

FROM THE GARDEN (of Eden—"my will") TO THE GARDEN (of Gethsemane, "Thy will be done")

Mt 6:10

I. CONSIDERING NATURE, CHANCE, NECESSITY—THINGS BEYOND OUR POWERS

- A. Laws—gravity; electromagnetic fields; nuclear forces
- B. Elements: light; matter; air; food & water
- C. Biological ingredients: parents; people
- D. Thus an important caveat: powerful environmental, historical, psychological, theological considerations limit freedom; in many ways we're not free, subject to powers beyond our ken or control

II. WHAT IS THE HUMAN WILL? INDEPENDENCE & THINGS WITHIN OUR POWERS

- A. A Faculty: component, aspect of human nature, personhood
 - 1. Given: As a human being, a person (I Am, I Think, I Will)—an important aspect of who I am as a "rational animal," whereas irrational animals follow instincts
 - 2. Man's will is subject to reason—a "rational" or "intellectual" appetite; the Word guides the Will
 - a. Enduringly disputed
 - 1. Plato's *Euthyphro*—is something good because God wills it or does God will it because it's good?
 - 2. William of Occam & Nominalism—lasting, destructive influence (cf. *Ideas Have Consequences*)
 - 3. Benedict XVI's "Regensburg Lecture" shows deep divide between Islam & Christianity
 - b. Voluntary (following deliberation) rather than non-voluntary (instinctive reaction)—self-determined, self-actualized choices; self-giving decisions; thus "free" will coupled with responsibility (basic to metaphysics & ethics)
 - 3. "No other gods," including various forms of fatalism, determinism (human ideologies positing causes); basic causation questions—why is this as it is? what will be?—underlie false "gods"
 - a. **Pan** & Pantheism: God & Nature equated; C.S. Lewis says theism & pantheism two options
 - 1. Chinese sages: Confucius & Lao-tzu
 - 2. Indian religions—Hinduism esp; N.B. Beatles et al going to India for enlightenment
 - 3. Greco-Roman inclination—atomists & Lucretius's *De Natura* & recent update in *The Swerve*
 - 4. Enlightenment ideas evident in Spinoza (*Deus sive Natura*—ethics according to geometry)
 - 5. Anthony Kronman: *Confessions of a Born-Again Pagan* tries to revive Spinoza
 - b. **Sol**, Neptune & environmental determinism—"Father Sun, Mother Earth" naturalism
 - 1. Physical—atoms-in-motion, dominoes falling, chance & necessity; Lucretius & *The Swerve*
 - 2. Biological—naturalistic evolution (Darwinism) inexorable survival of fittest
 - c. **Caesar**—historical/sociological determinism—political, Egyptian & city-state & Roman gods
 - 1. Marxism in various forms
 - 2. Current Identity Politics, criminal justice theories—cf. Carl Trueman
 - d. **Diana**—psychological determinism—inner drives, stimuli, sex & drugs
 - 1. Behaviorism—Watson, Skinner
 - 2. Freudianism—irrational Id & sex-shaped psyche
 - 3. Contemporary drug-therapy—Ritalin for rambunctious boys, chemicals for depressed adults
 - e. **Zeus**—theological determinism; Homer's *Iliad* filled with gods' capricious control
 - 1. Erasmus or Luther?
 - 2. Arminius or Calvin?
 - 3. Wesley or Edwards?
 - f. Ironically, importantly, virtually all determinists become totalitarians—e.g. Environmentalists & dictatorial laws; Marxists & Lenin, Stalin, Mao; Psychologists & imposed therapies such as mental asylums for deviants, Ritalin for kids; Theologians such as Luther & Calvin's "magisterial reformations" evident in Peasants' Revolt & Geneva codes of conduct
 - 3. Embracing importance, reality of free will
 - a. C.D. Broad
 - b. Samuel Johnson insists on common sense
- B. An Activity: loving—pluriform *agape*, *eros*, *philia*, etc.
 - 1. Desiring, wishing, wanting—coffee, rest, companionship, happiness, God, immortality, etc.
 - 2. Deciding, judging, evaluating—given an end, deliberating means
 - 3. Enacting, doing

Aristotle: "We deliberate about things that are in our power and can be done. . . . For nature, necessity, and chance are thought to be causes, and also reason and everything that depends on man. Now every class of men deliberates about the things that can be done by their own efforts.

"We deliberate not about ends but about means" (*Ethics*).

Aristotle: "The origin of action—its efficient, not its final, cause—is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end" (*Ethics*).

Thomas Aquinas: "Only an agent endowed with an intellect can act with a judgment which is free in so far as it apprehends the common notion of good, from which it can judge this or the other thing to be good. Consequently, wherever there is intellect, there is free choice" (*Summa Theologica*, I, 59, 3).

Thomas Aquinas: "Man has free choice. Otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments would be in vain" (*Summa Theologica*, I, 83, 1)

Richard Weaver: "Like Macbeth, Western man made an evil decision, which has become the efficient and final cause of other evil decisions. . . . It occurred in the late fourteenth century . . . [when it was thought] that man could realize himself more fully if he would only abandon his belief in the existence of transcendentals. . . . The defeat of logical realism in the great medieval debate was the crucial event in the history of Western culture; from this flowed those acts which issue now in modern decadence. . . .

"For this reason I turn to William of Occam as the best representative of a change which came over man's conception of reality at this historic juncture. It was William of Occam who propounded the fateful doctrine of nominalism, which denies that universals have a real existence. . . . The issue ultimately involved is whether there is a source of truth higher than and independent of man; and the answer to the question is decisive for one's view of the nature and destiny of humankind. The practical result of nominalist philosophy is to banish the reality which is perceived by the intellect and to posit as reality that which is perceived by the senses. With this change in the affirmation of what is real, the whole orientation of culture takes a turn, and we are on the road to modern empiricism" *Ideas Have Consequences* (pp. 2-3).

Dante: "The greatest gift God of His largess made at creation, and the most conformed to his own excellence, and which he most prizeth, / was the will's liberty, wherewith creatures intelligent, both all and alone, were and are endowed" (*Paradiso*, V, 19).

Erasmus: "Although the free will has been wounded through sin, it is not extinct; though it has contracted a paralysis, making us before the reception of grace more readily inclined towards evil than good, free will has not been destroyed" (*Discourse on the Free Will*).

Luther: "Christians, however, are not led by a free will, but are driven by the Spirit of God To be driven is not to act or do oneself. But we are so seized as a saw or an axe is handled by a carpenter" (*Bondage of the Will*).

MAYO: "But he [Jonathan Edwards] makes the proper distinction between moral and physical necessity."

BOSWELL: "Alas, Sir, they both come to the same thing. You may be bound as hard by chains when covered by leather, as when the iron appears. The argument for the moral necessity of human actions is always, I observe, fortified by supposing universal prescience to be one of the attributes of the Deity." JOHNSON. "You are surer that you are free, than you are of prescience; you are surer that you can lift up your finger or not as you please, than you are of any conclusion from a delusion of reasoning. But let us consider a little the objection from prescience. It is certain I am *either* to go home to-night or not; that does not prevent my freedom." (Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Apr 15, 1778)

JOHNSON: "All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it" (Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Apr 15, 1778)

C.D. Broad: "If a man referred to his brother or to his cat as 'an ingenious mechanism,' we should know he was either a fool or a physiologist. No one in practice treats himself or his fellow-man or his pet animals as machines; but scientists who have never made a study of Speculative Philosophy seem often to think it is their duty to hold in theory what no one outside a lunatic asylum would accept in practice."