

COVID-19, MENTAL HEALTH, & THE NEED FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

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ABSTRACT - Increasingly sophisticated, devious, and forceful contexts of human cruelty continue to inflict inhuman misery and suffering that adversely affect our health and functioning. Understanding these impingements contextually defines trauma-informed care.

In this seminar I boldly propose that, as Christians, we can best understand the COVID-19 situation in the larger context of human evil action in the world these days, and that this demonic activity is fear-inducing and emotionally traumatizing. One of my purposes here is “to restore to fear its proper object.”

In addition, I offer Part 1 and Part 2 below as examples of the contributions Scripture and Theology can make to Psychology and Psychotherapy.

PART 1

THE CREATIVE WORK OF GOD — SCRIPTURAL & THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SELF-ESTEEM

A Christian Theological Anthropology and Scripture as a wellspring of understanding being human and a Psychology with which it can converse.

SOURCES:

Jewett, PK. and Shuster, M. (1996). *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human. A Neo-Evangelical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Stolorow, R.D. & Atwood, G.E. (2019). *The Power of Phenomenology. Psychoanalytic and Philosophical Perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge.

PART 2

THE DESTRUCTIVE WORK OF THE DEVIL — SUCCESSFULLY SPOILING SO FAR THE- SE DAYS WHAT GOD HAS MADE

Covid-19: Deceitfully constructive words, extremely destructive actions.
The Satanic power to subjugate and inflict misery through human evil
action in the world these days.

SOURCES:

Peck, M.S. (1983) *People of the Lie. The Hope for Healing Human Evil*. New York, NY: Touchstone.

Shuster, M. (1987) *Power, Pathology, Paradox: The Dynamics of Evil and Good*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

— From the World Economic Forum (weforum.org):

Schwab, K. (2016). *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*.

Schwab, K. (2018). *Shaping the Future of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*.

Schwab, K. (2020). *COVID-19: The Great Reset*

World Economic Forum- Strategic Intelligence– THE GREAT RESET
<https://intelligence.weforum.org/topics/a1G0X000006OLciUAG?tab=publications>
Resetting the Future of Work Agenda: Disruption and Renewal in a Post-COVID World. White Paper, October 2020. weforum.org

The Great Reset— “You will own nothing and you will be happy.” video, weforum.org

— From ynharari.com:

Harari, Y. N. (2014). *Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind* .

Harari, Y. N. (2016). *Homo Deus. A Brief History of Tomorrow*.

5G Information: *Health Effects of Non-Ionizing Radiation (NIR)*. Physician’s Health Initiative for Radiation & Environment. British Society for Ecological Medicine.

PART 3

THE COVID-19 VACCINE — A BLEND OF EUGENICS & TRANSHUMANISM

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA is an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of *atrocities*. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. (p. 33)

THE ORDINARY RESPONSE to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word *unspeakable*. The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dynamic of psychological trauma. (p. 1)

Judith Lewis Herman, M.D. *Trauma & Recovery*.
New York, NY: Basic Books, 1992.

ONE OF THE REASONS WHY CONFUSION is gaining ground in the world is that we are afraid to face its real causes. We believe in a thousand evils, guard against a thousand dangers, but we have ceased to believe in Evil and face the real Danger. To demonstrate the reality of the Devil in the world is not to increase fear, but to restore to fear its proper object.

Deni de Rougemont, *Talk of the Devil*, London: Eyre, 1945, p. xi.

The FDA's ban of medications the early use of which effectively prevents or cures Covid-19 infections is an atrocity — See Part 2, page

A brief experience of fear is a natural signal that we are in danger. In the Covid-19 situation, sensing the Devil's presence in it, and not just the virus, may be the cause of our distress.

PART 1. THE CREATIVE WORK OF GOD¹

SCRIPTURAL & THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SELF-ESTEEM

1. We are Created in God's Image

The doctrine of creation teaches us that the world was created by God. Therefore, the world cannot be understood in terms of itself but only in terms of its origin in the *will* and *word* of the Creator.

Since we are part of this world, the same is true for us. We can understand who we are only as we acknowledge that it is he who has made us and not we ourselves:

“Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture”. (Ps. 100:3 NRSV).

Like the story of creation as a whole, the human story begins with a divine word:

“Let us make humankind in our own image, according to our likeness.” (Gn. 1:26 NRSV).

With this word God consummates indeed his work as Creator.

He summoned the light into being; gathered the waters into seas; clothed the land with verdure; placed the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens; and filled the earth with living creatures in order that the world might be a fit abode for the man and woman.

2. We Are The Chosen Stewards of God's Creation; 'A Little Less Than God'

Having called us into being, and having endowed us with his image, God *entrusts* to us the world he has made and all that is in it. (Gn. 1:28).

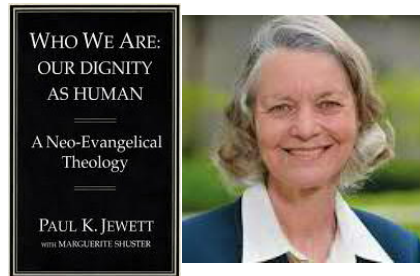
The Christian understanding of the meaning and uniqueness of human life has little appeal for those whose ultimate trust is exclusively in science and the knowledge it affords.

Yet, even apart from Christian faith, there are undeniable hints that we humans are somehow remarkably different from the rest of the created order.

The universe as a whole is, of course, remarkable. But what is more remarkable: that the universe in which we live is as it is, or that *we* should have *discovered* that it is as it is?

¹ Excerpted by Ernesto Vasquez, MD from:

Paul K. Jewett & Marguerite Shuster (1996). *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human. A Neo-Evangelical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.



Is it not a wonder of the first order that on a speck of cosmic dust called planet Earth there lives a creature whose knowledge has penetrated with incredible acumen the incredible disguises of her environment?

While it is humbling to know how small we are, at the same time it is a tribute to our power of self-transcendence that the empire of our reasoning is coterminous with the universe itself. While we have decreased as objects, *we have increased as subjects*.

Human life is significant because God has made us in his image. *The meaning of our lives* is to be found not in our size but in our unique relationship to God, who, as Augustine said, has made us for himself.

The awesome universe that is opened to us by science is not threatening to the Christian; rather, it evokes, perhaps compels, the worship of him who created heaven and earth.

"The heavens declare the glory of God," the psalmist says, "and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1 KJV).

The whole of creation testifies not to itself but to God. And if we think rightly, so do we.

For the Lord who made the heavens not only made us, but made us what we are. And what is that? What are humans? Psalm 8 reads in part:

"... When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars that thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him *a little less than God*, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!"

So what are we human beings?

Creatures a little less than God, a creature who, despite our weakness, despite our powerlessness, despite our utter insignificance in terms of size and strength, God has chosen in his abundant goodness to crown with glory and honor, attributes of royalty bestowed upon the chosen stewards of his creation.

All our human uniqueness are simply God's gift to us, and finally a revelation of his unfathomable majesty rather than a manifestation of our own achievement.

3. We Are Mysterious to Ourselves: Reflective Self-Awareness

The mysteries of the human object, the body, we approach as problems that, we are confident, one day will be solved.

Christian faith postulates a qualitative difference between a machine and a person. True, we are given our being in a bodily form; but this inextricable mechanistic aspect of our being as persons is secondary, not primary, to our understanding of who we are.

To be materially *conditioned* as conscious selves is *not* to be materially *constituted* as such. As we will see later in Part 2, this understanding becomes even more important in light of the Covid-19 *transhumanist* agenda.

But the real mystery of humankind is not the mystery of the human object but of the human *subject*.

How is it that in all of creation, one creature, and one creature only, asks the question about his or her own significance and then proceeds to understand the whole created order?

How is it that one creature alone has the power not to just to *look* at the heavens and see them, as any animal can, but to *consider* them? We humans alone are self-reflecting, conscious of ourselves as selves. There is something transcendent about this self-consciousness. Each self, conscious of itself and others through memory, links all of life together in a continuity of inner experience.

We alone respond with awe to beauty. We alone have longing for the ultimate, for God, and seek to worship him. A mystery and a marvel indeed.

4. Our Humanity as Fellowship with God and Neighbor

We not only exist but we know we exist, and such self awareness inevitably compels us to pursue the knowledge of ourselves that we may understand who we are and the meaning of our existence.

As Christians see it, the problem is not that we seek to understand ourselves, but that we seek such understanding in terms of ourselves alone. Even a good psychology can provide only an approximate understanding.

Such procedure is doomed to failure because only God, who made us, truly knows who we are and can disclose to us the mystery of our existence.

The same *divine word* that gives us a knowledge of God also gives us knowledge of ourselves.

Hence an adequate self-understanding is indissolubly bound up with a knowledge of God.

Calvin reminds us that "True and substantial wisdom principally consists in two parts, knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves."

He argues that these two branches of knowledge are intimately related because we live and move and have our being in God.

Indeed, “it is evident that the talents we possess, and our very existence is only a subsistence in God alone.”

As Christians, we believe that this interlocking of the knowledge of God and self is because human existence is by definition an existence in relation to God.

The being that is human has no existence in itself, but only in its unique relationship to the Creator.

In disclosing himself as the God-who-has-made-us-for-himself, the Creator discloses to us that we are the creature-uniquely-related-to-him.

God’s act of creation is the basis of a Christian understanding of humanity.

While all creation is grounded in the word of the Creator (Ps. 33:6), to be human is to be grounded in that word in a unique way.

The Creator is both the God in whom we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28), and the one with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13).

To say that God is the God “with whom we have to do” is just to say that we have our being in a way that makes us *responsible* to him.

Only if we understand responsibility literally as the necessity of giving an account to the Judge who judges impartially and knows everything— only then do we understand ourselves as really responsible.

Even sinful humanity is uniquely related to God and, therefore, responsible to him though not in fellowship with him.

As the Creator, he is the true “Thou” to every human “I.”

To be human is to live one’s life *coram Deo* — in the presence of, under the authority of, and to the honor and glory of God.

But as human we are not simply summoned into existence by divine fiat— “let the dust bring forth humankind.”

Rather, we are given our existence as a gift of love in order that in love we may respond to the Creator’s love with gratitude and obedience.

Our first parents knew the divine love through the Creator’s blessing and provision.

They also knew how to respond to that love, that is, they knew their *responsibility* for they were addressed by their Maker as those who could distinguish between “thou shall” and “thou shall not.”

They were summoned, and we with them, to a life of responsible love toward God and one another (Gn, 2:16; 3:2-3; 1:28-29).

Such love toward God and neighbor is not simply a desirable attribute of our existence as human; it is the very essence of that existence.

Our being-in-responsibility is fulfilled in our being-with-and-for-others-in-love, first the divine Other who is our Maker, and also the human other who is our neighbor.

This *dynamic* understanding of the *imago* describes our humanity even as fallen and sinful.

Original sin is the perversion of the love to which we are summoned in creation.

The sin of the creature turns the love of God and neighbor into a *selfish love* that rebels against God and exploits the neighbor as it is the case in the Covid-19 situation.

However, the sin of the creature does not utterly destroys the responsible relationship to God and neighbor given to us in and by creation.

And it is here that we can find an the possibility for radical hope and thus begin to address one of the educational goals for this seminar, that of defining hope in the context of the radical adversity inflicted by the manufactured tragedy named Covid-19.

The irresistible and unavoidable, the ineluctable encounter with the human other, our neighbor, entails *responsible* behavior toward the other.

The basic human act is to affirm "I am."

And to posit our sense of self as "I" in this way is to posit the other who is a "thou."

I am "I" not in isolation but in encounter with others.

We humans contextualize one another because God and human contextualize each other.

Our being as being-in-encounter is evidenced particularly by human language, both verbal and nonverbal.

Language is not the making of sounds like a talking parrot, or the stringing of arbitrary symbols linearly like a computer.

It is, rather, the *disclosing* of the our selfhood to others and placing oneself at the *disposal* of others for language is the best example of heart and mind in action. Heidegger claims that it is emotions that disclose whom we are, and he calls this disclosing affectivity.

Such fellowship is of the essence of humanity, and it is being marred these days by the sin of arbitrariness in the Covid-19 situation, with its *unrestrained and autocratic use of authority*.

MARGUERITE SHUSTER'S CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND USE OF SCRIPTURE IS A WELLSPING OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

Studying Shuster's work, I have realized that my attempts to bringing traditional psychology into coversation with Scrip-

-ture and Christian Theology are wrought and need to be rethought.

As a science, traditional psychology purposely studies a dehumanized or robotized version of isolated humans which it takes apart in theoretical and meaningless fragments, and considers them through detailed mechanical research protocols totally apart from understanding any daily life human concerns and meanings.

In contrast, Shustar proposes that human being's unique and wondrous attributes are a loving gift of God to us. We exist only in relational context with God and others, and as an uninterrupted flow of organizing human experience. When I read this, I wept!

Shustar's understanding of being human in the world with God and others was exactly what I have been studying in the psychoanalytic literature since the mid-1980s. Intersubjective-Systems Theory is the science of human experiencing. It is best understood a *phenomenological contextualism*.

It is phenomenological in that it investigates and illuminates worlds of emotional experience. We are subjects, organizers of experience, not objects to be studied. It is contextual in that it holds that such organizations of emotional experience take form, both developmentally and in the counseling situation, in constitutive intersubjective or relational contexts.

Through Shustar's work, I believe God may be telling me that I seem to be going in the right direction! Christian Theology and Scripture can be a wellspring of information to understand God and ourselves.

Here are two references to intersubjectivity theory. Chapter 4 of *The Power of Phenomenology* by Robert Stolorow and George Atwood provides a summary of the construct, but it is well worth it to read the whole book. Please read all of *The Suffering Stranger* by Donna Orange. It provides the best guidance for conducting psychotherapy I have found.

