

Outline of Lecture

Chapter Five: Ray Anderson, *On Becoming Human* Humanity as Self-Determined

In this chapter we discuss the crucial matter of subjectivity (not subjectivism) or self-consciousness and its relation to the person, particularly in the context of existentialist philosophy.

Consciousness is found in animals, but not self-consc.

p55 "I am a centre of feelings reactions, hopes..." This doesn't mean "there is a feeling" or "there is a hope." Rather, "I" is the *subject* of these hopes etc.

Is this self-awareness the *essence* of being a person? (No, but it's essential to the person.)

Do we *necessarily* know ourselves more intimately than others?

Not just existentialism, but the entire Idealistic school of phil. develops an anthrop. from self-consc.

Idealism is the notion that reality is mind-correlative or mind-coordinated. Real objects are not independent of cognizing minds, but exist only as in some way correlated to mental operations.

Realism is the notion that objects exist independently of our experience or our knowledge of them, and they have properties independent of the concepts with which we understand them or the language with which we describe them.

p55 Ernst Becker: mental disorder isn't a disease, but rather a cry for the self for the self in its self-transcendence to synthesize consc. and creaturely existence. What about the category of "mental *illness*"? For Becker the human is courageously to project the self into a cosmic unknown, hoping that "abandoning the self to the unknown is ultimately meaningful."

Shepherd: [1] here the nature of the reality to which the self aspires is obscure

[2] where does hope differ from sheer subjectivism?

[3] the truth question can't be reduced to the meaning question

[4] for Becker (and all existentialists) the self is a self-making. But is any self so made as good as any other?

[5] {1-4} how does existentialist anthrop. avoid arbitrariness?

[6] 'projection into the infinite': what's the infinite? what can be said about it?

Needed: God as the object ('other') of self-tra'ce: I am aware of myself as irreducible subject in the context of God who is Subject.

Camus and Sartre: the God who is transcendent Lord "thingifies" and dwarfs me, eliminating me as subject.

X'n reply: [1] God is person

[2] by rev. we know that (a) God accommodates...

(b) God has been to hell and back for us.

(c) God knows us.

NB the existentialists' preoccupation with life's meaning(lessness).

(SUBJECTIVITY AS RESPONSE)

p56 Xns affirm that human subjectivity is grounded in God's addressing us. Note the logic of how we come to know God by being included in God's self-knowing. God knows us *now* as surely as he knows himself: this is our security. The human self therefore is an 'answering', not a *primarily* a 'seeking.' In short, human subjectivity and speech arise from God's address.

p57 "being in the sense of human beings is a process of self-enactment." The self exists as it is enacted, and is enacted as it *responds*. We are what we do (as opposed to what we reflect upon.) NB sin's contradiction of this.

(SUBJECTIVITY AS DISCRIMINATION)

p58 self-enactment: we constantly 're-posit' ourselves or reaffirm our subjectivity. Still, such reaffirmation isn't indiscriminate. Such discrimination arises from both God's act and mine, wherein I actualize my personal existence.

p58 "The essence of self-determination is discriminating one's own being as it occurs." NB what disasters occur when the person "doesn't know who she is." Then how do we come to know who we are? Note where Xn faith differs from existentialism.

p58-9 In all of this do *we* possess criteria for recognizing the Word? If so, it's no 'Word' at all. The Word, rather, is self-authenticating and therein authenticates to us the 'self' it has rendered us. Here the biblical 'person' differs radically from that of existentialist and rationalist.

p59 Bonhoeffer and the goodness of the Divine Command. Casting aspersion upon it curses us.

[1] the C. is good because rooted in the goodness of God who aims to bless us.

[2] to know *it* is to share intimately in the life of *God* (i.e., of a person).

[3] "good and evil" is not the same as "good plus evil."

[4] to know is to share intimately in.....: i.e., to experience and thereby become cursed.

p59 God's command "discriminates boundaries and limits, but not specific actions or choices for human beings." The limits God sets protect me and render me "me" but don't make me an automaton. Note where exist't and rationalist differ from Xns w.r.t. choice.

p61 "The discrimination of 'what is mine', or what completes my own being, is not premeditated. It takes place 'as it occurs' in the course of our life."

[1] this doesn't suggest thoughtlessness or whimsicality.

[2] such choices aren't premeditated means, for instance, I can't premeditate on the marriage-partner I've never met.

Still, everywhere in life we have to choose/act

[1] with discrimination

[2] as life occurs

[3] even as what occurs together with our response to it isn't irrational or superficial; rather it is profound as our being answers to the being of another person.

p61 "growth of the self is growth in competence {and the consistent desire} to make discriminations which enhance life." {growth in our knowledge of who we are} This is wisdom/soundness w.r.t. practical living.

p61 Adam seizes that "possibility" which Eve is. He doesn't suspend choice until he's exhausted all possibilities. He seizes this possibility as *his*.

Did he love her? [Buber: love *is* the commitment.] [Shepherd: falling in love doesn't legitimate a relationship.]

p62 "To substitute ethical, esthetic or even religious criteria as the basis for the discrimination of the self leads to negative reinforcement rather than positive." The crucial word here is "substitute."

Those who make this substitution

[1] frequently have an identity crisis

[2] or avoid it by preoccupying themselves with a feature of their environment which they allow to tell them who they are

[3] this slavish mentality is what Kierkegaard calls "the Philistine life"

[4] the result is triviality.

(SUBJECTIVITY AS "OUTWARDNESS")

The undeniable 'inwardness' of discrimination is equally an 'outwardness.' The self is private but it isn't secret. What is private is also public (e.g., marriage). Individual acts are also social acts. "Victimless crime" is a myth.

p62 Hence the profundity of "Spirituality... is the externalisation of the Spirit in the form of action." (cf. the "root" command in scripture; Leviticus 19:2, and its fulfilment in the "great" command)

p63 That self which I am is what others have access to as my self is disclosed to them. Then does my face reflect my heart? false face? God's face and heart are one. (This truth is preserved by the interpenetration of ontological and economic Trinities.)

Therefore the self must constantly reaffirm itself as the self it knows itself to be. Otherwise what it discriminates as 'not myself' is subtly brought into the 'self', thereby dichotomizing the self. Result:

[1] we appear two-faced

[2] eventually we don't know who we are.

p63 where LOVE is lacking, everything we are about is an exercise in deception whether intended or not. E.g., touching someone else out of habit or compulsion is a gesture from which my "self" is absent. If this is protracted, her personhood is threatened by exposure to repeated depersonalisation. For touch to be 'discriminate' it has to be the vehicle for and expression of a love that is anything but dissimulation.

p64 Alternative: 'going through the motions' wherein the self is absent. Plainly, the more proximate people are in a relationship, the greater the capacity for destruction.

Intimacy is born of discrimination (the presence of being in the act.) Exploitation is the abuse of a proximity that isn't intimate. We can afford to be defenceless (vulnerable) when we know someone's proximity includes the presence of her *person* ('self') in her *act* with us.

Tragically, proximity may foster decreasing appreciation of the as person (self, subjectivity) and increasing 'using' that person. Many marriages slide slowly from a self/self (other) relatedness

to a convenient, comfortable, utilitarian arrangement (with many social and economic advantages)

to a recognition of such exploitation

to a hostility that precludes co-habitation.

The Bottom Line:

To be a person is to be addressed by *the* Person. This is the basis of theological anthropology. Because God is a self who discriminates and therefore differentiates between self and non-self, we *may* and *must* do the same.