialized and inaccessible language of the academy. The paradox is that Fasching obviously wants his work to make a real difference in the world, but the world cannot read it--only a small slice of academic theologians can. This is not a problem unique to Fasching's work, by any means. But it is one of the reasons why academic theology has so very little cultural impact.

A pet peeve of mine as an author and a reader is poor editing. Unfortunately, *Ethical Challenge* suffers from being a poorly edited book. I counted two dozen obvious spelling or grammatical errors, and I don't think I got them all. Again, this problem is not confined to this particular book, but is distressingly widespread.

Finally, I should also note the very considerable overlap in content between this book and his previous one, *Narrative Theology After Auschwitz*. This is not merely an overlap in concepts, but the straightforward use of large sections of material from *Narrative Theology* in *Ethical Challenge*. I don't know how SUNY Press and Fortress worked out the copyright problems, but I do know that two books should not overlap as much as these two did.

But enough criticism, Fasching's work may best be seen as a hugely important resource for those of us who seek to make a difference within our own "holy communities," whichever these might be. His hermeneutical test--does your narrative require of you that the stranger be welcomed?--is absolutely the right one. His moral passion is a good model, as is his "audacious" willingness to be relentlessly critical about holy narratives. I will return to *Ethical Challenge* many times in the years to come.

The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima

Apocalypse or Utopia?

by Darrell J. Fasching

A critique of technological civilization in the light of Auschwitz and Hiroshima using a narrative ethics approach. Although narrative ethicists have typically argued that it cannot be done, Fasching proposes a cross cultural ethic of human dignity, human rights and human liberation grounded in the convergence of diverse narratives of hospitality to the stranger and the outcast. On this basis he argues for an ethical coalition of Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Gandhian Hinduism and Humanistic A-theism, to shape public policy in an apocalyptic nuclear era.

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