



Lesson Guide

Lesson 3 - Anthropology: Who is Man?

Introduction

Lesson 3 takes us into the western regions of the compass, where we engage in an in-depth examination of biblical and contemporary ideas about the nature of the human race. The focus of the discussion is *anthropology*: Who is man? Where did he come from? What is the meaning and purpose of his existence? In the course of this study, Dr. Tackett demonstrates that the answers we bring to these questions have a direct bearing upon our approach to another pressing problem, one of the thorniest and most challenging of all – *Why is there evil in the world?*

Themes

Having established the importance of determining whether the cosmos is to be viewed as an *open* or a *closed box*, Dr. Tackett now moves on to examine another defining aspect of any comprehensive worldview: its basic assumptions about *mankind*. Here again we discover a fundamental conflict between Christianity and the perspective of contemporary culture. The Bible teaches that man consists of both body and spirit and is created in the image of God; our culture assumes that he is purely material, the product of mindless, purposeless forces. The Bible says that man has rebelled against God and fallen from his original state of innocence; contemporary thought maintains that he is “basically good.” The Bible affirms man’s need for divine grace, redemption, and regeneration; popular thinking asserts that “self-actualization” is the key to happiness and fulfillment.

Christianity represents evil as the product of the *Cosmic Battle* that rages *within* man – the conflict between humanity as it was *meant* to be and what it has *actually become* as a result of sin. Godless philosophy and psychology, on the other hand, can suggest only one possible solution to the problem of evil in the world: man must throw off the restraints of superimposed social conventions and institutions (i.e., any kind of moral standard) and pursue “self-fulfillment” to the fullest possible extent. This is what Dr. Tackett calls “the pernicious lie.”

Points to Watch for

Some viewers – even those who consider themselves Christians – may have difficulty accepting the idea that “self-fulfillment” and the call to “follow your heart” are inconsistent with a Christian worldview. Others may object to Dr. Tackett’s assertion that a great deal of the radical social and political activism we see in the world today is driven primarily by secular man’s sinful desire to throw off the shackles of “God’s social design.” All will find it stimulating and profitable to wrestle with the question he poses: *why* do non-believers and evolutionists find evil so troubling?

Discussion Questions (Pick 3 or 4 for you discussion time)

(Make these questions your own. That is, don't just "read" them, but become familiar with them so that they don't appear as simply an item to get through. Go through them yourself before your group meets and ponder them.)

1) Opening Question: (this may be the only question you need to ask)

A. Ask your guests to list what they saw on the tour. Here are some of the key items: Primary doctrine; cosmic battle within; states of man; Maslow and self actualization; problem of evil; depravity of man. [Add your own]

B. Ask your guests to point out the ones that were particularly interesting or striking to them and why.

C. Ask if this particular area struck anyone else as well.

D. Ask if there were other items that they saw that stood out to them. (You may want to read back through the list if you need to.)

2) Let's discuss the truth claim that man is basically good.

A. Do you see any evidence that our culture has bought this notion? What is that evidence?

B. Do you think we live in a culture of "blame"? If so, how is that linked to the notion that man is basically good? (See next)

C. What about "victim mentality"? Is that related? If so, how?
(If I am basically good, then anything bad that happens to me must be caused by someone or something outside of me. I will always find someone or something to blame for my troubles or situation.)

D. What about the issue of "tolerance"? Any linkage? Why or why not?

3) Consider Maslow's position that man must self-actualize by getting in touch their inner desires and bring them out.

A. What are the consequences of this?

B. Why would it give rise to a hostility toward Christianity?
(Biblical Christianity holds to a transcendent absolute moral truth that would stand against someone doing whatever they well please. This thwarts "self-actualization" and the highest need and achievement of man.)

4) Let's revisit the Carl Rodgers' statement: "I do not find that evil is inherent in human nature."

A. What are the implications of this view of man in relation to what man really needs?

B. What does it do to the biblical concept that man needs a Savior?

(It means that man has no need of a spiritual Savior. He may need a physical savior, such as the civil government, but not a spiritual One.)

5) Why do Christians so often feel "stumped" when non-believers point to the existence of evil in the world? According to this discussion, what is the ultimate source of evil?

(Without oversimplifying the problem, it is important to state that Christians struggle with this issue largely because they do not know the Word of God. On the whole, the Bible makes it clear that responsibility for the problem of evil lies not at *God's* doorstep, but at our own. Evil flows directly from man's decision to reject the truth of God and embrace a lie.)

**6) How does your worldview influence your definition of evil? **

(Carried to its logical conclusion, the *cosmic cube* or *closed-box* view of the world actually renders the concept of *evil* meaningless. If "the stuff in the box" is all there is, there can be no basis for value judgments such as "good" and "bad." Everything simply *is what it is*. This is why Dr. Tackett suggests that it can be telling to ask non-believers, "Why does evil *bother* you?")

7) What are the major differences between the Bible's view of man and autonomous man's view of himself?

(Scripture represents man as having existed in several different "modes" or "states," all of which continue to play a role in his present nature and identity: created innocent; fallen through rebellion and disobedience; dead in trespasses and sins; redeemed by grace through faith; glorified by identification with Christ. Contemporary man, on the other hand, sees himself as "basically good," but capable of being "corrupted" by the pressure of "social institutions." In other words, following Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he views himself as just another aspect of "the stuff in the box," which is best off when left to follow its own "natural" inclinations.)

8) How might a person's understanding of human nature and the meaning of human life determine his or her behavior or lifestyle? Given the basic distinctions between biblical and man-centered *anthropology*, how would we expect a believer's behavior to differ from that of a non-believer?

(This question brings us back to the connection between "faith" and "action." Our behavior is determined by our concept of truth. Those who believe that man is happiest when he seeks to "actualize" himself without regard to any external standard of right and wrong will behave accordingly. Christians, on the other hand, ought to act as if they consider themselves accountable to a higher authority.)

9) How do differing views of mankind play into the social struggles and conflicts we see in our culture today?

(According to Dr. Tackett, a vast amount of the social unrest and activism we see around us today is attributable to the human impulse to throw off the “chains” of the higher authority of God. There is potential here for a lively discussion of the possible connections between man’s quest for independence and issues such as feminism, gay rights, cohabitation, and relativistic morals.)



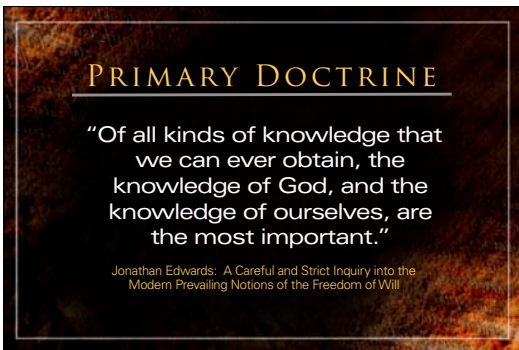
ANTHROPOLOGY
who is **Man**?

1



WHAT IS EVIL?
Why is there **Evil** in the world?

2



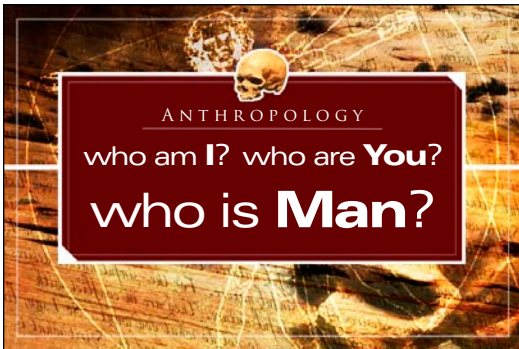
PRIMARY DOCTRINE

“Of all kinds of knowledge that we can ever obtain, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves, are the most important.”

Jonathan Edwards: A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of Will

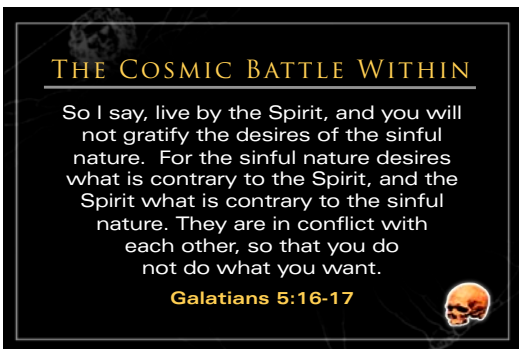
3

Edwards, Jonathan (1808). A careful and strict inquiry into the modern prevailing notions of that freedom of will.... Albany, NY: Backus & Whiting, Author's Preface.



ANTHROPOLOGY
who am **I**? who are **You**?
who is **Man**?

4



THE COSMIC BATTLE WITHIN

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Galatians 5:16-17

5

THE BATTLE OVER ANTHROPOLOGY

who is Man?

Truth Reality VS Lie Illusion

THE PERNICIOUS LIE

6

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

his **essence**

his **moral state**

his **need**


7

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

the **states of man**

- or -

"**modes**"




8

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

mode 1: **innocent**

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;

Genesis 1:27



9

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

mode 2: **fallen**

...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

Romans 5:12

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Genesis 6:5

10

DESCRIPTIONS & NAMES OF THE OLD MAN

Evil	Rebellious
Dead	Without hope
Blind	Haters of God
Deaf	Desperately Wicked
Lost	Children of the devil

11

"YOU CANNOT SLANDER
HUMAN NATURE; IT IS
WORSE THAN WORDS
CAN PAINT IT."

C. H. Spurgeon

12

Spurgeon, Charles Haddon. *Spurgeon's Sermons, Volume 4.*
Sermon #181 "Particular Redemption," 2/28/1858. [http://
www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0181.htm](http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0181.htm)

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

mode 2a: hell

If anyone's name was not found written
in the book of life, he was thrown
into the lake of fire.
Revelation 20:15

...man is destined to die once, and
after that to face judgment,
Hebrews 9:27

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THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

mode 3: redeemed

...with your blood you purchased men for
God from every tribe and language
and people and nation.
Revelation 5:9

14

DESCRIPTIONS & NAMES OF THE NEW MAN

The redeemed	Children of God
Saints	Sons of God
Priests	Beloved
Called out ones	Wear white robes
The people of God	Born from above
A holy nation	

15

BUT WE CARRY SOMETHING

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Galatians 5:16-17



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THE COSMIC BATTLE WITHIN

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Romans 7:15, 18-20



17

THE COSMIC BATTLE WITHIN

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 7:24-25



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THE COSMIC BATTLE WITHIN

this **does not absolve** us from **responsibility!!**

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Romans 6:12

&

Romans 8:5-14



19

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

mode 3a: glorified

The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44



20

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

His **essence**
made in the image of God
dualistic: both flesh and spirit

His **moral state**
fallen nature

His **need**
redemption

21

THE BATTLE OVER ANTHROPOLOGY

who is **Man**?

Truth
Reality

imago deo

Dualistic, Fallen,
Redemption

VS

Lie
Illusion

?

22

"THE COSMOS IS ALL THAT IS, OR EVER WAS, OR EVER WILL BE."
Carl Sagan




23

Sagan, Carl (1980). *Cosmos*. Los Angeles, CA: Cosmos Studios.

THE WORLD & CORLISS LAMONT'S PRIMARY DOCTRINE

"The nonreality of the supernatural means, on the human level, that men do not possess supernatural and immortal souls..."

Humanism as a Philosophy



24

Lamont, Corliss (1949). *Humanism as a philosophy*. Washington, DC: Humanist Press (1997 ed.).

NATURALISTIC PHILOSOPHY IMPLICATIONS

if man is but a material beast, having nothing beyond the **evolutionary cosmic particles**, then what must we conclude about man?

does he have a **purpose** beyond himself?

can he have any **meaning** in life?

25

NATURALISTIC PHILOSOPHY IMPLICATIONS

does he have a **free** will?

is he basically **good**?

is there anything **beyond** the grave?

26

NATURALISTIC PHILOSOPHY IMPLICATIONS

Dr. William Provine

No gods or purposive forces
 No ultimate foundation for ethics
 No free will
 No life after death
 No ultimate meaning in life

Debate with Phillip Johnson, Stanford University
 "Summary of Implications of Modern Evolutionary Biology"

27

Johnson, Phillip & Provine, William (1994). Debate at Stanford University. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, April 30.

NATURALISTIC PHILOSOPHY IMPLICATIONS

Paul Kurtz

"Using the powerful critical tools of science and logical analysis, modern man now recognizes that the universe has no special human meaning or purpose and that man is not a special product of creation."


The Humanist Alternative

SOURCE OF TRUTH?

28

Kurtz, Paul (Ed.). (1973). The humanist alternative. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.

IMPLICATIONS FROM AN ICON OF EVOLUTION




Haeckel's Embryos

29

Haeckel, Ernst H. P. (1876). The evolution of man. London: Watts & Company (1910 ed.).

IMPLICATIONS FROM AN ICON OF EVOLUTION



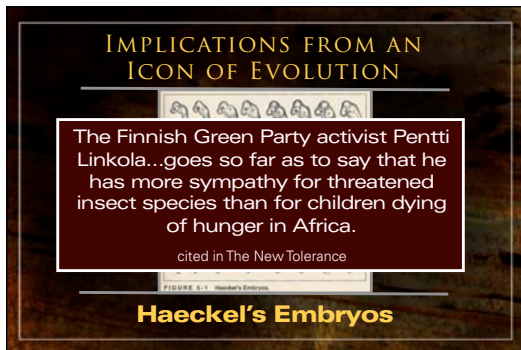
**"A rat is a pig
 is a dog is a boy."**

Ingrid Newkirk, Save the Animals
 ~ president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

Haeckel's Embryos

30

Newkirk, Ingrid (1990). Save the animals. New York, NY: Warner Books.

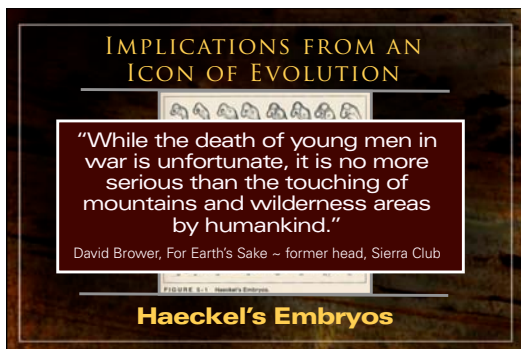


31

Cited in McDowell, Josh and Hostetler, Bob. *The New Tolerance*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1998, p. 65.

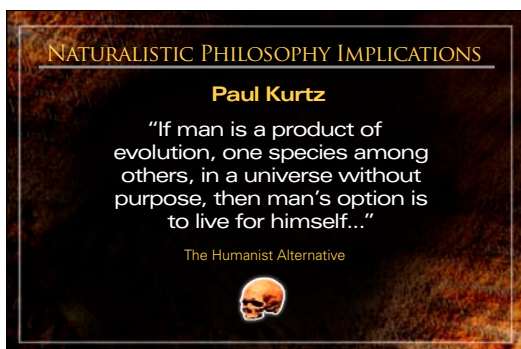
McDowell is citing Veith, Gene E. *Postmodern Times*. Wheaton: Crossway, 1994, p. 75.

And Veith is citing Virkkula, Simopekka. "One Man's War." *Books from Finland* no. 24, 1990, p. 45-50.



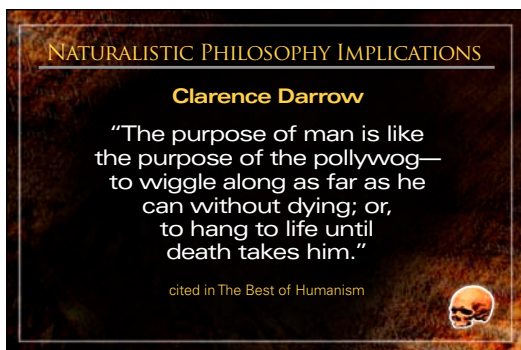
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Brower, David (1990). *For earth's sake: The life and times of David Brower*. Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, p. 125.



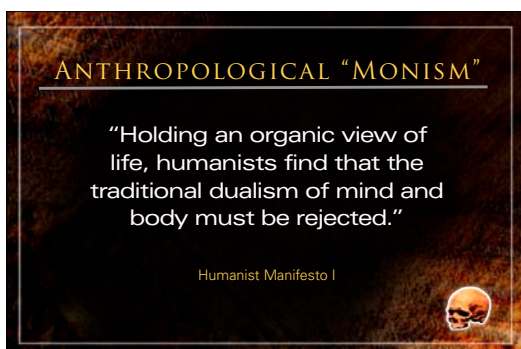
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Kurtz, Paul (Ed.). (1973). *The humanist alternative*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.



34

Darrow, Clarence (1988). Cited in *The best of humanism*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, p. 154.



35

Sellars, Roy W. (1933). *Humanist Manifesto I*. *The New Humanist*, May-June, 58-61.

THE WORLD'S VIEW OF MAN


his **essence**

his **moral state** ←

his **need** ←

36

ABRAHAM MASLOW



"Hierarchy of Needs"

37

ABRAHAM MASLOW

"Hierarchy of Needs"

SA	Self Actualization (following/doing your inner desires)
Esteem	(self respect, autonomy, status, achievement, recognition, attention)
Social	(affection, belonging, acceptance, friendship)
Safety	(security, protection from physical & emotional harm)
Physiological	(hunger, thirst, shelter, sex)

38

Maslow, Abraham (1954). Motivation and personality. New York, NY: Harper (2nd ed., 1970).

"AS FAR AS I KNOW WE JUST DON'T HAVE ANY INTRINSIC INSTINCTS FOR EVIL."

Abraham Maslow
cited in David Noebel, Understanding the Times



39

Maslow, Abraham (1991). Cited in David Noebel, Understanding the times. Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Press, pp. 359, 361, 362.

"I DO NOT FIND THAT... EVIL IS INHERENT IN HUMAN NATURE."


Carl Rogers
cited in David Noebel, Understanding the Times



40

Rogers, Carl (1991). Cited in David Noebel, Understanding the times. Manitou Springs, CO; Summit Press, pp. 355, 361.

ABRAHAM MASLOW



"If you think in terms of the basic needs; instincts, at least at the outset, are all 'good'...careful study of them [instincts] will provide the values we need by which better societies can evolve."

cited in David Noebel, *Understanding the Times*


41

Noebel, David. *Understanding the Times*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991, p. 359.

Or, the original source, which Noebel cites:

Welch, G.A. Tate, & F. Richards, eds. *Humanistic Psychology: A Sourcebook*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1978, p. 188 (the second quote on the slide), 190 (the first quote on the slide).

ABRAHAM MASLOW



"Since this inner nature is good or neutral rather than bad, it is best to bring it out and to encourage it rather than to suppress it. If it is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful, and happy."

cited in David Noebel, *Understanding the Times*

42

Noebel, David. *Understanding the Times*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991, p. 362.

Or, the original source, which Noebel cites:

Maslow, Abraham (1968). *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 3rd Edition. New York: John Wiley, 1999, p. 5.

THE TRUTH

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live...

Romans 8:13

43

THE TRUTH

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived...

Colossians 3:5-10

44

THE TRUTH

But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Colossians 3:5-10

45

THE OL' GARDEN LIE

No! Get in touch with the inner man...let him flourish...if you let him guide your life, you will be healthy, fruitful and happy.

this is **self-actualization**...and the **consequences** are huge...



46

What is the enemy of **self-actualization**?

Suppression
of one's inner desires



47

WHO IS MAN? the Truth claims

Man is created in the image of God

Goo-man, a product of mindless, purposeless forces



48

WHO IS MAN? the Truth claims

Man, though created perfect, rebelled against God and is now fallen, his heart desperately wicked

Man is basically good



49

WHO IS MAN? the Truth claims

Man needs divine grace, regeneration, and redemption

Man must save himself through self-oriented pursuits



50



HMMM???

“[Man’s] inner nature is **good**...”

“...we just **don’t** have any intrinsic **instincts** for **evil**...”

“...**instincts**, at least at the outset, are all ‘**good**’...”

52

HMMM???

doesn’t this raise a very **obvious** and **important** **question**????

if Man is **instinctively** and **basically good**, then **why** is there **evil** in the **world**?

53

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU
(1712-1778)

“If man is good by nature, as I believe to have shown him to be, it follows that he stays like that **as long as nothing foreign to him corrupts him**.”

“Man was born free, but everywhere he is in **chains!**”

cited in Francis Schaeffer, How Shall We Then Live?

54

Schaeffer, Francis (1976). *How Should We Then Live?* Wheaton: Crossway, 1983, pp. 154-155.

CARL ROGERS

“For myself, though I am very well aware of **the incredible amount of destructive, cruel, malevolent behavior** in today’s world—from the threats of war to the senseless violence in the streets—I **do not find that this evil is inherent in human nature**.”

cited in David Noebel, Understanding the Times

55

Noebel, David. *Understanding the Times*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991, p. 355.

Or, the original source:

Rogers, Carl. “Notes on Rollo May.” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Summer 1982, p. 8.

THE LOGICAL QUESTION...

If evil doesn't come from human nature, then **where does it come from?**

56

IF MAN IS GOOD?
WHY IS THERE EVIL?


"Sick people are made by a **sick culture**; healthy people are made possible by a healthy culture."

Abraham Maslow, Motivation and Personality

57

Maslow, Abraham (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York, NY: Harper (2nd ed., 1970).

IF MAN IS GOOD?
WHY IS THERE EVIL?



Carl Rogers

"...experience leads me to believe that it is **cultural influences** which are the major factor in our evil behaviors."

cited in David Noebel, Understanding the Times

58

Noebel, David. *Understanding the Times*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991, p. 361.

Or, the original source:

Rogers, Carl. "Notes on Rollo May." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Summer 1982, p. 8.

INTERESTING QUESTION

the "feeling bad about evil" problem

why does evil **bother** you?

why do you **feel bad** about **evil**?

isn't **evil**, as you described it, simply the natural **outworking** of the **evolutionary process**?

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OUR CULTURE'S ANTHROPOLOGY
BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

man, by nature, **is good**

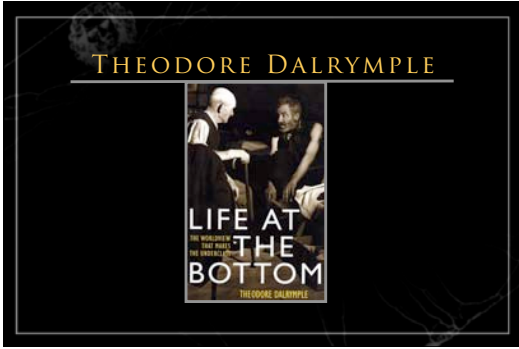
mental health and **happiness** come through **self-actualization** and getting in touch with one's real '**good**' self

social institutions are **responsible** for man's **evil** actions

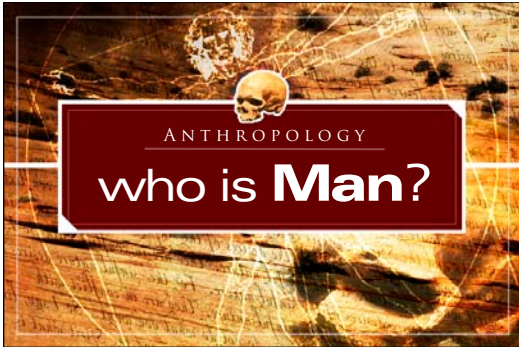
David Noebel, Understanding the Times

60

Noebel, David. *Understanding the Times*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991, p. 359-361.



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Outline

Lesson 3 – Anthropology: Who is man?

- I. Introduction – The Problem of Evil and Who is man?
 - a. Primary Doctrine – Who is Man? Who is God? - The answers to these two questions form the foundation of everyone's worldview
 - b. The cosmic battle within – Galatians 5:16-17 – Our sinful nature is in constant conflict with God's Spirit – Romans 7:15-25, Romans 6:12, Romans 8:5-14
- II. Man's Essence
 - a. States of man
 - i. Innocent – Genesis 1:27
 - ii. Fallen – Romans 5:12, Genesis 6:5
 - a. Hell – Revelation 20:15, Hebrew 9:27
 - iii. Redeemed – Revelation 5:9
 - a. Glorified – 1 Corinthians 15:42
 - b. Dualistic or Monistic – Both flesh and spirit or purely material?
 - c. Naturalistic Philosophy Implications – no gods or purposive forces, no foundation for ethics, no free will, no life after death, no meaning in life
- III. Man's moral state and Man's needs
 - a. Abraham Maslow – Hierarchy of Needs – man's ultimate objective is self-actualization – The Pernicious lie – getting in touch with your inner nature
 - b. Basically good or sinful? – Depravity of man – Man's propensity for evil
 - c. Carl Rodgers - "I do not find that evil is inherent in human nature."
 - d. Scriptural Truth – Put to death your earthly nature – Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5-10
- IV. If evil is not inherent in man, then where does evil come from?
 - a. Abraham Maslow - "Sick people are made by a sick culture..."

- b. Carl Rodgers – "...experience leads me to believe that it is cultural influences which are the major factor in our evil behaviors."
 - c. Social institutions and authority structures are blamed for man's evil actions – provides basis for understanding the battleground over social institutions today
- V. Why should "evil" bother someone with a secular worldview? – the question of evil is more difficult for them than us



Key Terms

Lesson 3 – Anthropology: Who is Man?

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) : psychologist who developed the theory of Hierarchy of Human Needs in 1943 (portrayed as a pyramid shaped structure that illustrates human needs, where self-actualization is the top of the pyramid). Not surprisingly, there is no clinical evidence to support his theory.

Anthropology: the study of mankind, its nature, behavior, origin, physical, social, and cultural development.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987): influential American psychologist who, along with Abraham Maslow, was the founder of the humanistic approach to psychology. Popularized the idea that "evil is not inherent in human nature" (i.e., people are basically good by nature).

Dualistic: Biblical view of man that he is comprised of both natural and supernatural elements, both flesh and spirit.

Imago Dei: Created in the image of God. Biblical perspective of man that we bear the divine image of God as his created beings (see Genesis 1:26). Though created in God's image, man is fallen by nature and in need of redemption.

Imago Goo: Del's way of expressing the humanistic perspective of man that maintains human beings are simply random products of the stuff in the box. Views man as monistic, good by nature, and in need of self-actualization.

Monistic: Humanistic and naturalistic view of man that man is simply material, made of one substance, and has no spiritual dimension. Man was not created but has evolved and is a product of chance. In religion monism is the view that all reality is one, such as in certain forms of Hinduism.

Self-actualization: Humanistic psychology theory that advocates getting in touch with one's inner-desires in order to help develop or achieve one's full potential.

States of man: May be referred to as "modes" of man. The different states through which man has passed or in which he currently exists: innocence, fallen, redeemed, and death (hell or glorified).



Scripture References
Lesson 3 – Anthropology: Who is Man?

Gal 5: 16-17

Rev 20:15

Rom 6:12

Col 3:5-10

Gen 1:27

Heb 9:27

Rom 8:5-14

Rom 7:24-25

Rom 5:12

Rev 5:9

1 Cor 15:42

Gen 6:5

Rom 7:14-20

Rom 8:13



Recommended Reading

Lesson 3 – Anthropology: Who is Man?

Please note that not everything in these suggested resources should be considered endorsed by Focus on the Family. Nevertheless, Dr. Tackett has found this material helpful. Scripture should be your first and primary resource.

- C.S. Lewis *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1980)
- J.I. Packer, *Knowing Man* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1978)
- Francis A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1981)
- A.W. Tozer, *That Incredible Christian* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1964)



Historical Figure: Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow is one of the great "hidden" influencers of contemporary thought and culture. Though his name has never achieved "household word" status, many of the *concepts* he developed and promoted are now all but taken for granted by the average person on the street. In particular, his understanding of what it means to be *human* has entered deeply into the popular consciousness, profoundly impacting the way we view *ourselves*. If you've ever been advised to "follow your dreams" or "listen to your inner voices" – if you are inclined to regard education as a fail-safe solution to social problems and human development as a steady upward climb toward godlike greatness – then you have felt the effects of Maslow's writings and teachings.

Abraham H. Maslow, one of the founders and chief proponents of the *humanistic psychology* movement, was born on April 1, 1908 in Brooklyn, New York, the first of seven siblings. His parents, uneducated Jewish immigrants from Russia, understandably stressed the importance of academic achievement as the key to a brighter future, and Abraham, a shy but intelligent boy, was driven hard to succeed in school. In the event, his diligent work as a student laid the foundation for a brilliant career as a researcher and writer. But Maslow always looked back on his childhood as a lonely and unhappy time.

In compliance with his father's wishes, Maslow studied law at the City College of New York (CCNY) for three semesters before transferring to Cornell University. Returning to CCNY, he married his first cousin, Bertha Goodman, and moved west to undertake a course in psychology at the University of Wisconsin. Neither the marriage nor the change in direction pleased his parents, but Abraham forged ahead in spite of their objections. The switch was to prove a significant step into his future – a life-choice from which there would be no turning back.

At the University of Wisconsin Maslow conducted research in primate sexuality and dominance behavior under the guidance of Professor Harry Harlow, earning his B.A. in 1930, his M.A. in 1931, and his Ph.D. in 1934. A year after graduation, he was back in New York, investigating human sexuality at Columbia University with E. L. Thorndike and Alfred Adler, an early disciple of Sigmund Freud.

In 1937 Maslow joined the faculty of Brooklyn College and came under the tutelage of anthropologist Ruth Benedict and Gestalt psychologist Max Wertheimer. This was another crucial turning point in his career; for as Maslow himself tells us, his ideas about "self-actualization" and the "hierarchy of human needs" arose directly out of his profound respect for Benedict and Wertheimer. As he explains it, "[These studies] started out as the effort of a young intellectual to try to understand two of his teachers whom he loved, adored, and admired, and who were very, very wonderful people."¹

Over the course of time, admiration led to observation, observation to analysis, and analysis to the development of a theory. Based on what he regarded as the "secrets" of Benedict's and Wertheimer's personal success, Maslow drew up a generalized list of the attributes of "self-actualizing people." This list in turn became the nucleus of his definition of psychological health or, as he termed it, "full humanness." Eventually, these concepts provided the impetus for his crusade to establish a more thoroughly *humanistic* approach to psychology.

"Self-actualizers," in Maslow's view, are people who reach for and achieve a maximum degree of their inborn potential by 1) experiencing life vividly, 2) allowing the "true self" to emerge, 3) listening to their "inner voices," 4) focusing on problems outside themselves, 5) making responsible life choices, and 6) consciously preparing for "peak experiences," or "mystical" inward encounters with a "larger reality." All of these activities are directly associated with the higher "being needs" that occupy the upper levels of Maslow's pyramid-shaped "hierarchy of human need." According to the theory, these "being needs" – love, a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and, ultimately, self-actualization – cannot be pursued effectively until the lower needs – food, water, shelter, safety, and security – have been met. In light of this, it's not surprising that the "higher possibilities" of human nature are so infrequently realized: Maslow himself suggested that only about two percent of the world's population ever reach the pinnacle of true "self-actualization."

At this point it has to be said that there is something extremely subjective about Maslow's conclusions and the methods he used to reach them. He himself was keenly aware of his susceptibility to this particular charge. Concerning his observations of Benedict, Wertheimer, and other notable "self-actualizers," he writes, "By ordinary standards of laboratory research ... this simply was not research at all. My generalizations grew out of *my* selection of certain kinds of people. Obviously, other judges are needed."² Henry Geiger, a warm admirer of Maslow, underscores this element of subjectivity when he says, "The core of what Maslow found out about psychology he found out from himself. It is evident from his writing that he studied himself."³

Geiger continues: "Has a scientist any business getting to where he gets by such private or inexplicable means? Maybe; maybe not."⁴ It's a question well worth asking. But ultimately Maslow was undeterred and undaunted by reflections of this nature. "My confidence in my rightness," he said, "is not a scientific datum."⁵

Maslow's selective and highly personal approach to his material may have everything to do with what some have considered the greatest flaw in his thinking: a failure to take serious account of the darker side of man's nature. Having hand-chosen a number of particularly brilliant and accomplished individuals as subjects for his inquiries, it was almost inevitable that he should arrive at what Geiger calls "a fresh and encouraging view of mankind."⁶ As Maslow himself put it, "Human nature is not nearly as bad as it has been thought to be." Elsewhere he wrote, "The fact is that people are good. Give people affection and security, and they will give affection and be secure in their feelings and behavior."⁷

Following his work at Brooklyn College, Maslow became a professor at Brandeis University, where he chaired the Psychology Department from 1951 to 1969. During this period he was also

elected to serve as a Fellow of the Laughlin Institute. He spent his final years in semi-retirement in California and died of a heart attack on June 8, 1970.

¹ Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Compass, 1971), Chapter 3, "Self-actualizing and Beyond," 40-41.

² *Ibid.*, 41.

³ *Ibid.*, Introduction, *xv*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Introduction, *xix*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Introduction, *xvi*.

⁷ Abraham Maslow quotes; from Brainyquote
http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/abraham_maslow.html