A Shrinking Horizon:
The Deeper Reasons Underlying our Struggles to Believe in God in Western Culture

THE NEED FOR A NEW MISSIOLOGY WITHIN THE WEST TODAY

We need a new missiology within the Western world today. This seems evident. What used to work, for the most part, no longer does. Our churches are emptying, our families and ecclesial communities are breaking apart, and, more and more, we are witnessing the phenomenon of unbelief both outside the churches and indeed inside of them. Moreover, what is required is more than a simple readjustment of our old methods, bandaids, the old missiology put on the Internet. The old no longer works the way it once did, not because it was faulty, but because the things which impact upon our collective ability to believe in God have shifted at their roots, not simply at the surface. It is this shift, this earthquake at our roots, that must be analyzed as the first step in the formulation of any new missiology. Albeit this is essentially a diagnostic endeavor, an exercise in trying to name a dis-ease, it is nonetheless a very important one. Unless there is a proper diagnosis, the prescriptions suggested will not be very helpful. Thus the task of this essay will be to try to name what has shifted in the deep roots of Western culture so as to leave us today struggling to believe in God.

THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE INTERIOR LIFE

Western culture today constitutes a virtual conspiracy against interiority and belief in God. This conspiracy, obviously, is not some conscious or deliberate thing, but a confluence of accidents now meeting in history which are making it difficult for us, in the Western world, to live the examined life.

What are the elements within this conspiracy? Too common is the impression that today's faith struggles in the Western world have their real roots in the social changes of the nineteen sixties. Rock music, the Beatles, the Viet Nam war, drugs, the sexual revolution, affluence and the emergence of the first real post-rags-to-riches generation, new technologies, and new opportunities for travel and anonymity, it is felt, changed our conception of family, marriage, morality, and of God and religion. Life in the Western world changed fundamentally in the nineteen sixties and, with that change, the old ideals of church and family were undermined. In this analysis, problems with faith today are rooted in the social changes that happened then.

The thesis here is that this is too simplistic. When Nietzsche's madman breaks his lantern and shouts to the people in the marketplace, "God is dead ... and we are his murderers!" the murdering process he is referring to is one which has taken place gradually, almost imperceptibly, through many centuries. The generation that subsequently finds that God is dead is at the end of a long historical process which killed God unknowingly, gradually, imperceptibly, and often with the very means and tactics it was using to try to keep

God alive. [1] The reason why our generation struggles with belief has its deepest roots in changes which began in Western history at the time of the renaissance with the advent of modern science and modern philosophy but which only began to come to a full crystallization in the second half of our own century. The roots of our present crisis have tentacles which extend back many centuries.

What are these roots? They are extremely complex mixture of historical, philosophical, cultural, psychological, moral, and religious factors and it would be pretentious to the extreme to attempt any kind of definitive analysis. Hence what we will present here are five compenetrating causes which, while not exhaustive (and vastly oversimplified in their development) offer at least a kernel insight vis-a-vis the deeper historical roots of our present struggles to experience the presence of God within our ordinary lives.

1) An obsession with clarity ... an Epistemological Shift

One of the root causes is philosophical and has to do with how and what we know. Beginning already with Rene Descartes (1596-1650) and then moving through the British empiricism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to our own time, with its positivism and linguistic analysis, we can trace a progressive obsession with clarity in knowing which ultimately has major effects upon the human capacity for contemplation. [2]

In vast oversimplification, it might be said that. prior to Descartes, Western thought had been characterized by the following elements:

i) Reality was seen to be deep, rich, and full of hidden dimensions. Mystery was the operative word vis-a-vis human knowing. It was felt that reality was so full of things that we could not hope to understand that, almost universally, there was present the sense that we must rely on God (or superstitious practices) to remain at peace with it. And this richness and depth lay in its quality. Reality was seen to be full of all kinds of qualities - colours, textures, ghosts, spirits, demons,fixed features which caused predictable patterns, and unpredictable things which could cause arbitrary changes. Moreover, those aspects of reality which dealt with its size, shape, and brute physicalness, were considered less interesting and less important. Thus, quality was emphasized over quantity and the measurable aspects of reality were considered secondary to its non-measurable dimensions.

ii) The human mind was seen, naively, to be able to know reality as it exists in itself, outside of the mind. Truth was understood to mean that your mind, camera-like, captured in an accurate picture or concept things just as they existed in themselves outside of the mind. There was little criticism regarding how the mind itself helps shape and create what we know.

iii) The human mind was perceived to have two distinct knowing powers: INTELLECTUS (the power of insight, the power to simply perceive meaning without any

reasoning process being involved) and RATIO (the power to reason logically so as to induce and deduce new truth.) [3] Prior to Descartes, the human mind was understood to possess not only the power of logical thought, discursive reasoning, analysis, and synthesis (RATIO), it was understood to possess as well the power to "listen to the essence of things", to be "effortlessly aware" of the essential meaning of things - one looked at a tree and did not have to be told what it meant, one simply had an insight into what the essence of a tree is and thus "understood" (INTELLECTUS). Both powers, RATIO and INTELLECTUS were accorded a respected place in the process of human knowing and the latter, INTELLECTUS, was seen as the contemplative muscle within human knowing.

iv) In the process of knowing, persons understood themselves as not being so totally distinct from the world and the things that they were knowing. The ego was understood as less separate from the world it perceived and found itself part of. What this means is that, prior to Descartes, someone standing before the world, hoping to know that world, knew at the same time that this world was not really so separate from herself. The self who knows and the world that is known were both understood as one reality. The distinction between the objective and the subjective was drawn in a different way than it is today.

v) As well, in the process of knowing,the object perceived was less separated from its context and surroundings, it was less analyzed in the sense that analysis means, precisely, separating something from its surroundings and examining it in isolation. [4] Knowing, at all levels (in philosophy books and on the street) gave a greater place to wholism, to mystery, to context, to synthesis. Knowledge was more synthetic and less fragmented.

vi) Philosophy, and education in general, saw the primary purpose of learning as the acquiring of wisdom. [5] The ultimate purpose of knowing, it was felt, was for its own sake and not as a means to acquire or attain something pragmatically. You struggled to learn because it was good to know, pure and simple. Moreover, the most valuable kind of knowledge was not the understanding of practical things, mechanics and skills. Rather, important knowledge was wisdom, insight into the essence and being of things. The important theoretical question was not the how of things, but their why. Correspondingly, there was the propensity to try to figure out how things ought to be as opposed to simply explaining how in fact they were. Wisdom,ultimately, delves more into ethics than phenomenology. Moreover, and very importantly, the purpose of knowing was seen as that of entering reality to participate in it rather than to manipulate it for a utilitarian purpose. [6]

vii) Philosophy admitted various kinds of certitude, including moral certitude.[7] What this means is that there was a wider definition of what it means to be certain or sure of something. What does it mean to establish something as a fact so that you can be sure of it? Must you be able to count something, measure it, or otherwise empirically establish it? But how could you then establish that someone loved you, or that you trusted someone? Prior to Descartes, Western epistemology (in the universities and on the street) allowed for moral as well as empirical proof, you could be sure of something on the basis of a certain trust in it as well as on the basis of measured observable facts. Hence, the adjudication of what was considered to be a fact was not always rendered by the scientist who could do so by referring

to the empirical facts. When moral certitude was given fair play then mystics, priests, poets, lovers, wise persons, soothsayers, sorcerers, people with common sense and intuitive hunches were also given a chance to help establish what was considered normative.

viii) Knowing was seen as an activity which was meant to appeal to more than just the intellect and the self-reflective part of the human being. Prior to Descartes, while philosophy and theology were, at one level, obviously very heady and rational, they, at another level, admitted that their were other dimensions to human knowing and these were accessed not through the head or even the conscious self, but through the heart and the non self-reflective personality.[8] Hence, in knowing, a more prominent place was given to mythology, poetry, aesthetics, mystical knowledge ("dark knowledge", they called this), and piety. Prior to Descartes, the non-rational and pre-rational elements in knowledge (the "right brain" elements) were given a more respected role in human understanding. Consciousness was not simply identical with self-consciousness and communication was not simply identical with what can be exchanged rationally.

ix) Finally, prior to Descartes, there was more of a sense of the corporate body of humanity, both in epistemology and outside of it. What this means is that people had less of a sense of their own selves as separate from each other and the outside world. Prior to the shift in Western thought that will begin with Descartes, the idea that we, despite our individuality, are part of one body, a corporate entity that somehow has physical, moral, ecclesial, societal, and familial dimensions and brings with it concomitant responsibilities in each of these areas, was more part of the mindset of a person standing before the world and trying to understand it than it is today. That, in a caricature, describes how human knowing was thought of prior to Rene Descartes. We see things fairly differently today, as we will soon see. How did we come to a new and very different vision of things?

It is beyond the scope of this essay to attempt a history of modern philosophy in general and of modern epistemology in particular. That history, how we moved from the seventeenth century (Descartes) to our own times (and the Logical Positivism, Pragmatism, Marxism, Materialism, and Existentialism which is so manifest in our own approach to life), is already well-written.[9] Our concern here is more with the end results of that journey.

Thanks to some key distinctions within the thought of Rene Descartes (1596-1650), which were furthered especially by John Locke (1632-1704) and David Hume (1711-1766) and the logical positivists of our own century, coupled with what developed in the scientific world beginning especially with Isaac Newton (1642-1727) (who drew upon Copernicus, 1473-1543, Galileo, 1564-1642, and Kepler, 1571-1630) and Francis Bacon (1561-1626) we see a radical shift in Western history regarding how human knowing is conceived of and how it is evaluated.

Again, in a vast oversimplification, we can say that the Western mindset, after the growth through nearly five hundred of the seeds that were planted at the birth of modern philosophy and the scientific method, is characterized by the following conceptions regarding how we know:

i) Reality is not seen as containing much in the way of hidden dimensions or mystery. The emphasis in knowing, however sophisticated its ultimate expression might be, is upon what is quantifiable and can be measured empirically, namely, bulk, number, figure and motion. From these, we establish normative facts, the facts of science. Although many contemporary scientists admit that there is much within physical reality in the way of mysterious quality not accessible to empirical measurement and the scientific method, most common sense does not admit this. In current Western common sense, the idea is prevalent that the physical is what is undeniable and proven as real. Spiritual realities are a question of faith, to be believed in on no other basis beyond blind option. As well, nothing to do with spiritual realities is considered to be mainstream. Language which deals with realities beyond what science can talk about is restricted to church circles, poetic circles, esoteric circles, and a few arts faculties. It has no relevance elsewhere.

Moreover, physical reality is, in the end, itself, not very mysterious or complex. It is reduced to the quantifiable. In the Western mindset today the conception is that all the goods can really be seen in the store window, there is nothing under the counter! Despite the conceptions of contemporary physics, the common sense notion it still that what is real is one big giant physical machine with no spiritual parts and very little mystery to it.

E.A. Burtt, already more than a generation ago, described the change from an earlier mindset to our own:

> **"The world that people had thought themselves living in -
> a world rich with colours and sound, redolent with fragrance,
> filled with gladness, love and beauty, speaking everywhere
> of purposive harmony and creative ideals - was now crowded
> into minute corners in the brains of scattered organic
> beings. The really important world outside was a world hard,
> cold, colourless, silent, and dead; a world of quantity, a
> world of mathematically computable motion in mechanical
> regularity."** [10]

ii) Naive realism is dead. This is the case today, not so much in that common sense no longer naively believes that in our perception and thought we do not capture, camera-like, concepts of reality as it is in itself, but rather in that, both at the level of science and at the level of common sense, there is a certain agnosticism about knowing in general. At the level of common sense this often expresses itself in cynicism-"Nobody knows anything for sure!". At the level of science, this expresses itself in a reluctance to assert that its models are anything more than functional. The effect of both on our discussion is that, if there is a greater uncertainty about even the physical realities that science deals with, how much more is there scepticism about anything beyond that?

iii) The power of the human mind to have simple insight into the essences and meaning of things is no longer accorded an important place within human knowing.

We saw earlier how in classical thought the human mind was seen to have, beyond its power to reason and induce and deduce rationally, the power of insight, to simply see and grasp essences and the deeper meaning of things. Today, while this is not explicitly denied (and is taken for granted in ordinary day to day living), this power of insight, INTELLECTUS, is given little status theoretically. RATIO, especially as it works through scientific research and mathematics has the centre stage and, often times, the whole stage. Science with its assumptions and method is given the total normative role regarding the establishment of what is fact and what is mere faith.

iv) There is much more of a radical separation between the knowing subject and the object it knows. Today, in contrast to thought before modern philosophy and modern science, subject is seen as more separate from object, anthropology from ecology, and human from cosmos. The common sense idea is that we are detached observers in knowing, subjects standing over and apart from what we perceive. As well, we do not see ourselves as part of one eco-system with what we know. Rather we see ourselves as set apart from, and above, the world we know.[11]

v) We are obsessed with analytical clarity - which, ultimately, is based upon separation and distinctiveness. Clarity is based upon analysis and, as we saw earlier, analysis works precisely by separating elements from their context, by focusing in on individual elements and phenomena and examining them in isolation from the whole which makes up their fuller context.[12] Our knowledge is more fragmented, even as it is more clear and precise because, in our understanding, we understand things more and more in isolation from each other. The epistemological ideal of classical philosophy (and, indeed, of contemporary physics) [13] is unity, simplicity, and synthesis. Sadly, today, for the most part, the demand for clarity and preciseness has meant the death of these. We know individual phenomena more and more clearly even as we become ever more vague about their interconnection. Analysis is strong, synthesis is weak. The general practitioner has died and the specialist has been born.

vi) Philosophy and knowledge in general no longer see their primary aim as that of acquiring wisdom. We see this fall from the pursuit of wisdom in a double way:

First of all, today there is very little emphasis on knowledge for its own sake. Rather learning is for utility. We learn things, not because it is good to know for its own sake, but so that we might use that knowledge in order to achieve something. In this sense our relationship to the what we know today is much more manipulative than participatory. As Jurgen Moltmann puts it, we desire to know in order to dominate, or analyze and reduce in order to reconstruct. Our purpose is knowing is not, first of all, to enter into a mutual relationship with the environment. [14]

Our fall from the pursuit of wisdom is evident too in the fact that, both at the level of academic philosophy and at the level of common sense, we are less concerned with ultimate questions, questions of the why of things, than we are with the simple functioning, the how, of things. The dominant philosophies of our age submit that the ultimate aim of human knowing

lies in the service it can render to language clarification and to pragmatism. Common sense does not stray far from this ideal. This, as should be evident, is a long way down the road from the idea that the first task the human mind is to have "ultimate curiosity, which asks ultimate questions, and seeks for ultimate answers ... purely for their own sake."

vii) Philosophy, and life in general, attach little or no status to moral certitude. Ever since Descartes jettisoned all philosophies that were not founded and developed on the model of physics and mathematics, the Western world has grown ever more impatient and intolerant of any proposition that does not meet the criteria of "clarity, distinctiveness, and indubitability."
For us, today, the very word "fact" carries with it the connotation of "empirically verifiable". Arguments are settled by measurement and counting or they are not settled at all. There is no status in mainstream thought for moral certitude or moral argumentation.

viii) The primary, and perhaps only, access to true knowledge is through the rational, the head, the left brain, the logical, mathematical, or conceptual construct. Nearly five hundred years after Descartes' emphasis on the clarity and distinctiveness of ideas and the birth of the scientific method, we are reaping the fruits of that. The fact that myth, poetry, mysticism, the para-psychological, and spiritual realities in general exhibit features that are very different from those that mark the clarity of science and contemporary philosophy makes them suspect. True knowledge and true pedagogy are largely identified with the ability to conceptualize and articulate something with the clarity and precision that marks the discourse of the scientific community. Consciousness is, by and large, only self-consciousness. We have little understanding of, and even less patience with, what another generation called "dark knowledge", namely, knowledge which is real but which we cannot conceptualize or articulate.

ix) There is less sense of the corporate. When Descartes said: "I think, therefore, I am!" he was left to wonder whether anything else was real. Again, nearly five hundred years after this, we are reaping a harvest of individualism. Fritz Pearls' famous axiom, so popular in our culture, "you do your thing, I'll do my thing, and if our two things meet it is beautiful!" would have been less popular prior to the revolution of modern philosophy which isolated the human ego and set its reality against that which is outside of it. Someone once commented that Descartes, in coming to his famous dictum, allowed himself an orgy of self-doubt. The isolation of the ego, partly begun through his orgy of self-doubt, has grown and is now so full-blown that it allows our generation an orgy of narcissism. [15] Just as Descartes was left pondering vis-a-vis the reality of anything outside of his mind, so too, in Western culture today, we are similarly obsessed with our own reality and, not infrequently, unsure regarding how real anything is outside of the experience of our own heartaches and headaches.

How does this all relate, more specifically, to our collective incapacity to believe in God?

In terms of a very brief summary, it can be said that the emphasis on clarity, which began in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, has culminated in a mindset which has greatly

reduced the range of what is considered valid experience. In contrast to the time before modern philosophy and the scientific method, reality has less to offer and the mind has less range and ability to know what reality does offer. In this mindset there is little left of the ancient instinct for astonishment.

2) The enshrinement of one zone of consciousness as normative vis-a-vis what is considered as real ... A Shift in the Sociology of Knowledge

A further cause for the loss of our instinct for astonishment is sociological. We have collectively enshrined one zone of human consciousness and made it normative in a way that tends to suppress other valid zones of experience. The result of this, again, is a serious impoverishment of what is considered valid experience. But this needs explanation:

Reality is not experienced as one unified whole. Instead our experience contains certain "zones". [16] **For example, we experience one zone of consciousness when we are dreaming and another quite different zone when we are awake. Or, again, we experience a certain zone of consciousness in an intense aesthetic experience (e.g., getting lost in a piece of music) which can be quite different from the zone we call ordinary, everyday consciousness.**

However there is one zone that has a privileged character in our consciousness, and it is precisely that which we experience when we are (in our perception of it) wide awake and ordinary. That zone is experienced as more real and as real most of the time, as compared to other zones (e.g., such as the reality we experience in a dream or when we are lost in a piece of music). The other zones, judged against the reality of this "wide awake and ordinary" zone, are seen to be less real, enclaves into which our consciousness moves but from which it returns to "real life".

This most real zone, being wide awake and ordinary, is also the reality one shares most easily with other persons. In a sense we "co-inhabit" it with other human beings who help confirm its existence. This social confirmation helps give it its normative status within our consciousness. It defines what is real. Only a few lunatics and eccentrics appear not to share this sense of reality and this does not disturb much our confidence that this is what is most real.

Freud once commented that we understand something best when we examine its pieces after it has been broken. Given that, we can perhaps understand this better by examining it when it is broken.

While we enshrine one zone of consciousness (that of being ordinary and wide awake) as normative and let it, alone, define what is real experience, we experience this zone as very precarious (even while it is so massively real). It can be easily ruptured. For example, compare these two incidents:

Suppose someone falls asleep and has a very vivid dream. The dream seems real at the time, but it begins to pale immediately when the person awakes and becomes conscious of

having fallen asleep (and temporarily left the real world). In this case, being awake and being everyday and ordinary remains the point of departure and the normative criterion from which we judge what is real. We still experience other forms of reality but, when we return to being awake and ordinary, we experience this as a return, a coming back, to reality. In this case, there was a certain reality-rupture but we return to normalcy fully confident about the normative character of our everyday experience of reality.

Now suppose, however, one has an experience which ruptures the normalcy (being awake and ordinary) in a different way than does a dream or an hallucinatory experience. Suppose some experience (aesthetic, cosmic, intellectual, sexual, mystical) ruptures our everyday experience in an ecstatic way so that, in the literal sense of ecstasy (EKSTASIS), we end up "standing outside" of ordinary reality. In this case, the return to normalcy is not judged to be a return to reality, but a return to a world which now appears as flat, emaciated, impoverished, illusionary, and less real than the world we just came from.

Such an experience is a reality-rupture of a different kind. The ordinary world and our normative zone of reality are now not only relativized but are seen to have a previously unperceived quality. Peter Berger [17] describes this quality of reality as DOPPELBODIGKEIT (a German word which derives from the theatre and literally means "having a double floor"). The ordinary world, previously, perceived as being so massively real, is now seen as tenuously put together. We are now conscious that there are holes in what we thought was reality and beyond these holes lies another reality ... and one understands that his other reality has been there all along, on another floor, as it were. The experience of DOPPELBODIGKEIT reveals both a new reality and throws light on the familiar reality we term ordinary experience.

In conclusion, it can be said that, just as each individual has one zone of consciousness which she enshrines in such a way that everything else , rightly or wrongly, is judged as real or unreal vis-a-vis that zone, so too does a society collectively have such a zone. Individuals co-inhabit a certain zone and, because of this, that zone has a massive plausibility. Those who do not share the belief that this zone is normative and defines what is real are then judged as deviants, eccentrics, and out of touch with reality. These become, in the terms of sociology, "a cognitive minority".[18]

In Western culture today, a cognitive majority has enshrined one zone of consciousness as normative and that zone is devoid of virtually everything that is not sensibly cognizable. This includes not just the propensity to reject supernatural and religious realities as being unreal, but, as we shall point out later, the concomitant temptation to reject poetry, romance, and even love's ability to be faithful as being equally unreal. For the cognitive majority, being awake and ordinary no longer admits those realities. What is real (i.e., what is not dreaming or wishful thinking) is what can be seen, felt, touched, and sensed empirically. Poetry, fidelity, and the supernatural all belong to zones of reality like dreaming or aesthetics. From them, we return to reality. What is real is what is empirical, the pragmatic, the technological. Only a deviant cognitive minority asserts a reality beyond these.

Moreover, the cognitive majority considers this reality, as established by the one zone

of consciousness, to be absolute. There is a refusal to accept that the way we see things and judge what is real is only one of many historically available forms of consciousness. The deviant cognitive minority is judged to be backward, underdeveloped, or lacking in nerve.

When the sociological conditions of knowledge are this way, it becomes very difficult for an individual or group to retain belief in any realities which are beyond the immediate here and now because, precisely, the here and now dimensions of reality is what our zone of consciousness normatively defines as real. All else is something we return to reality from.

In such a mindset, all the goods are in the display window, nothing is under the counter. The net result, like the result of the unbalanced philosophical quest for clarity, is a reduction both in the depth and mysteriousness of reality and in what is considered valid and real within human experience. When this is constantly reinforced by a massive cognitive majority, the human faculty for astonishment severely atrophies. Like a person who does not exercise her legs for such a long period that eventually she can no longer walk, our failure to exercise our more contemplative faculties leaves us, at last, no longer able to apprehend those dimensions of reality which are beyond the immediate here and now. Reality is now known in such a manner that it becomes incapable of surprising us. Consequently, supernatural, aesthetic, mystical, and even romantic reality-ruptures become less and less frequent. In that, contemplation dies - as does the collective capacity to believe in God.

3) The Triumph of the Therapeutic ... A Shift in the Western Psyche

"A cruel trick I once played on a wasp. He was sucking jam on my plate and cut him in half. He paid no attention, merely went on with his meal, while a tiny stream of jam trickled out of his severed oesophagus. Only when he tried to fly away did he grasp the dreadful thing that had happened to him. It is the same with modern man. The thing that has been cut away is his soul and there was a period ... during which he did not notice it." [19]

This quote from George Orwell, perhaps more than most other images, describes the narrowing that has befallen us today. We are so engrossed in "eating jam" that we do not even realize that our potential to fly is being cut away!

The third factor contributing to the loss of our instinct for astonishment is psychological and sociological. It has been brilliantly analyzed by Philip Rieff in his work, The Triumph of the Therapeutic. [20]

Rieff contends that our age is witnessing a fundamental shift in mindset: a religious and ascetic culture (based upon "absent goods and present gods") is giving way to an analytic culture of release and pleasure (based upon "absent gods and present goods"). The imperative mood is being replaced by the therapeutic mood.

He details this development by contrasting two types of personalities: the religious-ascetic personality of the former culture (the imperative mood) with the released-analytical personality, the "therapeutic person" (the therapeutic mood). According to Rieff, the

transition began taking place when the "I believe" , the cry of the ascetic, lost its precedence and gave way to "I feel", the caveat of the therapeutic. [21]

In Rieff's analysis there are six contrasts which distinguish the religious-ascetic from the therapeutic personality:

i) They are spawned by different circumstances in history. The religious-ascetic culture and personality were born out of a situation of scarce goods and abundant gods. [22] In circumstances wherein there are few goods to share and little comfort and affluence, persons learned to renounce and to take consolation in belief in a religious future. The therapeutic person and culture are emerged out of affluence, a situation of present goods which make for absent gods. This personality emerged among the leisured and affluent, from those emancipated from the ethic of hard work. [23] The revolution separating the two has come "from the top, rather than from the bottom." ... and is a ... "revolution of the rich by which they have lowered the pressure of inherited communal purpose upon themselves." [24].

ii) Their respective values are carried by different types of historical institutions. [25] Institutions convey the social structure and help form persons into communities. Values are cognate with them and thus, through institutions, values reach individuals and bind them. For the religious-ascetic personality, the institutions which carry values are family, church, nation, school, and political party. For the therapeutic personality, values are carried by theatres, malls, the entertainment industries, health and therapy books and centres, and other "how-to" books. In a therapeutic culture therapy and entertainment become the normative means of instilling values and spectacle becomes the functional substitute for sacrament. [26]

iii) They have different "priests". For the religious-ascetic, the priest, the dominant mentor (in Rieff's terminology, "the therapist of commitment", the one who deals the final truth, dispels panic and chaos, structures meaning, defines ethics, and demands commitment")[27] is religion and the aesthetics of poverty. In a therapeutic culture, therapists and analysts (of every kind) replace the priests of religion and poverty and inherit the functions of dispelling panic and chaos, structuring reality, defining ethics, and demanding commitment. [28]

iv) They have different soteriologies. The religious person was born to be saved; the therapeutic person was born to be pleased. [29] For Rieff, the religious-ascetic lives under a false pretence, assuming that he is divinely willed, uniquely created, and destined for a meaning beyond this life. Hence, he sets out for himself expectations and develops desires which, ultimately, are unattainable; for example, a heaven beyond this life. The therapeutic lives his life "with a minimum of pretence to anything more grand than the sweetening of time." [30] For him, there is "no other purpose than the greater amplitude and richness of living itself." [31]

v) They are in a fundamental opposition to each other regarding the means for human fulfilment. The religious-ascetic personality has as its centre renunciation: asceticism,

the limiting of attainable desires, the restriction of the senses,and the renunciation of enjoyment and gratification. As Rieff puts it, up to now "Western culture has always been dominated by the ascetic model personality ... the enemy of his own needs." [32] This renunciation is done on the basis of commitment, a person sets something as a higher value than his own enjoyment.[33] Thus, for a religious-ascetic personality the emphasis is always on conversion, conversion to values beyond simple release and enjoyment.

For the therapeutic personality, the means to fulfilment lies in "deconversion", [34] in an anti-creedal analytical attitude which enables the person to become "permanently engaged in the task of achieving a gorgeous variety of satisfaction." [35] This model personality seeks release. There is no commitment to so-called higher values that necessitates ascetical renunciations. On the contrary, this type of personality seeks for a permanent disestablishment of any deeply internalized moral demands in a world which can guarantee a plentitude produced without reference the rigid maintenance of a particular "interdictory and counter-interdictory system". For the therapeutic personality, the means to happiness and self-fulfilment lie precisely in "deconversion" from the values and ideals which restrict enjoyment, erotic release, and indifference to community. Rejected is the culture of denial since the renunciation of attainable pleasure is seen to lead not to health but rather to "dis-ease". [36]

vi) They are born out of different parts of the human being and, consequently, generate a different kind of culture. The religious-ascetic is born out of the discontent, the dis-ease, within the human being. The culture this personality spawns is, correspondingly, the expression of human dis-ease rather than of human ease. For Rieff, the therapeutic personality sees religion as engaging itself in the "absurd task to trying to teach contented people how discontented they really are," and thus sees the symbols of religion as "dangerous" and leading to serious neuroses since they threaten "the combined comfort of things as they are." [37]

The therapeutic personality arise from the ease and contentment of the human person and builds up a culture based upon this. Freed of commitment therapies that demand renunciation, especially erotic renunciation, and unattainable expectations, the therapeutic person eliminates the sense of the tragic found in the religious-ascetic culture and, for the first time in history, creates a culture which is "the expression of human contents rather than the consolatory control of discontents." [38]

The growing dominance of the therapeutic personality in contrast to the religious-ascetic one, constitutes what Rieff calls "the triumph of the therapeutic". Now, given this radical shift within the human personality in the West, what are the consequences regarding our collective ability or inability to believe in God? For our purposes, five might be singled out:

i) The triumph of the therapeutic produces a culture based on pleasure ... which, in turn, helps produce a culture of narcissism. In a therapeutic culture, the gospel of self-fulfilment replaces all commitment and renunciation-type gospels. Life is then motivated by

the pursuit of pleasure, the idiosyncratic preference. According to Rieff, this creates "a knowing rather than a believing person." [39] As we shall see in the second part of this book, according to the analysis of the mystics in virtually all religious traditions, this creates a narcissism which in turn creates a "veil" that blocks the purity of heart needed to contuit God in ordinary human experience.

ii) The triumph of the therapeutic produces a culture based upon indifference. According to Rieff, as the therapeutic triumphs, we will witness more and more the demise of love (and the commitments it inherently demands) as the organizing principle for human community. With our secondary needs easily satisfied, we will no longer need to bind ourselves to each other through the types of commitment that we witnessed formerly in marriage and family. Rather "the organization of indifference may well succeed the organization of love" and produce a culture at a much lower cost to individual energies. [40]

In our urban technological culture, "it seems both archaic and dispensable already to organize men into compassionate communities by what Freud called `erotic illusion'". Instead, Rieff submits, the therapeutic person will be more adapted to organization into administrative units "with what used to be called `indifferentism'". [41] In his thesis, if the present cultural transition continues, we will eventually witness "the obsolescence of both love and hatred as organizing modes of personality." [42] We will be a "culture of contacts", freed of "the tyranny of primary group moral passion (operating first through family) as the inner dynamics of social order. Crowded more and more together, we are learning to live more distantly from one another, in strategically varied and numerous contacts, rather than in the oppressive warmth of family and few friends." [43] Whatever its positive effects in terms of freedom, this transition will spawn a deeper narcissism which, as we will detail later, will cause further blockage in our contemplative arteries.

iii) The triumph of the therapeutic produces a culture of diminished expectations. In the therapeutic mindset, since it is based upon human content and human ease rather than upon discontent and dis-ease, one no longer focuses on, or seeks, anything that is not attainable. One cease to dream the impossible dream. Instead one adjusts to satisfaction with the attainable. We ask, Rieff suggests, "only for more of everything-more goods, more housing, more leisure; in short more life. This translation of quantity into quality states the algebra of our cultural revolution." [44]

Rieff makes some further prophetic projections regarding this point which are worth noting. He suggests that when this cultural transition is complete, and we are content with our attainable expectations, the concepts of sin and guilt will also disappear since they originated in a religious-ascetic culture with its many demands for obedience. Ethical despair will then be understood as merely a transitional feeling, painful like all transitions, but no more significant than that. [45] Then "the sickening claim of superiority" of the interior life will finally be silenced. The last residues of mystery will vanish as the religious-ascetic person will see the futility of challenging the therapeutic culture and of ever finding an opening in the self-contained triumphant therapeutic. With that, Rieff suggests, God will not only be gone, He won't even have left a calling card. [46]

iv) The triumph of the therapeutic helps produce the analytical mindset. The therapeutic approach to life is also the analytical one. Its foundational principles are not grounded upon anything supernatural, mysterious, or even moralistic. They are simply based upon recent analysis. Contemporary analysis (of all kinds) functionally replaces the priests of religion. Whatever the habitual faults of the priests of religion, this transition, as we will see later, is, in the end, a reductionism in the area of contemplation.

v) The triumph of the therapeutic produces a culture which lives under a lower symbolic hedge regarding its understanding of life, love, and human destiny and meaning. A society that is characterized by its ability to simply enjoy life and not have any expectations beyond the attainable will not only cease to dream the impossible dream it will, according to Rieff, enjoy itself "without erecting high symbolic hedges." [47] In such a society, persons who will centre their lives on ritual, sacrament, and reference to some supposed plan underlying surface experience will be, in sociological terms, a cognitive and deviant minority. In psychological terms they will be considered living in paranoia, fantasy, and obsession. [48] As Rieff puts it, once a sense of well-being has become the end of human striving, no high symbolic hedges are needed and we will be on the verge of "a human condition about which there will be nothing further to say in terms of the old style of despair and hope. " [49] In the death of hope and despair there is also the death of contemplation.

This expose on Rieff has been rather detailed because, perhaps more than any other commentator, he articulates the cultural factors underlying the loss of the ancient instinct for astonishment. What is important is not whether his analysis is everywhere and always correct. There are counter-currents which contradict his projections. However, in the end, it must be admitted as a generalization that culturally there is clear shift away from the religious-ascetic personality. The principle of renunciation, in all but a few areas, is faring badly and the striving for release and pleasure seems to be winning the day.

With that comes not just the shrivelling of our faculty for contemplation and astonishment, but the virtual obliteration of it. The triumph of the therapeutic helps spell the death of mystery; the rejection of inner experience; the neglect of all deeper realities (not just the supernatural, but the deeper dimensions as well of love, aesthetics, and true romance); the glorification of the pleasure principle (which, as we will develop later, renders contemplation impossible); the exultation of the pragmatic and analytical; and the narrowing of the human perspective. In short, therapeutic consciousness, as described so brilliantly by Rieff, is the antithesis of contemplative awareness. Bottom-line, it strips human consciousness of the types of asceticism and symbols which the poets, mystics, philosophers, and theologians (not to mention classical common sense) used to say set us apart from animals. This has made us not only less contemplative, but also less interesting since, as William Auden puts it, "all of us know the few things that man, as a mammal, can do!" [50] In Orwell's image, we are so concentrated on the jam, we not even begun to realize that we have lost our capacity to fly!

4) A Changed Concept of Creation and Providence ... A Shift in Our Understanding of God's Relationship to Creation

A fourth factor in the loss of the ancient instinct for astonishment is religious and philosophical, namely, an altered concept of creation and providence.

Classical Christian theology (and philosophical theism) understood the act by which God created the heavens and the earth and act by which God sustains them as one and the same act. [51] **What is important to note here is that, in this view, all of finite creation, the whole heavens and earth and everything in them, exist only because they are being actively created by God at this very second. In the classical understanding of creation there is no distinction made between a first act of creation by which God creates the universe and then a further, and less radically creative, act by which God sustains everything in existence. In the classical Christian doctrine of creation there is no past tense to creation. All is because it is being created right now. If God would cease creating for one second, all would disappear into nothingness ... as a dance ceases to exist the precise second the dancer ceases to dance it.**

Theologians have employed various metaphors in attempting to clarify this. For example, imagine a person (like a king of old) taking a ring and impressing it into some soft wax. When the ring is withdrawn the wax retains the imprint of the ring. Suppose, however, that one pushes the same ring into water. The water retains the imprint of the ring only as long as the ring is actually present and being pushed into the water. Or, in the analogy suggested in the previous paragraph, a dance exists only while a dancer is actively dancing it. When the dancer stops dancing ... there is no dance! When classical theology asserts that God's act of creation and God's act of sustaining the universe are one and the same, it wants us to understand that relationship precisely in terms of these metaphors. Creation is God's dance and if the dancer ever stopped actively dancing, all would return again to the nothingness that existed before creation. We were not created (past tense) "in the beginning". We are being created (present tense) by an act of God which is just as much an active reality now as it was "in the beginning".

This notion, however, was slowly lost in both popular and philosophical circles. In both piety and philosophy it degenerated into Deism and Mechanism.

In circles of piety and popular theology, deism takes the form wherein God is conceived as the Great clock maker or Great Engineer. God is understood to have created the world at some point in time. That first creative act is understood as something radically extraordinary, the most radical of all miracles, the creation of something out of nothing. However, it is understood as an act which is now essentially finished. God created the world and everything in it and that world now has a certain independence from its creator and operates by its own laws (which God fixed there) and perpetuates itself (save for the creation of new human souls). Essentially it is self-contained. God still relates to it, but not as an active creator. Now God is only the sustainer (though, he might occasionally interfere with a miracle). How this sustaining role is conceived is well captured by popular song and piety: "He watches over us" and "has the whole world in his hands."

Philosophically, deism expresses itself with much more sophistication, but is, in the

end, identical to the conceptions of popular piety. In philosophical circles, deism is generally some form of Mechanism. God is seen as the author of a great machine (which occasionally he might tinker with or fine-tune slightly, but) which generally runs on its own. More recently in philosophical circles, in a misrepresentation of Paul Tillich, deism has taken the form wherein God is conceived as "the ground of being".

At both levels, piety and philosophy, God tends to be imaginatively pictured as sitting with a globe of the world in his hand, or as some quasi-physical substance which acts as a foundation for the world so as to prevent it from falling endlessly into space. The end result is that God is no longer conceived of as being actively creating, or actively involved in the ordinary events of nature and life. For the pious, he will still interfere occasionally by a miracle (though he is seen to do that rarely and only by way of great exception). Ordinarily the world and human beings are understood as running on their own steam.

In such a conception we have a radically altered concept of our contingency and dependence. God is not longer seen as the one who makes it rain or who gives us food. Clouds make it rain, and fields and supermarkets provide us with food. God has only the distant and rather domesticate role of having to "hold the whole world in his hands." He has very little to do with the actual processes of nature and life; in fact, God has very little to do at all! God is pretty silent, uninvolved, and absent.

The consequences of this altered role of God as creator and sustainer will be more fully detailed later. Here it might be generically stated: It has meant the eclipse of God from ordinary life and his banishment to the narrower realms of church and miracles. Ordinary, bread and butter, reality is seen as less contingent, less full of miracle, and less laden with supernatural dimensions. Rather it tends to be seen as an independent, self-contained, closed system which God is holding in his hands or is, in some vague sense, "the ground of". God, it is believed, is still radically capable of altering reality by doing the extraordinary, a miracle ,but this is then judged as an interference in the natural process. The natural process itself, ordinary life, is understood to be pretty predictable and to offer few surprises. God can work extraordinary miracles which subvert the natural, but God is no longer seen as being the miracle which is ordinary life!

This Deistic notion of God, with its underlying faulty notions of creation and providence, has an affinity with nineteenth century determinism, whose view the astronomer, Pierre Simon de Laplace, so classically summarized in 1886:

> **"Given for one instant an intelligence which could comprehend all the forces by which nature is animated and the respective position of the beings which compose it, if moreover this intelligence were vast enough to submit these data to analysis, it would embrace in the same formula both the movement of the largest bodies in the universe and those of the lightest atom: to it nothing would be uncertain,**

the future as past would be present to its eyes." [52]

Contemporary physics has dealt a death blow to such a view of determinism. Surprisingly however, in both popular circles and among many scientists and philosophers, it has not dealt a death blow to deism. God, to the extent that he is believed in at all, is still relegated to the edges of natural processes, some vague "ground of being". These processes, even though they are now given a character of unpredictability that is beyond the wildest conceptions of Laplace and his contemporaries, are still understood as having been already created (past tense). Thus, contemporary astronomer, Carl Sagan, irrespective of his other differences from Pierre Simon de Laplace, has, in the end, the same restrictive place for God's creative activity. He concludes the preface to Steven Hawkings, A Brief History of Time, with the words:

> **"This is also a book about God ... or perhaps about the absence of God. The word God fills these pages. Hawking embarks on a quest to answer Einstein's famous question about whether God had any choice in creating the universe. Hawking is attempting, as he explicitly states, to understand the mind of God. And this makes all the more unexpected the conclusion of the effort, at least so far: a universe with no edge in space, no beginning or end in time, and nothing for a creator to do."** [53]

To a large extent that last line, "a creator with nothing to do", is the view of believers and agnostics alike. In such a view, with its faulty distinction between creation and providence, there is little chance of contuiting God's existence in ordinary life because God does not have any place in ordinary life. God, to the extent that he is given any role at all, may do miracles and act inside the churches. It is no accident therefore that, today, that is about the only place most anyone, especially so-called believers, ever search for him.

5) The Loss of the of the sense of God's Holiness ... A Shift in our Understanding of God's Mystery and Transcendence

The fifth factor involved in the loss of our instinct for astonishment is psychological and religious in nature. What is involved here is the partial loss of the sense of God's absolute holiness and transcendence. Philosophically, this is often analyzed under the rubric the analogy of being. [54] **This notion, which tends to scare off reflection by alternatively posturing abstractness and piety, has played a very significant role in the present impairment of our contemplative faculties. But this needs explanation:**

Within our Christian tradition there has been a long and often bitter debate between Roman Catholics and Protestants regarding the exact extent to which we must accept Isaiah's pronouncement that "God's ways are not our ways" and that God is, above all else, "holy, holy, holy". [55] **Classical Protestant thought was, precisely, a protest for God's holiness, transcendence, and radical otherness. Roman Catholics and some Anglican sympathizers**

tended to tone this down somewhat and affirmed that, while God is completely other and beyond human conception, because we and the rest of natural creation are in God's image and we can know at least of God's existence naturally, that is, outside of explicit revelation through Israel and Christ. Given this natural connection ("the analogy of being") God's ways were not so radically opposed to our ways so that, through natural reason alone, we could not say anything at all about God. Protestantism rejected that. In its thought, God was radically other. We could not know of his existence, nor say anything about him, save through explicit revelation (Sola Scriptura).

However, despite that difference, Protestant thought and Roman Catholic thought were in agreement that, irrespective of the precise way in which God's holiness was understood, God's ways were infinitely more dissimilar than similar to our own. Furthermore, they agreed that we can truly know and speak of God but, when we do so, we conceive of and speak of him in concepts and words that are drawn from finite experience and thus do not mean the same thing when they are applied to an infinite reality, God. God rather is grasped and known precisely as that which is other than what is normally grasped in our concepts. All concepts and language we use to think about and describe God must be seen as metaphorical, humble, tentative, saying more about what God is not than about what God is.

This notion, however, is easily lost. Like Job's friends we have the propensity to compare God's ways to our ways and, on that basis, to find them rather unacceptable. This leads to what, playing off classical philosophical terminology, might be aptly termed psychological univocity. What this term implies is that we tend to understand God by using the same concepts, sets of categories, and sets of rules as we use in understanding finite reality. When we do this, then: metaphysically, univocity replaces analogy; religiously, understanding replaces faith; and effectually, God is shrunk to fit a finite understanding. What all of this means will be analyzed later. Here it is sufficient to say that, whenever this happens, God dies and we are left with an idol, an impoverished deity who can easily be "figured out", "psyched out", "second guessed", and whose ways may be very far beyond our own.

This is, as has been argued classically within Christian theology, a mistake, metaphysically and religiously. A God whose "thoughts are our thoughts" and who can be understood with a finite mind is eventually not an object for contemplation, nor a God worth believing in. Such a God, too small and impotent to be a proper object of faith, is, in the end, to small and powerless to function either theoretically or practically as creator and redeemer. The God of univocity is rightly rejected as a hangover from a former theistic mindset and as "an opium" that those with real courage and honesty will reject. As well, when a finite God reigns then mystery is simply another word for ignorance!

How all this impairs our ability to contemplate should be obvious. When one reduces the holiness of God then understanding substitutes itself for faith. Among other things, we lose our sense of awe because God is no longer conceived of as so "awe-ful" and frighteningly holy that, as Isaiah, [56] we would want to purge our eyes, our lips, and all our

senses with burning coals before approaching his holiness. We simply have less appetite for contemplating because we are convinced there is nothing worth contemplating. Not very disguised in the contemporary mindset is the attitude that "we've already had a look and we know what's there!" Psychological univocity domesticates the burning bush and it is easy to keep one's shoes on before a subdued fire.

The results of this serves to fixate us at a certain level of agnosticism: we question, we wonder, we sincerely seek and ask ... to a point. Then we stop, mistakenly believing that this is as far as we can go. Partially we are correct and partially we are horribly mistaken. A God who can be "psyched out" and "seconded guessed" is indeed as far as our minds and understanding, tied as they are to a fixed symbolic system of concepts and language, can go ... but faith, desire, love, and dark mystical understanding can go further. These are had in contemplative awareness and it is in that contemplative awareness that a contuition of God can take place because contemplation opens our agnosticism to a much wider world within which we will be again astonished. [57]

A VERY NARROW HORIZON

We began this essay suggesting that, the Western world, the deepest roots for our current collective disinterest in God and our struggle to believe in God, extend far back into history and are linked to huge, paradigmatic shifts. This confluence of circumstances, cumulatively, has helped shape a new kind of awareness in Western history within which dimensions of ultimacy, once so common within ordinary awareness, are now generally absent. In the West, we are a culture that struggles to see things against an infinite horizon. The reasons for this, as we have tried to show, are complex and have deep historical roots. It is not without sufficient reason that, in the West, it is not easy to believe in God today.

Notes and references ...

1) The best commentary on this is Michael Buckley's, At the Origins of Modern Atheism (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987).

2) For a brief, but clear, outline of this see: H.H. Price, "Clarity is Not Enough", in, H.D. Lewis, (ed.). Clarity is Not Enough, (London, 1963), pp. 15-41. Also, see: Eric Lionel Mascall, Words and Images: A Study in Theological Discourse (London, Longmann and Todd, 1957) pp. 30-70.

3) See, for example, Joseph Pieper, Leisure and the Basis of Culture, London, 1952, pp. 33-34. See as well, Eric Mascall, Words and Images, op. cit., p. 64. Moreover, the concept of INTELLECTUS is also evident in Bernard Lonergan's famous work, Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, (London, 1957) For some comment on this see: Eric Mascall, Whatever Happened to the Human Mind (London, Longmans, 1980) pp. 16ff.

4) Jurgen Moltmann, God in Creation,An Ecological Doctrine of Creation, The Gifford Lectures of 1984-1985 (London, SCM Press Ltd., 1985) pp. 2-3.

5) Eric Mascall, Words and Images, op. cit., p. 67.

6) Jurgen Moltmann, God in Creation, op. cit., p. 2.

7) Michael Buckley, At the Origins of Modern Atheism, op. cit., pp. 73-85.

8) Classical medieval philosophy saw three knowing centres to the human person: intellect (head), will (heart), and memory (ego/personality). They understood the person as knowing through all three of these ... and only the intellect was understood as a fully self-conscious centre. For them, we saw and understood through the will and the memory in dark, inchoate, and mystical ways. Knowledge received through these latter two faculties often befuddled the head and was ineffable. However, in communication, both in giving and receiving knowledge, it was important for them to be attentive to more than just the rational. Hence, their propensity for mysticism, piety, mythology, etc.

9) See: W.T. Jones, Hobbes to Hume, and Kant to Wittgenstein and Sartre, (San Francisco, Harcourt, Brace and World Inc.); James Collins, God in Modern Philosophy (Chicago, Henry Regnery, 1959); James Collins, A History of Modern Philosophy (Milwaukee, Bruce, 1954); Michael Buckley, At the Origins of Modern Atheism (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987); and Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy,

The road that leads from Descartes to today's Positivism and Linguistic Analysis is complex and there are dangers in quick oversimplifications. Nonetheless, risking all the dangers of such an

oversimplification, its main lines and its main players might be presented as follows:

a) Descartes, in his own philosophical attempt, was trying to overcome the skepticism of his time. Schooled in mathematics and convinced that skepticism was wrong, he had a hunch that all problems, even philosophical ones, could be resolved if they could be approached through a method modeled on that of geometry and mathematics. Hence, he attempted to begin his philosophy with a starting point that was beyond any doubt (an "indubitable") and then develop it through a mathematical method. Thus, he begins by using doubt as a tool ("universal methodic doubt"). He ends up reaching the one thing that cannot be doubted: COGITO, ERGO SUM. Then, using the criteria of clarity and distinctiveness (since this is what justifies mathematical conclusions) he develops his system. What, among the many conclusions he eventually comes to and the influence he had on subsequent philosophy and methodology, is most pertinent to this thesis is the following: Trustworthy conclusions follow from a mathematical method. Mathematics, ultimately, articulates physics. Physics is based upon empirical measurement. Hence, to bring the equations together, ultimate intelligibility comes through extension and its direct modifications (Michael Buckley, At the Origins of Modern Atheism, p. 96) Put in another way, for Descartes, as for subsequent thinkers, one must distinguish between what one perceives as reality and what reality actually is in itself. Simple sensation and common sense can be wrong. What cannot be wrong is mathematics and this is based upon material extension, quantity not quality. As he himself puts it: "In this way we shall ascertain that the nature of matter or of body does not consist in its being hard, or heavy, or coloured, or one that affects our senses in some other way, but solely in that fact that it is a substance extended in length, breadth and depth. ... The nature of body consists not in weight, nor in hardness, nor colour, and so on, but in extension alone." (Principles of Philosophy 2.4, H-R 1:255-256 - quoted by Buckley, op. cit., p. 96). In his quest for clarity, Descartes lays the first key principles which will, in time, reduce radically what is admitted as being potentially available to know within reality.

b) John Locke then makes formal the distinction between primary and secondary qualities within reality. Primary qualities are those, precisely, that deal with extension and its direct modifications (bulk, number, figure, and motion). Secondary qualities have to do with colours, textures, smells, and the like. For Locke, only primary qualities were real in the world outside of the mind. Once this distinction is admitted, then "bulk, number, figure and motion" can begin to claim an objectivity not allowed to anything else.

c) David Hume furthers the process towards the identification of true and valid knowledge with what can be known only through "bulk, number, figure and motion" by rejecting the metaphysical notion of causality. For Hume, what we perceive when we observe reality is not causality, but only the succession of events. The human mind supplies the idea of causality, you do not see causality. Hence reality can only be truly studied by charting accurately the succession of events (as opposed to an older idea, classical philosophy, which, through causality, attempted to deduce new truth and which, through causality, attempted also to project what ought to be). Philosophy, after Hume, focuses only of the question of the how of things (as opposed to the why) and it is no longer a large jump to the assertion that the task of philosophy is not to search for wisdom and to try to find new truth. Rather its real task is that of clarification, of analyzing and clarifying what is already known - and it is through the empirical method that we establish what is known.

d) Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804) was perhaps the most influential epistemologist in history and his influence deserves more nuance that it will receive in this discussion. Suffice for our purposes to say that his work, irrevocably, altered the way we understand perception and knowing in the West. Kant showed that the act of knowing is not the camera-like subjective recording of an objective event. What we know is never reality as it is in itself. Rather, in his view, what we know is what the objective reality triggers inside of us. According to Kant, inside of us there are certain a priori categories of understanding which are triggered by our perception of things outside of us. Hence, human understanding is a profoundly subjective event, though with an objective counterpart. Meaning, however, is more supplied by the mind than the object its perceives. This epistemology helped derail a naive realism which believed that we know "the thing in itself" just at the time when science for the first time was truly beginning to manipulate "the thing in itself". Among many other things, this helped create a skepticism which eventually took out its vengeance most viciously on those

types of knowledge which were not the result of direct empirical measurement.

e) Contemporary logical positivism is the final development of the seeds that Descartes sowed. What one gets, full flower, in the thinking of the more militant logical positivists (e.g., A.J. Ayer) is the principle of verification. In its earlier forms the principle affirms that whatever cannot be empirically verified is meaningless. Later it was mitigated to read more as a theory of falsification: "the question that must asked about any putative statement of fact is not, Would any observation make its truth or falsehood logically certain? but simply, Would any observations be relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood? And it is only if a negative answer is given to this second question that we conclude the statement under consideration to be nonsensical." (A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic. London, 1941)

There have been many reformulations and mitigations of the verification principle and of the precise criteria discourse must meet if it is to be considered meaningful. Generally speaking, there has been a gradual softening through the years of the demand for an empirical referent. Irrespective of that, however, two effects were achieved and remain: i) there is a clear bias for the empirical regarding what constitutes truth knowledge, and ii) philosophy is now defined, not as the search for wisdom, but as the clarification of language. This latter has developed a therapeutic connotation as well, namely, the philosopher now sees her job as that of curing muddles and headaches generated by language, either the language of the everyday person or of the scientist. And underneath this conception lies the idea that "unclarity is the root of all difficulty." (H.H. Price, Clarity is Not Enough, pp. 16-18).

f) It is beyond the scope of this work to trace the influence of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, and Francis Bacon - and their relationship to each other. Suffice to say that their discoveries and projections were among the key factors that gave birth to modern science. Beyond that, their discoveries and projections also helped to change fundamentally the way we understand ourselves and our world. To describe what each of them contributed as revolutionary is to speak accurately. The West, and the world, do not understand themselves in the same way, thanks to them. What, among their many influences, needs to be underlined here are two interpenetrating things: i) They helped lay the basis for a scientific view of the world and, with that, helped dethrone metaphysics and theology as the ruling disciplines both in university circles and in life in general.

10) E. A. Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundation of Modern Physical Science (London, 2nd ed., 1932. See too: Eric Mascall, The Christian Universe (London, 1966, p.48ff.) for further comments on this.

11) Moltmann, God in Creation, pp. 2-4 & pp. 20-40; 140-157. Also, see his essay: "The Ecological Situation: The Theology and Ethics of Creation", in Creating a Just Future (London, SCM Press, 1989) pp. 51-100.

12) Moltmann, God in Creation, pp. 2-19. See, as well, in Michael Buckley's, At the Origins of Modern Atheism, pp. 99-129, especially his summary on pp. 118-119, for a brief sketch of how our propensity for analysis developed through the work of Newton.

13) Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science, p. 126.

14) Moltmann, God in Creation, pp. 3.

15) Ronald Rolheiser, The Shattered Lantern, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1994. See the section on Narcissism, chapter 2.

16) This section is little more than a summary of the early part of Peter Berger's, The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation (New York, 1979) . See his analysis, pp. 34-38. Berger, himself, takes some of this from S. Schutz, "On Multiple Realities", in Collected Papers (The Hague, Vol. I., pp. 207ff).

17) Berger, The Heretical Imperative, p. 37.

18) Peter Berger, A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural (N.Y., Doubleday, 1969) pp. 7-8.

19) George Orwell, The Collected Essays, Journals and Letters (New York,1968, Vol.II) p. 15.

20) Philip Rieff, The Triumph of the Therapeutic (New York, Harper and Row, 1966). It is important to note that Philip Rieff, in submitting this thesis, does not himself necessarily rejoice that things are so. He presents this as a pure analyst, not as a high priest; as pure description, not as prescription; and as not necessarily what should be (or he would like as being), but as what is, pure and simple.

21) Ibid., p. 25.

22) Ibid., p. 254.

23) Ibid., pp. 40 & 253.

24) Ibid., p. 240.

25) Ibid., pp. 3 & 24-25.

26) Ibid., p. 234.

27) Ibid., p. 246.

28) Ibid., pp. 3-4 & 24-25.

29) Ibid., pp. 24-25.

30) Ibid., p. 23.

31) Ibid., p. 241.

32) Ibid., p. 241.

33) Ibid., p. 15

34) Ibid., pp. 7 & 240.

35) Ibid., p. 241.

36) Ibid., pp. 239 & 254.

37) Ibid., pp. 27 & 242.

38) Ibid., p. 27. Allan Bloom suggests something very similar. See: The Closing of the American Mind, pp. 132-137 & 380-382.

39) Ibid., pp. 22-23 & 239 & 253.

40) Ibid., p. 239.

41) Ibid., p. 245.

42) Ibid., p. 246.

43) Ibid., pp. 239 & 243.

44) Ibid., p. 243.

45) Ibid., p. 245.

46) Ibid., p. 254.

47) Ibid., p. 23.

48) Ibid., p. 251.

49) Ibid., p. 261.

50) William Auden, "Shorts II", in Collected Poems, (London, 1976) p. 643.

51) Thomas Aquinas succinctly defines the classical doctrine of creation: "Before creatures existed their existence was possible not because of any created potentiality, since nothing created exists eternally, but simply because God had the power to bring them into existence. Now just as bringing things into existence depends upon God's will, so also preserving them in existence. For he preserves them in existence only by perpetually giving existence to them, and were he therefore to withdraw his activity from them, all things, as Augustine makes clear, would fall back into nothingness. " (Summa Theologica, I. 9, 2c. The reference to Augustine is to a passage in Super Genesim Ad Litt. IV, 12, PL.)

52) Cited by R.E. Moritz, On Mathematics and Mathematicians (N.Y., 1952, p. 328.)

53) Carl Sagan, in the "Introduction" to Steven Hawkings', A Brief History of Time, From the Big Bang to Black Holes (Toronto, Bantam Books, 1988) p. x.

54) For a fuller discussion on analogy see: Aristotle, Categories, Chapter I; Aristotle, Posterior Analytica, Book II, Chapters 13-14; Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book Iv, Chapter I; Book X, Chapter I; Book XII, Chapter 4; Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book I, Chapter 4 (English translation of all the works of Aristotle, edited by J.A.. Smith and W.D. Ross, Oxford, 1908-1952); Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 13, 5c; Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, I, 34. Also see: Cajetan, De Nominum Analogia. For a modern synthesis about its development and use within scolasticism, see: Eric Mascall, Existence and Analogy (London, Longmann, 1949) pp. 92-121; He Who Is (London, Longman, 1943) pp. 95-115; and Via Media (London, Longman, 1965) pp. 36-42. Mascall expresses the classic scholastic position succinctly in the following words: "So the whole order of beings, of entia, from the triune Deity down to the speck of dust and the electron, consists of nothing more and nothing less than analogical instances of being: self-existent being and dependent being, actual being and possible being, substantial being and accidental being, real being and notional being, not in any pantheistic or monistic sense, as if being were some kind of cosmic material, a metaphysical modelling-clay appearing now in this shape and now in that, but in a far more profound sense that every being must be, and must be in some determinate way, and - the theist will add - in the sense that the way in which it has being depends in the last resort upon its relation to self-existent Being which is the prime analogate of all." (Existence and Analogy, pp. 99-100.)

For a contemporary analysis which takes into account the full critique of the language philosophers, I recommend Louis Dupre, The Other Dimension.

55) Isaiah 55, 8-9; Isaiah 6, 3.

56) Isaiah 6, 3.

57) Jurgen Moltmann captures brilliantly in one paragraph the type of astonishment and surprise that contemplation will open one up to. See, The Crucified God (London, SCM Press, 1974), p.162.