Institute for Christian Teaching
G. C. Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

Carl Rogers' View of Personal Wholeness:
An Evaluation and Critique from a Christian Perspective
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Prepared for the International Faith and Learning Seminar
held at
Union College
Lincoln, Nebraska
June 1993

The Purpose and Approach of this Paper

This paper will identify and compare two conceptions of meaning that have been especially influential in contemporary culture. These are Christianity and humanistic psychology. The later, which is sometimes referred to as psychology's "third force" (because it followed and repudiated psychoanalysis and behaviorism), rose to prominence after World War II, with Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers as its most influential leaders.

It is almost trite to say that humanistic psychology has had a major impact on American culture. Jones and Butman, (1991) credit Rogers with having originated what, "has probably been the most widely adapted approach to people-helping that has ever been developed. Applications for the business, educational, familial, group, individual, marital and parental context abound in the literature" (p. 272). By 1973, fifteen years before his death, Rogers observed that the entire body of his published books and articles had been translated into Japanese and significant portions of it into numerous other languages (Rogers, 1974). A national opinion survey of American counseling and clinical psychologists that was published in 1982 (Smith) ranked Rogers as psychotherapy's most influential figure, even though very few of those polled adhered strictly to his methods. But more lasting than Rogers' approach to therapy have been the beliefs he articulated about the nature and potential of the individual self.

While this perspective has undergone numerous adaptations, including vulgarizations, most of its basic presuppositions about human nature and wholeness have not changed and can be identified (Vitz, 1977). Christianity, of course, has also undergone many adaptations and vulgarizations, and for this reason I will try to limit what I say about Christian thinking to points over which there is wide agreement. I will primarily confine myself to presentations of one writer within each perspective and to statements each makes about personal wholeness or psychological or spiritual maturity. I have chosen Henri Nouwen as a representative of the Christian perspective and have used Carl Rogers as a representative the humanistic perspective. Both of these writers present developed views of how to achieve personal fulfillment and obtain a more cooperative society, and they both apply their systems to the alleviation of psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression, as well as to issues of interpersonal relationships.

The Christian view reflects my own commitment and forms the background from which this critique is developed. However, I will give a relatively brief synopsis of Nouwen's views and then devote most of this paper to a discussion of Rogers' thinking.

Nouwen's Christian Perspective on Wholeness

Nouwen (1981), who has published some thirty titles in the area of Christian spirituality, summarizes his understanding of "the spiritual life" in his book titled, *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life*. In this book he shows how a spiritual reorientation can become a curative for anxiety and purposelessness. He uses as his starting point the words of Jesus: "Do not worry...but set your hearts on His kingdom first." With respect to the causes of worry, Nouwen observes that one of the ways in which we moderns most commonly describe our lives is to say that we are busy. But even in our busyness we find that our energies and attention are often less consumed by our occupations than by our preoccupations. Personal preoccupations, which include obsessions with, "what ifs," and doubts about whether we can meet the expectations of others, "fill our external and internal lives to the brim" (p. 28).

Often, along with the sense that our lives are "filled," we have the disquieting sense that they are "unfulfilled." Nouwen says that some of the most common sentiments beneath this sense of unfulfillment are boredom, (which comes from a sense of disconnectedness and from questioning the value of what we do); resentment (which we may experience when we sense we are being used and manipulated for random and meaningless ends); and depression. The latter is what we experience when we begin to feel that, "our presence makes little difference [and] that our absence may be preferred" (p. 31). Frequently, the dynamic of depression is the end result of lives that are filled, but fragmented and disconnected.

It is against this background that Nouwen applies Jesus' words about worry. He notes that,

> "Jesus does not respond to our worry-filled way of living by saying that we should not be so busy with worldly affairs...[or by] telling us that what we do is unimportant, valueless, or useless....He asks us to shift the point of gravity, to relocate the center of our attention...to move from the 'many things' to the 'one necessary thing.'"

For Nouwen, the most striking feature of Jesus' own life was the unwavering nature of His focus. This focus consisted of what Nouwen calls, "single minded obedience to His Father," (Nouwen contrasts the negative connotations of "obedience" in our society with Jesus' intimate and trusting relationship with God) which He maintained in the midst of the unpredictable and changing needs around Him. When Jesus said, "set your hearts on His kingdom first," He meant, says Nouwen, that we were to, "make the life of the Spirit within and among us the center of all we think, say or do." This requires a self-transformation, something which may be experienced as either sudden or gradual.

Such a transformation does not remove the difficulties of life, but it places them in a context that is purposeful, meaningful and unifying. This transformation is an act of grace but this does not mean it happens automatically. Nouwen identifies two primary methodologies, which he calls "disciplines," which place us in a position that facilitates the changes God makes in us. (While it is not my intention to endorse all of the methods Nouwen suggests for practicing these disciplines, I do agree with the importance of the two disciplines he identifies.) The first is "solitude," by which he means regular times set aside for prayer, meditation and the contemplation of scripture. He describes solitude as, "the simple, though not easy, way to free us from the slavery of our occupations and preoccupations and to begin to hear the voice that makes all things new" (p. 75).

The second means of setting our hearts on the kingdom is through what Nouwen calls the discipline of community. It is related to the first discipline because God speaks to us through others as well as in solitude. Community, as Nouwen defines it, "has little to with mutual compatibility" and it stands in contrast to the many groups, "that have formed to protect their own interests, to defend their own status, or to promote their own causes." He states that, "through the discipline of community we prevent ourselves from clinging to each other in fear and loneliness, and [become able] to listen to the liberating voice of God" (pp. 81–83). An element of discipline is required to maintain relationships, whether they be relationships of marriage, family and friendship, or relationships with persons towards whom we feel little natural attraction.

In summary, Nouwen sees both individual and social wholeness as achieved by a regeneration that comes through a spiritual connection with God.

Carl Rogers' Humanistic Perspective on Wholeness

Rogers and Nouwen agree that wholeness involves moving away from a slavish concern with the expectations and evaluations of others and a corresponding reorientation to a single source of meaning and authority.

For Rogers, however, this source of meaning is not discovered by knowing God, but through recovering contact with ones' real and authentic self. Rogers (1951) linked his theory of human fulfillment with the methods of science whenever he could. The following quotation illustrates this link as well as his explicit rejection of the need for any external source of meaning or authority:

> Civilization hitherto has looked for the orientation of society through an imposed 'system' derived from some extrinsic authority, such as religion, 'cultural' education, or political suasion. The biologist conceives an order emanating from the organism living in poise in its environment. Our necessity, therefore, is to secure the free flow of forces in the environment so that the order inherent in the material we are studying may emerge (p. 62).

Although Rogers went considerably beyond biological methods as a basis for his conclusions about human nature, he did place a great emphasis on what he saw as the flow of forces within the individual. These forces were part of the "self experience" which became for him the ultimate source of truth and meaning.

> It is to experience that I must return again and again; to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me. Neither the Bible nor the prophets—neither Freud nor research— neither the revelations of God nor man—can take precedence over my own direct experience (1961, pp. 23-24).

These statements illustrate a key difference between the sources of authority and meaning for the two perspectives being considered, but they also reveal that Rogers did not claim ultimate allegiance to empirical research as a basis for understanding persons. Both of these points will be commented on further but it will be useful to first summarize what Rogers meant by

personal experience and how this meaning related to his theory of personality and mental health.

Jones and Butman (1991) have suggested that the "Core assertion of [Rogers'] personality theory is that there is but one single motivational force for all humanity: the tendency toward self-actualization" (p. 257). He taught that every person has an innate tendency toward the positive development or actualization of his or her unique potential to the greatest extent possible. Persons also had another innate capacity called an, "organismic valuing process" which provided humans with the ability to choose between what will enhance personal fulfillment and what will not.

Rogers' theory of mental health and abnormality, as summarized by Jones and Butman (1991), includes several key concepts and terms. He believed that if the parents of a growing child provided it with an atmosphere of unconditional positive regard and acceptance, the child would be blessed with a complete awareness of its actualizing tendency and valuing capacity. This awareness, or self-experience, of the child's natural inclinations would constitute a reliable guide for its ongoing process of actualization. As the child's conscious awareness developed, his or her self-concept (i.e. perception of who he or she actually is) would develop in a manner that was congruent with this self-experience rather than in a manner that was determined by the expectations and evaluations of others. In addition, the child's ideal self, which was his or her understanding of what he or she should be, would also be congruent with self-experience since he or she would not aspire to be something other than what he or she was. Thus, a fully functioning and mentally healthy individual would be one whose self-experience, self-concept and ideal self are congruent. Such an individual would exist comfortably with his or her changing feelings and experiences and would be successfully guided by them. Incongruities that might occur would be minimal and able to be quickly overcome.

Unfortunately, children rarely develop in such an open and accepting environment. The expectations and demands of parents and others make it impossible for them to achieve acceptance by relying on their instincts. These external influences cause them to deny parts of their self-experience and to develop distortions in who they perceive themselves to be and who they believe they should become. As a consequence, their internal evaluating process becomes impaired, and the choices they make are adversely affected.

In Rogers' theory, lack of congruence between various aspects of the self is largely responsible for failures in living and for mental suffering or discomfort (Jones & Butman, 1991).

This theory of personality provides the basis for Rogers' conception of therapy. The therapist's task is to create an atmosphere of complete acceptance and unconditional positive regard so that the self-actualizing potential and organismic valuing process can safely emerge and the various dimensions of the self can become integrated. This happens when the person in therapy is able to replace adopted or imposed values with those learned from organic experiences. One way in which Rogers explained this process is seen in the following quotation:

> If a [person in therapy] gives up the guidance of an introjected system of values, what is to take its place?...Gradually [the person in therapy] comes to experience the fact that he is making value judgments, in a way that is new to him, and yet a way that was also known to him in his infancy. Just as the infant places an assured value upon an experience, relying on the evidence of his own senses...so the client finds that it is his own organism which supplies the evidence upon which value judgments may be made. He discovers that his own senses, his own physiological equipment, can provide the data for making value judgments and for continuously revising them (1951, pp. 522–523).

An illustration of the extent of Rogers' confidence in the innate tendency of human beings to make good choices can be seen in a speech he delivered to students at a midwest college in 1957.

> The basic nature of the human being, when functioning freely is constructive and trustworthy. For me this is an inescapable conclusion from a quarter-century of psychotherapy....We do not need to ask who will socialize him, for one of his own deepest needs is for affiliation and communication with others. As he becomes more fully himself, he will become more realistically socialized. We do not need to ask who will control his aggressive impulses; for as he becomes more open to all of his impulses, his need to be liked by others and his tendency to give affection will be as strong as his impulses to strike out or to seize for himself. He will be aggressive in situations in which aggression is realistically appropriate, but there will be no runaway need for

aggression....The only control of impulses which would exist, or which would prove necessary, is the natural and internal balancing of one need against another, and the discovery of behaviors which follow the vector most closely approximating the satisfaction of all his needs (Rogers 1961, 194–195).

Critics of humanism have sometimes equated its emphasis on self-actualization with selfishness but this is not completely accurate (Jones & Butman, 1991). Humanists believe that the disposition to relate positively to others is an innate part of a person's natural tendency to actualize. One of Rogers' most far reaching assertions was that interpersonal and social problems are caused by the failure of individuals to fully actualize and accept themselves. Rogers (1951) described this part of his theory in this way:

The implications of this aspect of our theory are such as to stretch the imagination. Here is a theoretical basis for sound interpersonal, intergroup, and international relationships. Stated in terms of social psychology, this proposition becomes the statement that the person (or persons or group) who accepts himself thoroughly, will necessarily improve his relationships with those with whom he has personal contact, because of his greater understanding and acceptance of them....Thus we have, in effect, a psychological "chain reaction" which appears to have tremendous potentialities for the handling of problems of social relationships (pp. 520-522).

This quotation illustrates the extent to which Rogers was willing to apply his philosophical assumptions about human nature and mental health to social problems. Few theorists have been as explicit as he was in stating their conclusions and extending them to their logical end (Jones & Butman, 1991).

A Christian Critique of Humanism

There are many elements in Rogers' theory that Christians should be able to affirm and benefit from. Some of these positive points include his insistence on understanding persons in a wholistic rather than an atomized, reductionistic manner; his stress on the capacity of individuals to change and grow; his emphasis on the importance of developing an awareness and understanding of ones' feelings and internal conflicts; and his belief that every person has the potential to develop in a unique and individualized

manner; (Jones & Butman, 1987). Furthermore, his singular contribution toward an understanding of the dynamics and power of empathic listening, and his emphasis on the growth that is produced when people are treated with honesty, openness and unconditional positive regard deserve much commendation. However, there are fundamental points at which Rogers' theory of personality and behavior have been legitimately questioned and criticized.

Several writers have written in depth critiques of his theories from a philosophical, scientific, and/or theological perspective (e.g. Browning, 1987; Geller, 1982; Hart, 1992; Jones & Butman, 1991; May, 1982, cited in Greening, 1984; Vitz, 1977). I will discuss a number of the criticisms which are especially important and add comments from other authors. I will begin by emphasizing, as Vitz (1977) did, the quasi-religious nature of humanistic theory and the type of evidence upon which it is based. I will then consider some of the ontological, epistemological, and ethical issues raised by Rogers' view of persons and conclude by identifying some of the potential psychological and social consequences of his theory.

Humanistic Psychology's Religious Character

Vitz (1997) is one of a number of theorists who call attention to the overtly "religious" elements in humanistic psychology. If one defines religion as a developed system for ascribing ultimate meaning and purpose to life and which is dependent upon something beyond the methods of empirical observation for its verification, then Vitz is certainly right. Browning (1987) observes that humanism has at least two important elements that it holds in common with religious faith. These are "metaphors of ultimacy" and a model for ordering the inner life. Regardless of whether it is defensible to speak of humanism as a religion, its basic claims about human nature and values have not been empirically verified and are not amenable to such verification. This is a point about which Rogers expressed explicit agreement near the end of his career, when referring to his legendary and vigorous arguments against B. F. Skinner's behaviorism. At that time he said, "I have come to realize that the basic difference between a behavioristic and a humanistic approach to human beings is a philosophical choice. This certainly can be discussed, but cannot possibly be settled by evidence" (Rogers 1974).

Although many of Rogers' philosophical descendants have been less ready to admit, or less aware of, the subjective basis for their conclusions than he was, there are signs of a growing willingness among therapists and theoreticians, (e.g. Rutan, 1992) to acknowledge that all theories of mental health are value based and are, as such, beyond the scope of empirical verification.

This point is important for beginning a discussion of the merits of any theory of personality or change, (although it does not imply that empirical evidence may not be used to argue for one theory over another). Once it is accepted, a discussion of the merits of a theory such as humanism, including its religious merits, can proceed on a more sound basis.

Ontological Problems with the Theory of Human Nature

Rogers and Nouwen both see humans as suffering from internal and external conflicts. Nouwen, however, does not attribute all internal suffering to the false demands and expectations of others. He states that our lives are broken, bound by sin, and in need of "radical transformation," by the "work of the Holy Spirit" (pp. 50-53). This conclusion that there are defects in human nature at the most basic and individual level, while variously interpreted as to cause and extent, is one of the most basic beliefs of Christianity and most major religions, (Solzhenitsyn, 1975, cited in Vitz, 1977). Many Christian interpreters conclude that human nature is made up of a mixture of both good and bad tendencies, rather than as being wholly one or the other. This means that some experience of inner conflict is part of what it means to be human.

Rogers (1951), on the other hand, asserts that "the [human] organism has one basic tendency and striving—to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism; [and that] rather than many needs and motives, it seems entirely possible that all organic and psychological needs may be described as partial aspects of this one fundamental need" (pp. 487–488). He further maintains that the movement of this single tendency is, "in the direction of an increasing self-government, self-regulation, and autonomy, and away from heteronymous control, or control by external forces...[and that this tendency] appears to be in the direction of socialization, broadly defined" (p. 488). This position rejects that there is any part of human nature that is

basically defective or out of balance. Eric Fromm (1947, cited by Vitz, 1977) emphasized this when he said that,

> The position taken by humanistic ethics that man is able to know what is good and to act accordingly on the strength of his natural potentialities and of his reason, would be untenable if the dogma of man's innate natural evilness were true (p. 19).

This argument for a single motive force that is both individually and socially constructive raises a number of problems. Vitz (1977) points out that it runs counter, in various ways, to the conclusions of many psychologists (particularly those in the psychodynamic tradition such as Freud & Klien); ethnologists (including Nobel laureates Konrad Lorenz and Niko Tinbergen) and biologists (such as Ludwig von Bertalanffy) who have seen dynamics such as conflict, and/or tendencies toward destructive aggression, as an innate part of the human character.

On what evidence have humanists based their conclusions for a single, harmonious motivating force? Browning (1987) points out that humanistic psychologists do not derive the idea of the self-actualizing tendency as a moral norm from observationally based explanations of human motivation. Rather they "identify a variety of goods which they recognize to be morally justifiable on grounds independent of the facts of human motivation (our various tendencies and needs) and then attribute them to our biologically grounded actualization tendency" (p. 74).

A second problem with the single-motive theory of human behavior is that it logically requires the complete externalization of responsibility for inner conflicts. Jones and Butman (1991) illustrate this difficulty in the following words:

> Suggesting one drive, and a totally good one at that, leads to attributing all human distress to forces external to the person. If we ever experience conflict, it cannot be due to a true struggle within ourselves, but rather to a pseudostruggle between our true selves (all good) and some sort of false selves, which are presumed to have originated externally from how significant others have treated us (pp. 265–266).

Since Rogers championed virtues of individual freedom and autonomy, it is paradoxical that this aspect of his theory would seem to encourage people to assume the psychological stance of being victims. There is a third problem with the single motivational theory of human nature that

should be noted. When Rogers extends his theory of actualization into the arena of interpersonal relationships and suggests that it contains the key to social harmony, he creates a logical hurdle of enormous proportions. Browning (1987), in a detailed discussion of this assertion, notes that it requires one to maintain that there is a "preestablished harmony of all potentialities" (p. 760). When applied just to the microcosm of a single family unit, it necessitates the belief that, "the self-actualization of the potentials of any one member of the family could occur without interfering with or impeding the self-actualization of any other member of the family" (p. 82). When applied to the international level, as Rogers does, the belief that all potentialities harmonize requires a giant leap of faith. Yet this is the leap humanism takes. Browning (1987) refers to statements by Maslow (1965) which specifically point in this direction and then summarizes the underlying position as follows:

> The actualization of our various potentials can be morally justified as our primary obligation simply because the world, at its depth, is basically harmonious, and all undistorted and basic needs, potentials, and self-actualizations complement each other and lead to mutuality and reciprocity (p. 82).

The question that this theory fails to adequately explain is why social disharmony continues unabated if the natural tendencies of each individual in society and the real and true balance of moral forces in the world are harmonious and good. The Christian belief that sin has caused a disruption of harmony within each individual as well as within the entire universe (Rom. 8:22), provides a more simple and parsimonious explanation for human evil than does the humanistic view. The Christian view suggests that, "our good impulses and our bad impulses, our love for and rebellion against God, are both representative of our true selves" (Jones & Butman p. 266). It also maintains that self-enhancement and social harmony come about through a spiritual regeneration of our true selves. This is one of the most basic ontological distinctions between the two theories of human nature.

Epistemological Problems and Issues

Rogers' theory not only merits criticism for its position on the nature of human nature, it also raises epistemological and ethical difficulties. With respect to the sources of knowledge, Rogers' emphasis on the ultimate

reliability of self-experience (when it is in congruence with the organismic valuing process) differs significantly from Christian thought. The Christian tradition holds that all of human nature has been affected by sin and therefore no part of it is perfectly trustworthy.

Many Christians would affirm Kant's belief that humans have an awareness of "the moral law within," and in this sense agree that humans have, (at least under normal circumstances) an intrinsic sense of right and wrong (Lewis, 1943; Malony, 1986). For this, as well as other reasons, a Biblically Christian theology would reject any suggestion that the Gospel calls upon persons to live in a way that is out of harmony with their true selves. It should also be noted that Protestant theology has given particular emphasis to the importance of living in harmony with ones' conscience or moral intuition. But Christian thinking has stopped short of suggesting that the subjective experience of the individual is the final arbiter of moral and religious truth. It has emphasized the importance of other sources of truth, the most fundamental of which are the principles and teachings contained in Scripture as well as other sources of divine revelation, such as the role of the discerning community. Jones and Butman (1991) contrast this approach to truth with that of Rogers who they describe as, "optimistic about one's experience as the basis of determining truth, but rather pessimistic about the value of culture, dogma, traditions, and systems of morality" (p. 263).

Ethical Problems and Issues

It is hardly necessary to note that the Christian view of personal wholeness includes an acceptance of ethical imperatives. Nouwen, for example, speaks of obedience to God as an ethical ideal and his emphasis on discipline and character transformation have ethical dimensions as well. Rogers, on the other hand, clearly stated that his theory constituted a reaction against, and an alternative to, religious ethical imperatives.

But one of the most distinguishing features of his theory of personality is its implicit ethical system. Browning (1987) notes a shift in the writings of Rogers and other humanistic psychologists from simply maintaining that "the tendency toward self-actualization is the basic nature of humans to the assertion that it is good and that, therefore, all humans should pursue the life of self-actualization" (p. 70). Thus, actualization of ones' self becomes a moral obligation. But humanism's understanding of individual and social

pathology creates an even more far reaching moral imperative. This is the imperative to avoid imposing values on others. The logic of this moral stance is clear. Since the self is good and obligations and expectations placed on us by others are the cause of individual and social pathology, then teaching others how to live is not only unnecessary, but individually dehumanizing and socially destructive. Freedom and unconditional positive regard (which except for during the "therapeutic hour" are often downgraded to the virtue of tolerance), both of which are important and necessary values, become the highest values because they are ultimately the only values that are believed to be necessary.

Christian ethics holds that the principle of agape love is the highest virtue and that its clearest expression is seen in the person of Jesus. This love is not possible unless accompanied by the virtue of freedom, but it is more than freedom. It is unconditional, but it not the same thing as unconditional positive regard in the Rogerian sense. It strengthens and integrates the self, but it is also self-sacrificing (Roberts, 1985).

Agape love's self-sacrificing quality cannot be easily or naturally integrated into the Rogerian idea of personal fulfillment. But agape love sacrifices when genuine good (as, opposed to such false goods as the enabling of addictions or the perpetuation of abuse) will be brought about by doing so. When the self is respected and appreciated (as it should be), and when it is given to others from a position of freedom and spiritual strength, the giver transmits something of great value, and, according to Christian thinking, is blessed with a depth of meaning and joy that can only be understood in spiritual or religious terms. This is what Jesus referred to when he said that the one, "who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:39; Mk. 8:35)

Social and Psychological Problems of Humanistic Psychology

Rogers' theory of human nature and therapy developed as reaction against what he saw to be the dogmatism of conservative and legalistic religion and the rationalistic qualities of psychoanalysis (Jones & Butman, 1991). It quickly developed, as this paper has attempted to show, its own set of faith assumptions and ethical imperatives and has taken on the qualities characteristic of religious belief for many people.

It needs to be emphasized that humanistic psychology would not have experienced its wide and rapid acceptance if many of its ideas had not already

been embedded in American political and economic philosophy (Bloom, 1987; Browning, 1987; Rogers 1951; Vitz, 1977). Rogers' and Maslow's theories were popularized during the years immediately following World War II when the American economy was enjoying unprecedented growth. The economic system that produced this prosperity championed individualism, creativity and the belief that the primary role of government was limited to that of protecting the freedom of its citizens to pursue their own self-interest. Humanism inferred that these political and economic principles could be applied with equal success to the arenas of individual and social morality. This linking of political and individual values was what Hauerwas (1981) referred to when he observed that, "our private morality has increasingly followed the form of our public life. People feel their only public duty is to follow their own interests as far as possible, limited only by the rule that we do not unfairly limit others' freedom" (p. 79).

I draw attention to this connection between American cultural values and the popularity of humanism's theory of the self for two reasons. One is to note that Rogers and his fellow humanists did not originate a completely new way of thinking as much as they helped popularize and extend one which was already present within the culture. The other is to note that problems which have become increasingly apparent in America's political system illustrate the inadequacy of the pursuit of private needs as an ethical ideal. Citizens and the media frequently express outrage when political leaders put personal interests or the benefits of local constituents above the good of the larger society, while at the same time professing allegiance to a belief system which says that pursuing one's self-interest is an individual's primary moral obligation and that it is destructive to question or criticize the ethical choices of others. They may have the disquieting sense that they lack an integrated moral vision but be unaware of the extent to which this sense arises from competing and contradictory beliefs about what makes life good.

The humanistic understanding of personhood and wholeness fosters a public morality that Hauerwas (1981) has aptly referred to as "vulgar relativism," namely, a relativized view of most ethical principles combined with a non-relativized view of the principle of toleration (p. 104). The psychological and spiritual result is a diminishment of a vital part of what it means to be human, for, as Hauerwas says, "In the interests of securing tolerance, we are forced to pay the price of having our differences rendered

morally irrelevant" (p. 104). Bloom (1987) has argued that many college students believe that there is a necessary connection between the principles of toleration and relativism because they have been taught that a belief in the latter is necessary to avoid prejudice. But relativism ultimately undermines all principles, including the principle of toleration. Thus it provides culture with an insufficient means for its own sustenance (Bloom, 1987; Hauerwas, 1981).

The Rogerian conception that our only innate tendency is to self-actualize in a way that is good for ourself and others, may seem to remove the annoying concepts of guilt and sin from the psyche, but it does so, as already mentioned, at the cost of either denying evil altogether or attributing responsibility for it entirely to others. This latter tendency can lead to an undiscriminating use of psychological tasks which emphasize emotional independence from significant others as a prerequisite to mental health. It can thus affect the way we seek a balance between individuation and intimacy. A strong emphasis on individuating tasks is clearly indicated in cases where self-esteem has been damaged by over-control and abuse, but in Rogerian logic any control that does more than guarantee a growing child's physical safety and development is over-control.

A final difficulty with the Rogerian view of human nature is the unrealistic expectations it creates. It promises that satisfying interpersonal relationships (as well as freedom from inner conflicts) will come naturally if people learn to accept themselves fully. It de-emphasizes or rejects the importance of developing character through overcoming innate tendencies toward selfishness, and creates the false expectation that families and communities can be held together without sacrifice.

A Biblical Basis for Accepting Persons

Many people are attracted to the conviction that humans are by nature innately and completely good because they equate being good with being of worth and value, and/or because they have been taught to believe that if people are not basically good they must be basically evil (which is interpreted as "entirely" evil). Jesus, however, never connected the basis of human worth with the issue of human nature, nor did he say that all our tendencies were completely evil. He taught that people were of value because God created them and loved them. As a historical figure, he is perhaps most

widely admired for how he combated prejudice and accepted people whom others rejected. He is also known for opposing attempts to legislate personal morality, but he was hardly a moral relativist or a person who avoided arguing and preaching about values and obligations. He taught that in this life we would always experience difficulties but that it was God's will for us to enjoy a satisfying existence and meaningful relationships.

Concluding Comments

Nouwen has summarized some key elements of the way of life that Jesus described and some steps for beginning to live it. The purpose of Jesus' way is to change our focus and our source of motivation from many things to the one, most important thing. Rogers also emphasizes the value of moving away from a life guided by many things to the one, most important thing. For Rogers, this most important thing is the self. For Nouwen it is the kingdom of God. Both invite us to give up an existence nourished by scraps gathered from diverse sources of meaning, but they call us to different tables. The contrast between these two perspectives arises from their different beliefs about ultimate reality and human nature.

I have not attempted to develop the implications of these two views for a philosophy of education. The ways in which Rogers applied his theories to teaching are well known (for example, see Robinson, 1985; Rogers, 1974), and much has been written about the relationship between a Christian world view and education (e.g. De Jong, 1990; Holmes, 1975; White, 1903). I do believe that the issues identified in this paper are important for Christian educators (particularly those who teach psychology, sociology, and theology) to identify and discuss with students. Educators would do well to help their students understand the challenge that humanistic psychology presents to Christian thought and encourage them to evaluate its philosophical basis critically and fairly.

I will suggest a few of the practical questions that could be used to facilitate this process. Students could be encouraged to compare Freud's belief that human nature is basically conflicted and that it consists of both destructive and constructive drives, with Rogers' belief that humans have one basic drive (the drive toward self-actualization) of which all others are a part. They could be asked which view, if either, is most consistent with the Christian view of persons? Are there problems with each? Related questions

would be: Do humans have a single core self (or true self) that can be discovered through introspection or therapy and used as a guide for life? Is it possible to accept Rogers' view of human nature and still explain the continuation of sin in the world? What is the meaning of Ellen White's (1909) statement that the image of God was not completely destroyed in persons by sin?

Other questions to consider would be: Is it necessary to love oneself in order to love one's neighbor? Does love and acceptance of oneself automatically lead to love and acceptance of others? What similarities and differences are there between the Rogerian concept of unconditional positive regard and the Christian ideal of agape love?

These are just some of the questions that could be used to help students think more critically about Christianity and the cultural currents that have been influenced by humanistic psychology. Each of these questions, in one way or another, relates to the central issue of human nature, and how human feelings and behavior can be modified, changed or redirected.

The importance of these issues cannot be overemphasized. As Tjelveit (1989, cited by Jones & Butman, 1991) has stated,

> Models of human beings—explicit or implicit, complex or simple, internally consistent or inconsistent,...open to change or static—shape society, the actions of every human being, and every individual's worldview.

Teachers and students need to critically examine their concepts of human nature and understand the implications of these concepts for how they live their lives.

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