

Psychology of Worldliness

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disdains the external sign of a priest in a college, but when arrested, he puts it on in a courtroom in order to win the esteem of the judge, where it is hoped that there will be some "respect" for the clergy.

Psychologists have sought to explain this want of humor in the worldly and attribute it to an unconscious guilt. Having fallen away from the ideal, the religious person engaged in an anticipation of defeat. The frequent condemning of spirituality as "irrelevant," is a narcissistic face-saving device, in order that one may appear less guilty for having rejected the Divine.

Difference Between Normal and Neurotic

Here one touches on the difference between a normal man or woman of God has the Christ pattern, or Christ mission-goat ever before his or her eyes; meditation, reading and study drive them to conform to that vocation. But the neurotic religious person, who identifies a mission to the world with absorption in the world, develops a defense mechanism. The neurotic lives in constant dread that what he ought to be, or the Christ-Ideal, will present a bill to his conscience; so he changes his aims rather than works toward them. The external of vocation are preserved for a time, but the internal assent is denied.

No one ever falls away from the Ideal without rationalization; this manifests itself by impugning the Truths of Faith, by a fondness for shocking statements, and a social avoidance of all who represent the Ideal. Incessant, rapid-fire fault finding of others becomes the cover up for the unbearable reprieve of conscience. Bitterness which is associated with the defense mechanism, results in a loss of humor, a devaluation of the success of others and a depreciation of the Ideal: "I don't know what a priest ought to be".

Cynicism can be far deeper in a religious who externally subscribes to the Ideal, but internally resents it, than among the laity. This is due to the height of the ideal from which one has fallen. A pervasive unhappiness accompanies the tension between the unconscious conscience which says: "I ought to be another Christ", and his conscious rationalization that shouts: "Jesus was always in the market place." Even the natural endowments of joy are destroyed in this desperate struggle to ward off the "inner foe", which is Grace reminding the soul what it is meant to be. The inner conscience is momentarily appeased by an expectation of punishment or rebuff: "The establishment is against me", "They never read Harvey Cox", "They forget that homosexuality is the only form of love for certain people".

They are obsessed with the idea that something is due them, that they have been overlooked; if others pity them, they take it as an agreement. It is the Christ-like response to a humiliation, or a failure, or an unpopular mission that matures a person, but in those without humor, it is a debit, an injustice and a personal affront.

It is the "going" into the world without first "coming" to Christ, which begets this loss of humor, and it is living close to Christ while going into the world, which restores it. The Cure of Ars tried once to explain to the laity his happiness: "We do not know what it means to come from a rectory to face God." Despite incessant hours in the confessional and poor health, he set only one limitation to his happiness: "I would be the happiest of priests were it not for the thought that I will have to appear before the judgment seat of God as a pastor."

The perfect example of the priest who combined detachment from the spirit of the world with attachment to the world, was Francis de Sales, who combined the heights of Divine Love with intellectual interests and a radiating spirituality with the finest worldly polish. The happy priest is one who has assurance that he has received pardon from the Father, and then is ready with joy to extend it to others: "Blessed by the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, a gentle Father and the God of all consolation, Who comforts us in all our sorrows, so that we can offer others, in their sorrows, the consolations that we have received from God ourselves. Indeed, as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so through Christ, does our consolation overflow" (2 Cor. 1/3-5).

III. THE REPUDIATION OF A TEST

St. Thomas Aquinas, in a masterly stroke of the comparison between God and man, says that: "God is measuring and unmeasured." By this he means that He sets limits, boundaries and goals to men and to nature. But man is "measured and measuring"; he is measured in the sense that he is bound by the laws of nature and the solicitation of Grace, but in the area of art and science, he measures the universe, transmutes matter by technology and becomes a kind of a creator. But with the "Death of God", with the rejection of the spiritual as the condition of effective social betterment, man is taking on the quality of God: he is "measuring but unmeasured".

He is the source of all values, and his values are determined by his choice. But the choice is not based upon reason, but upon feelings. As his feeling for an object changes, the significance of that object changes; as the feeling for a dress changes, one either grows in love or contempt for the dress. Once one starts with this sentimental, romantic approach to values, and identifies "conscience" with "feeling", then it follows that as one's feelings for the priesthood or the religious life change, the significance of the priesthood and the religious life changes.

There is no outside test of measuring good or bad; no norm by which sentiment may be measured. Nothing is real except feeling makes it so. Time dissolves; there is no continuity, no past, no future as this would presuppose a substratum of continuity; everything is merely now, an ever new and vanishing, merging presence; its

value is determined subjectively, or the feeling that one has toward it. The artist and the public hardly share the same language, due to the fact that it is difficult and almost impossible to analyze the feelings of others.

Contempt of Past

One finds this in theology in what is almost a contempt for the Fathers of the Church, or Scripture and even for the great theological literature of the past and great minds like Augustine and Aquinas. A theological book that is a year or two old is almost burned in the search for a new feeling. The refusal to practice Discernment of Spirit can be found as an illustration in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Having rejected an objective, ethical measure of "good and evil," and having substituted "amusing and boring", Dorian Gray has his picture painted as an unaging, enduring youth. But living the unmeasured and undiscerned life of the primacy of feeling, the picture becomes a kind of a substitute for the man portrayed. While Dorian Gray keeps the false ideal of the unmeasured ego, the portrait grows older; though the youth denies responsibility, judgment and any magisterium outside of himself, all of these are asserted in the aging portrait.

In the end, Dorian Gray slabs the picture that accuses him as a conscience. The only way that he could ever be free, he thought, was to kill the past, break with tradition, establish a generation abyss with all that had gone before: "... and when that was dead, he would be free." But at that moment, when he would have killed the ethical for the sake of the sentimental, there was a sudden switch, Dorian Gray had killed himself with that dagger thrust. When the servants entered they found: "... hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty."

Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled and loathsome of visage. It was not until they had examined the rings that they recognized who he was. "The flight from norms and from the past has miscarried". The end was bitter; it was an unredeemed admission that a man is man after all; that his conscience is not "free" in the sense of being unsuspected and "unmeasured".

Conclusion

The Psychology of Worldliness reveals that in those who are called to be spiritual, there is a triple effect:

a) It results in the pride which forgets that we receive before we give — even to our neighbor; b) in a seriousness which is the loss of the Spirit, and in the loneliness which comes from not seeing the Divine behind the human, and prayer behind the deed; c) and finally, it is a spurning of the past and the rejection of all tests and norms outside of the ego, this in turn results in the destruction of the ego itself. The hubris, or pride which has ruined nations, and brought to them a nemesis and finally an ate, or disaster, is also true of individuals. Reducing these three parts of the Greek drama and of history to the simple and the childlike, one finds the lesson better told in Martin Buber's book, *Between Man and Man*.

He relates an experience which took place when he was eleven years of age, spending the summer at his grandparents' estate.

He said: "I used, as often as I could do it unobserved, to steal into the stable and gently stroke the neck of my darling, a broad dapple-grey horse. It was not a casual delight, but a great, certainly friendly, but also deeply stirring happening. I must say that what I experienced in touch with the animal was the Other, the immense otherness of the Other, which let me draw near and touch it. When I stroked the mighty mane, sometimes marvelously smooth-combed, at other times just as astonishingly wild, and felt the life beneath my hand, it was as though the element of vitality itself bordered on my skin, something that was not I, was certainly not also to me, palpably the other, not just another, really the Other itself; and yet it let me approach, confided itself to me, placed itself elementally into the relations of Thou, and Thou with me.

"The horse, even when I had not begun by pouring oats for him in the manger, very gently raised his massive head, ears flicking, then snorted quietly as a conspirator gives his signal meant to be recognizable only by his fellow-conspirator; and I was approved."

"Now there comes a moment where the transcendence of the Other is not given primacy, but where the ego, sentiment and feeling begin to dominate.

"But once — I do not know what came over me, at any rate it was childlike enough — it struck me about the stroking, what fun it gave me and suddenly I became conscious of my hand. The game went on as before, but something had changed, it was no longer the same thing. And the next day, after giving him a rich feed, when I stroked my friend's head he did not raise his head. A few years later, when I thought back to the incident, I no longer supposed that the animal had noticed my defection. But at the time, I considered myself judged."

John Huston

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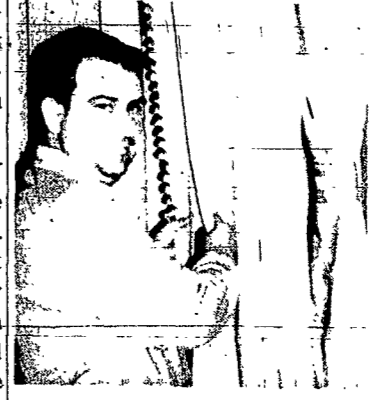
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WOOL KNITS — Please don't store it without cleaning. A stain that sets all summer can't be removed once it's imbedded in the fabric. What a shame! This good advice comes to you from David Thurston who knows from experience that pop spills are damaging to wools. If you don't know a good dry cleaner who knows all about this, bring your double knits to THURSTON'S, 1023 Norton St. 467-1241.



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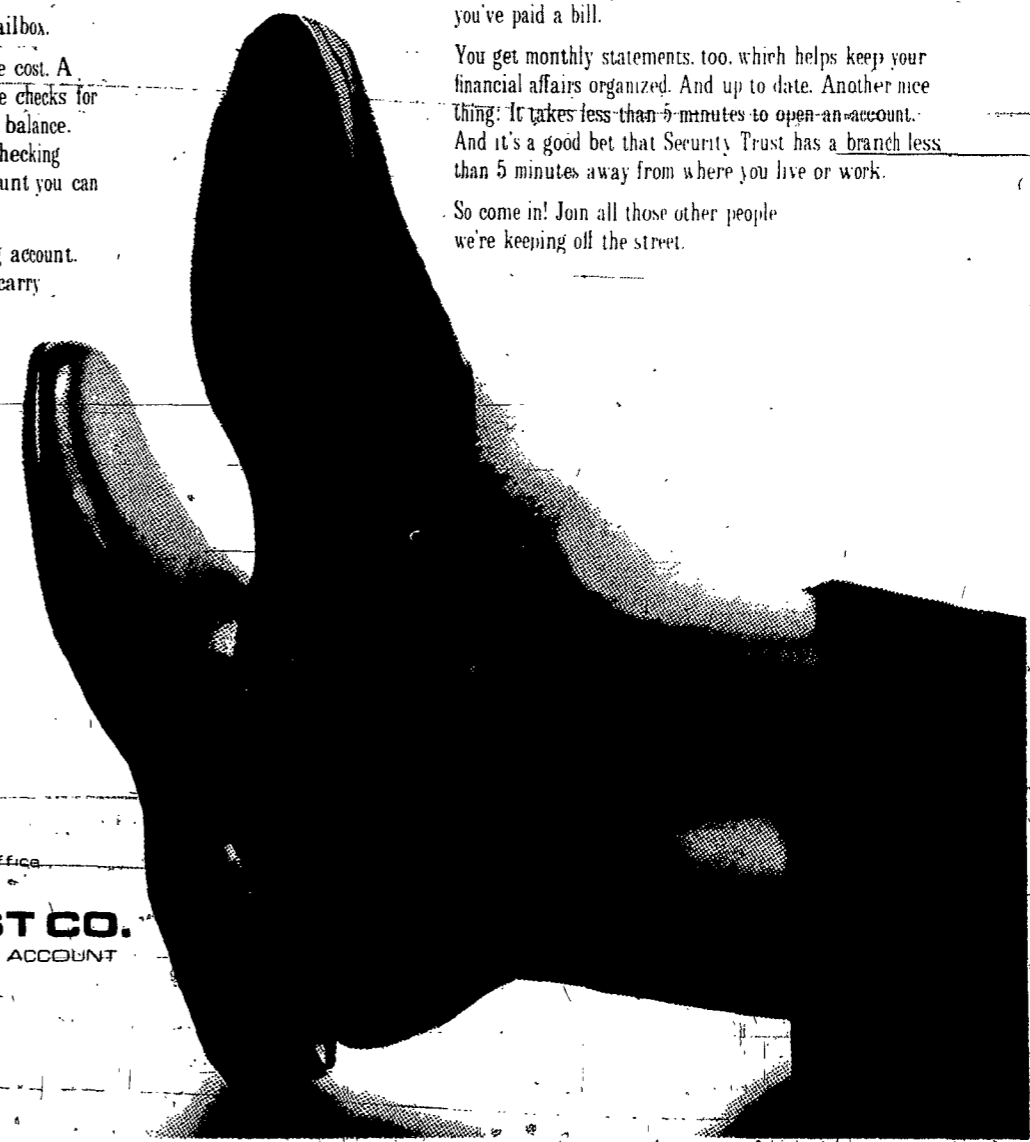
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