

The Tomkins Institute Newsletter

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The Power of Polarity and the Polarity of Power

From the Editors

John Brodsky with Don Nathanson

Perhaps since the dawn of self-consciousness our social species has been uncomfortably caught between the benefits of personal achievement and the expression of charitable impulses. The panorama of history depicts and illuminates this situation; explanations as quirky as a “selfish gene” ask to analyze it.

The nadir of the chasm between self-serving behavior and altruism — and the guilt often company to delinquency in responsibility — calls attention to both stated and unstated moral codes of our religious traditions. People from all backgrounds, polarized left or right, claim validation for their own expression of the “oughts” powering their instructions for action to be taken by self or other. Against these ideological canvases we find, often, that apparently insignificant and momentary alterations in personal and interpersonal circumstances can cause major shifts in the polarity not only of individuals but entire societies.

Contributors to this newsletter, here writing humanistically from left of center, illuminate certain shifts to the right in the tumult of our times. (You may want to refresh your memory of the Tomkins Polarity Scale at <http://www.tomkins.org/PDF/library/articles/polarityscale.pdf>.) This seventh issue of our Newsletter celebrates balance by using the psychology of the left to show the right as a polar opposite rather than an empirically validated truth or falsehood. Granted the glory and the goodness of love, it is not a foregone conclusion that the meek shall inherit The Earth.

A Working Concept of Humility



Reverend Richard Sindall

Wanted: A working concept of humility disconnected from the attack-self pole on the compass of shame. Also wanted: a working concept of pride disconnected from the attack-other pole of that same compass of

shame. Client: religion in general and Christianity in particular.

When I was a kid, had someone asked “What kind of Christian are you?” I would have answered “Protestant” or more specifically, “Presbyterian.” We Protestants came in various denominations, but the difference that was supposed to matter was between Catholic and Protestant, and we were taught to distinguish our beliefs from those of the Roman Catholic Church.

Today, if asked the most important division within American Christianity, I would answer in terms neither of Catholic and Protestant nor of distinctions among Protestant denominations, nor even of the popular labels such as mainline, evangelical, fundamentalist, or charismatic. Thanks to the Tomkins Institute’s video for clergy and Don Nathanson’s *Shame and Pride*, my answer would now incorporate shame affect, the great variety of scripts our experiences write for it, and the ways religion uses shame to influence and control.

From Martin Luther to Douglas John Hall, theologians have identified a more profound division within Christianity.¹ Life, pastoral ministry, and the events on and after 11 September 2001 have made me see that division as vitally important. Luther distinguishes between *theologia gloriae* (the theology of glory) and *theologia crucis* (the theology of the cross). This distinction contrasts triumphalist Christianity with servant Christianity — an imperious church with a ministering church. The former is the Christianity of power and glory, success and influence. In the United States, triumphalist Christianity seeks to establish and secure itself in the new imperialism of an American Christendom, so driving the nation toward imperious attitudes presented as sanctioned by God and harmonious with Christian faith. The old European Christendom has failed at last and nearly faded from the earth, but this new American variety is fighting mightily to emerge triumphant and take its place. The new imperious Christianity combines in common spirit and cause Christians

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from many traditions, including some (not all) who are evangelical Protestants, fundamentalist Protestants, Dispensationalists, Pentecostals, conservative Roman Catholics, conservative main-line Protestants, and whoever else may through fear or pride become convinced Christianity must take charge of the society and the world. Triumphalism cuts across the barriers between Christian traditions and the lines between denominations.

I hold that people and groups can come together rightly only in mutual respect. Tolerance is not enough. Though better than intolerance and active hostility, tolerance fails because it takes us only a half-step from contempt. Mere tolerance stands always at the edge of intolerance, where any offense or misunderstanding can push it back over the line. Tolerance is more insult than respect. Think how unflattering it would be to have someone say that you were a tolerable person, one he or she could tolerate when necessary. Harmony requires not just affective resonance but empathy, which requires a combination of understanding and respect to generate compassion. An imperious attitude makes respect impossible and so prevents harmony by rejecting its value. At best, the imperious may offer pity or patronizing charity as long as the recipients are duly grateful and mindful of their place. Such pity and charity are intrinsically shaming. Who wants to be pitied? Who then wishes to be the object of charity? Only when pity melds with respect does it become compassionⁱⁱ free from shame.

Triumphalist Christianity (any triumphalism) takes shame by the hand and leads it directly to the *attack-other* pole of the compass. It appeals by blaming others for one's own hardships or frustrations. The believer who resists being led to the attack-other pole to fight the enemies of the faith is banished to the *attack-self* pole to experience more shame. Christendom's militant religious language and imagery are reinforced positively by the pious desire to glorify Christ and negatively by the fear of being found ashamed of Christ. "I'm not ashamed to own [acknowledge and proclaim] my Lord," the hymn declares, and evangelical Christians have long been pressured with exhortations not to be ashamed of Jesus and of bearing his name. So, faithfulness and unfaithfulness are set onto the axis of pride and shame. The militant language with which Christianity abounds serves to turn shame toward the *attack-other* pole where, supposedly, the name of Jesus Christ will be vindicated by the defeat and humiliation of his enemies.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner, It must not suffer loss:
From victory unto victory His army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished, And Christ is Lord indeed.ⁱⁱⁱ

One further exhortation from that hymn deserves mention for its particular appeal to masculine pride (the macho script): "Ye that are men now serve Him Against un-numbered foes; Let courage rise with danger, And strength to strength oppose." Here

the appeal to pride comes with its corresponding threat of shame. The male believer must stand up and be a real man for Christ.

Other religions also generate zealots by turning shame toward the *attack-other* pole – for example, militant Islamists and militant messianic Israeli settlers. Is it any wonder, then, that some end-time, Dispensationalist Christians seek to make common cause (however dishonestly) with those settlers?^{iv} *Turn shame into the glory that rightly belongs to your faith and your God! Attack the other who represents your shame and whose humiliation will bring your God glory!*

How does triumphalist American Christianity use the "shaming of the faith" to push believers toward the *attack-other* spirit? How is American Christianity being shamed? Are Christians really being humiliated in the United States because they are Christian? We have *not* been humiliated, unless we take such pride in Christianity's prestige, power, and popularity that we feel shamed by their decline. Healthy Christianity would value ministry and service, not prestige and control over the society. Healthy shame over the churches' decline would lead to introspection and renewed commitment to ministry. *Have we been self-satisfied? Have we judged and excluded when we should have empathized and welcomed respectfully?* Triumphalism, however, pushes healthy shame to the attack other pole by broadcasting the alarm that Christians are under attack from outsiders. For political purposes, the manipulators of the faithful fabricate the shameful specter of a majority religion under attack by powerful anti-Christian forces that include the "liberal media," the secular society, liberals in general, liberal clergy in particular, intellectuals, permissive or "activist" judges, and the two great Babylons on both coasts, Hollywood and New York City (or, since 9-11, Massachusetts). Triumphalism defines Christianity as humiliated any time it isn't running the show, and the healthy shame that might bring improvement from within is, instead, goaded into attacking the "haters of Christianity" who supposedly threaten what they define as America's Christian way of life.

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So, the alarm is sounded, over and over. *Circle the wagons, protect the women and children, attack and never retreat.* Recruitment to the *attack-other* pole of shame's compass is fed by endless warnings and alarms. Calls to pride and warnings of shame fuel the fires of anger.

September 11, 2001 was a day of primal shame affect in America, even though we had nothing of which to be ashamed. We were attacked and, for the day, rendered powerless. Feelings of helplessness soon gave way to anger. Mine flared when I saw the images of Palestinian women dancing in the streets, jubilant because we had been attacked and our people were dying. Then, another set of images cooled my anger and let me think. I had just read an account of the only child psychiatrist in the West Bank that exposed me to images of the trauma suffered by Palestinian children on a daily basis. If their mothers blamed us, even in part, for that trauma, then I could understand (at least a little) why they were dancing. I have sons of my own. I was still angry, and my sermon that Sunday gave voice to the anger we needed to express together before God, but the empathy of an American parent understanding Palestinian parents had tempered my anger and kept it from pushing me toward the tempting *attack-other* pole. Christian faith requires, enables, and reinforces empathy. I had sensed how I might feel if I were a Palestinian father, powerless and angry at what was being done to my children, and so I could think about justice rather than revenge. Do I take credit for that moderating effect? No, it came from *my* understanding of that same Jesus whose name, spoken in a different spirit, fuels the fires of revenge, driving Christians to the *attack-other* pole. Revenge is not an option in my understanding of God and of faith.

Neither was *attack-self* an option. Nothing I, we, or America had done could be used to justify those attacks on 9-11 and had better not be. I wrote in that sermon of the two prominent "Christian mis-leaders" who had dared to suggest we deserved those terrorists attacks. They were, I think, trying to use shame and guilt for their own purposes, but the emotions and the trauma of the nation were too strong. Nothing could justify, rationalize, or explain such murderous deeds or make us feel we were to blame. Few in our nation would accept an *attack-self* posture.

Nevertheless, the well-honed *attack-self* mechanisms of religion, long applied to make Christians penitent, would soon be used in ways more subtle than the folly of suggesting to the nation we had deserved what we got on 9-11 or that it came from God. No, shame would be used, rather, against any who dared speak for reason to moderate any of the political steps taken toward purported self-protection and determined revenge.

Triumphalist religion goes hand in hand with imperious nationalism, and established religion has always shared in the benefits of power by sanctifying the political programs of the powerful. An alliance forms between *attack-other* triumphalist religion and *attack-other* imperious politics.^v

We neither want nor need life at the opposite pole of *attack-self* scripts. We need not develop litanies of self-blame. Rather,

we need a new and very different understanding of humility that empowers, that shares strength rather than displaying weakness. For Christians, such humility derives from grace, from the sense that God meets us with understanding and compassion, not pity. Equally, we need a new definition of pride that is neither arrogant nor cruel but exercises its strength and expresses its courage in pursuit of a justice that sets life right for all (not just for us), and in a mutual respect with no need to dominate or humiliate others. ***Needed: humility that does not grovel, pride that does not strut.***

Where do we find such working concepts of humility and pride? That question challenges Christianity and the other religions of the world to reexamine the origins of their beliefs for the relation between self and vocation. For Christianity, the answer lies at the very heart of our tradition: in the life, teachings, person, and self-giving of our central and primary figure.

Christianity is called to be the ministering faith of the servant church in our servant Lord. Yes, "servant Lord" sounds contradictory, but that contradiction is to the point. In our New Testament, Jesus asks who is greater, the one who sits at table and is served or the one who waits on the table and does the serving. The answer, of course, is that the one who is served is esteemed as the greater; but Jesus says he is among us as one who serves. Furthermore, we are not to be superior to other people when we are serving their needs or striving to meet the requirements of justice and compassion. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus forbids his followers to be benefactors, an important term for the self-understanding of the magnanimous rich and powerful in the Greek and Roman world.^{vi} The benefactor brought honor to himself by his charity to the poor. He did good, and he was able to do the good because he had done well. The charity of the benefactor was given downward from a position of greatness to those of lower standing in society and so became a shaming charity for the recipient, a prideful charity for the giver. It was the social responsibility of the great to use their wealth and influence to do such good for their inferiors; it showed their class. Jesus sets himself in contrast to this benefactor image and tells his followers they must be servants as he himself is a servant. They must share the life of those to whom they are sent and meet people with respect. Always, he says, his followers should speak to others with respect, as though his followers themselves were the youngest people present, the junior members of society.

At the very heart of Christianity is an act of self-denying, self-giving love. At the center of Christian faith is a person who takes great shame upon himself willingly for the sake of people who live in shame, whether they feel it or not. The New Testament emphasizes the shaming nature of crucifixion. Though designed to be a horrible ordeal of prolonged and unbearable pain, crucifixion was even more a public shaming of its victim. Rome inflicted this shaming upon people it judged to have dared challenge the might and right of the empire – rebellious slaves or insurgents.

Christianity's core message presents humility not only as the way to true glory but also as the essence of true glory. It is beyond the scope of this article to show the way this core message was turned upside down and inside out to refit Christianity for service as the established imperial religion, but it was. The focus of this article is on the challenge faced by us Christians and by our churches as we rediscover this core self-understanding and redevelop the servant Christianity that from the first was supposed to have been the way of life, ministry, mission, and service for the church and its people. This work — of finding a humility that is not shameful and a pride that is not shaming of others — must be done by those within the faith.

Resonance with other people is key — not pity, which exalts the benefactor, but empathy that enters into the world of another with respectful understanding and learns to share the other's life. For Christianity, empathy is what it means to be incarnational. Our doctrine of the Incarnation is our understanding of God's empathic link with us.^{vii} So, empathy is what being Christian is all about. The idea of empathy with the shamed is not, however, unique to Christianity. Ancient Israel was taught not to shame or afflict the resident foreigner because the Israelites themselves had been resident foreigners in Egypt where they were shamed and afflicted. "You know how it feels" is the implicit message. Islam needs to find its own way out of the shame that generates an *attack-other* religious zeal and into an empathic link with the vulnerable. Such evolution enables a healthy pride that is neither imperious nor vengeful.

Empathy can be educated by the memory of shame to provide a healing force. We can even learn to feel shame over the shaming of someone else. Abraham J. Heschel wrote that we do not need more people who love justice as an ideal but more who cannot tolerate the specific injustices done to others.^{viii} Imagine the changes in our world if we couldn't stand the shaming of another person, if we no longer delighted in the humiliation even of our enemies.

We have work to do. Beyond tolerance lies respect for others, which we must find apart from the *attack-self* pole and that will partner with self-respect not found at the *attack-other* pole of the compass of shame. For Christianity, away from the faith-twisting theologies of power and glory, waits a path that leads to ministry and service. Along that path, we will find a humility that does not shame us and a pride that does not feed itself by shaming others.

Notes

- i. For a brief explanation, see Hall's "Introduction," pp. 24-39, of *Thinking the Faith*, the first book in his three-volume, *Christianity in a North American Context*, Fortress Press, 1991 (for the first volume).
- ii. Compassion is derived from the Latin *passio*, suffering. So, compassion is a *suffering with* someone else. In compassion, one

enters into the sphere of another's suffering and resonates with that other person's experience.

- iii. The first stanza of the hymn written by George Duffield in 1858. Quoted from *The Hymnbook*, published the Presbyterian Church in the United States, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and *The Reformed Church in America*, copyright by John Ribble, 1955.
- iv. For an explanation see Barbara A. Rossing's book, *The Rapture Exposed: the Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*, especially the chapter, "The Rapture Script for the Middle East." Westview Press, 2004.
- v. Established religion differs from what people call "organized religion." Established religion is exactly what our founding ancestors wished to avoid in the United States by keeping religion apart from the powers of the state.
- vi. "A title widely used of both gods and men from the fifth century B.C. on. Often assumed by kings, it was also bestowed upon them or upon outstanding men, generally to reward some conspicuous service or meritorious achievement." *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 1*, p. 381. Abingdon Press, 1962.
- vii. "And the Word [of God] became flesh and lived [literally, tented] among us." (John 1:14a) Triumphalist Christianity tends to see the Incarnation as the veiling of the God-man, the King, so that faith reveals him as he truly is in splendor and power, much as King Richard the Lion-Hearted reveals himself to Robin Hood and his merry men at the end of that tale. So, for triumphalism, the truth of the Incarnation is the divinity of Christ veiled in flesh, and it is his divinity that must be defended and proclaimed. I suggest the emphasis should be placed on the controversial (the scandal in biblical terms, the stumbling block), which is the humanity of the Son of God, and so God's empathy with us becomes the key to understanding the Incarnation. In this view, the glory of Christ is found in his humility and even (especially) in his humiliation in unity with all who are put to shame.
- viii. Heschel, Abraham Joshua, *The Prophets*, in the section entitled, "The Sense of Injustice," pp. 261, 262. Perennial Classics edition, copyright 2001 by Susannah Heschel.

Editors' Note

The various elements of affect, ideology, and polarity at work in Dick Sindall's explanation of the divide between imperialistic and service orientation bear dispassionate, careful analysis. Unexpected phenomena continually provide food for thought. We are reminded of a report from a friend who is a scholar of Far Eastern religion; he spends much time in Indonesia among Buddhists, Christians, and those from other religious/cultural backgrounds. He told of his surprise when he discovered that while song and dance, music and legend, food and dress, and all the colorful paraphernalia of individual religions were easily exchanged in warm social settings, basic ideology (philosophical dogma), could not be approached. "Blood might flow!," he was warned. Might it be that we enculturate more by teaching grade school songs than we ever expected? Aren't all hymns a way of

embedding powerful messages in fascinating tunes?

While at first thought it might have seemed that the traditions we absorb with our mothers' milk are most vital to our future relationships, this report suggests another factor; one that supports the adage about the futility of *debating* religious and political beliefs. In such situations logic is servant rather than master. Whereas early memories may differ among groups, the affective experiences they recycle within their members echo and enable both cross-cultural resonance and dissonance. Worthy of study is the likelihood that critical to the formation of adult ideology is the intensity of the affect with which parents declare their own scripts to their children, and the degree to which life experience further validates and further amplifies these ideological scripts.

The following response by Reverend David McShane illuminates "ways of knowing" relevant to these observations. Following Dave's article, Sue Deppe reminds us that the current political scene and perhaps all political scripts depend on the device of framing language to fit ideoaffective posture. Little wonder then, that the direct wording of lectured ideology influences far less than the softer scenes of traditional celebration. The tune that carries the message choreographs the behavior it encourages.

Response to Richard Sindall by Reverend David McShane



As a fellow clergyman who is far out on the humanist end of Silvan Tomkins's Polarity Scale I have a three word critique of Reverend Sindall's article. My critique is this: "Amen and Amen."

His use of *theologia gloriae* and *theologia crucis* as definitive categories for understanding two contrasting forms

of religious affection is insightful and very helpful as we try to fathom what is going on in religious circles these days. Sindall appropriately focuses on Christianity in the United States, but his analysis can be applied across the board so long as we adjust the terms and symbols to fit other religiocultural situations. There are people in the north of Ireland — both Catholics and Protestants — who are bent upon triumphing in a Godly struggle, and there are also service oriented and peace seeking Catholics and Protestants. The same is true as well in the Middle East among both Jews and Palestinians.

I have wondered for much of my life how I can sit in the same church pew, recite the same creed, drink from the same

chalice at communion, and pray to the same God alongside someone with whom I deeply disagree about crucial social issues. It was Silvan Tomkins who provided the insight that such apparently incongruous behavior is not only possible but likely, and that no amount of reasoning can change that damned "triumphalist" down the pew into a nice guy like me. And, conversely, none of the reasons through which (by claiming that my reasoning itself is a scandal to God's righteousness) he tried to alter my attitude toward those SINNERS will make a dent in me.

It was early in his career that Silvan developed the Polarity Scale out of his realization that a person's stance toward the world derived from at least two sometimes conflicting sources, two ways of "knowing" the world. These he labeled postures: ideoaffective and ideological. As his theory grew and has been adopted and adapted, those two so-called "postures" have come to be understood as scripts.

The difficult and perennial effort toward the understanding of self and other has been greatly advanced by Tomkins's slowly evolving work on the theory of scripts. Though script theory has fostered much gain in the understanding of human motivation, less attention has been paid to the reasons scripts are so damned hard to change. Behind all scripts is the "guiding hand" of each individual's ideoaffective posture, an attitude therefore beyond the reach of our standard ways of dealing with each other, or for that matter, of dealing with ourselves. One of my delights in recent years has been the way in which central nervous system research has confirmed Tomkins's theory about ideoaffective posture. At core, script formation holds unavailable the specific memories from which it was formed — most of its contents will likely never be available to conscious memory.

According to LeDoux, "Different brain systems are involved in implicit forms of memory, on the one hand, and conscious/explicit/declarative memory on the other," and "Implicit memories are reflected more in the things we do, and the way we do them, than in the things we know."² Antonio Damasio puts it this way, "Feelings are poised at the very threshold that separates being from knowing."³ And LeDoux again, "The elements you are able to consciously remember about an experience overlap often with some of the elements that were being separately stored implicitly in other systems."⁴

The convictions of the guy down the pew from me (with whom I soundly disagree on a number of important issues like the right to die, gay marriage, the war in Iraq, etc.) are guided and magnified by his ideoaffective posture, and not by the reasons he offers when trying to change my mind. And, of course, my own convictions are also rooted in the affective set critical to my own implicit memory. It is not that logical arguments can never be useful, but they are always a paper tiger in the face of the affective posture that informs my scripts and yours.

An analogue helps me get the drift of this. Consider the sculptor who prepares to make a large work in clay by forming

a chicken wire frame upon which s/he will place, mold, and intricately shape that clay into the final product. I borrow Don Nathanson's delightful comparison from computerese⁵ and define the sculptor's wire frame as firmware and the clay as software. Clay and sculptor are both constrained by the wire frame set earlier, for clay cannot stray far from its frame. Not so with the wire frame of our affective/implicit memory upon which the clay of our life is hung.

The "reasons" of which we are conscious are hung on that wire frame of affective posture formed mostly in childhood and quite apart from any "thoughtful" input of our own. Such implicit memorial material influences conscious decisions and behavior in ways of which we are quite unwitting.

Richard Cytowic put it this way, "Emotion and reason are interdependent because their anatomy is interdependent, but aspects of them can be separately apprehended. Logical reasoning makes us feel that 'we' handle the process. The logic of emotion, however, is beyond our control. Therefore our energy is better spent trying to understand its conclusions rather than trying to change them by throwing reasons at it."⁶

How can I get my pew partner to be what I see as or "know" to be "more" Christian? More of that in a moment, but now a little of Tomkins as he defined this human dichotomy of implicit and explicit memories. His contention was that memories reside in the brain because they have an address there, a circuit of interconnected components of different sorts, which together compose an experience. They may include color, shape, sound, texture, taste, odor, other such elements, and above all, affect.

Such memories may or may not also have a "name" as abstract as a word or graphic symbol. In order to be recalled, in order to be explicitly available, that address in implicit memory must either have a name as address or contain elements of the sensory input that first triggered it. In order to be retrieved it must be conjointly re-experienced in sufficient similarity to the original experience.⁷

For the most part one's "professed" religion resides in explicit memory, the clay of our life that we consciously claim as the wire. If one's affective posture, (the wire frame of the sculptor self), marshals the affects in the direction of a Texas swagger, the surface clay that is molded as "Christian" chooses hymns like "Onward Christian Soldiers" or "Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory Of The Coming Of The Lord" rather than "Love Divine All Loves Excelling, Joy Of Heaven To Earth Come Down."

That's my damned pew mate who has it all wrong. Not only is he vigorously anti-abortion but he believes numbers were discovered rather than invented, and that the human mind is like a mirror rather than like a light. Did you remember that those last two are questions 43 and 58 on Tomkins's Polarity Scale?

Among those of us on the "humanist" pole of the Polarity Scale, the concept of sin has been given a bad rap — understand-

ably so since our implicit affective set is positively inclined toward human beings in general. However, it may be that paying attention to sin is one effective key to salvation (using the New Testament meaning of salvation as being made whole), and one possible means of re-scripting in a religious setting. The idea of sin calls up awareness of one's shortcomings, in which, (my) God knows, my normative pew mate abounds. Sin is shameful. And shame being a sociophilic, a correction- and thus reconnection-promoting affect, the self-conscious sinner should consider and adopt some sort of corrective action.

At this point the Christian proclamation says "Come to Jesus." But "What for?" The answer is different for the triumphalist *theologia gloriae* and the service oriented *theologia crucis*. Being rule bound and law oriented, the triumphalists are primarily concerned with sin as it undermines the sinners way of relating to God. And for them that is what Jesus came to fix. "You and ME God, OK?"

If I am to get to my wrongheaded pew mate with the gospel as I see it, I must play heavily on that dimension of sin/shame where Jesus is concerned for the welfare of others. And the gospels are loaded with such material. Hopefully the pew mate's plea will gradually morph to, "US and you God, OK?"

To the extent that you enjoy allegories, the contemporary White House is a library bursting with normative scripts for which models may be found throughout history. Many of its officials play fear as a trump card and define implacable centralized leadership as the only path to salvation. Yet as a humanist I would support a deep fear of fascism, sincere concern about the growing power of the gun lobby, the need for religious ecumenism, the value of nations united rather than splintered by fear and mutual dissimilarity, and a foreign policy dominated by care for the needy rather than a Malthusian belief that the death of the weak is not only justifiable but proof that strength and firm resolve are godly characteristics. Each of these two families of suggestions implies a specific ideoaffective set that casts humans in a positive or a negative light.

Paul of Tarsus was a raving normative as he persecuted the first Christians. But some implicit memory stored at a nameless address and thus unavailable to consciousness, was given a name when some malady struck him blind as he traveled toward Damascus to continue his persecutions.⁸ That name was Jesus, and Paul's normative proclivities bent on persecution were turned in the opposite direction. All of a sudden it was now shameful for him to hurt other people. It would be most interesting to know the content stored at that nameless address. Perhaps some lingering memory from the Biblical prophetic tradition which is essentially *theologia crucis*.

It took three days for Paul to see what had really happened to him. Three days to get his sight back. And the world, now viewed consciously from a new posture required a different response. Paul maintained much of his normative orientation:

Women must cover their heads, they are not to speak out in church, and sex is highly problematic. But in his normative way he quit hating people with whom he disagreed. He also came to understand this dichotomy in the makeup of human beings clearly as did our Silvan Tomkins so many centuries later. From other addresses that as yet have no name we are pressured from an unfathomed depth in our *psyches* — the classical Greek and now New Testament word for soul.

Paul put it famously. “The good I would I do not. That which I would not, that I do.”⁹ It is a shame not to embrace that dictum for ourselves and hope to ferret out the address which makes it so, and give that address its name.

Notes:

1. LeDoux, J. 2002 *Synaptic Self* NY:Viking. p161.
2. *ibid* Page 116
3. Damasio, A. 1989 *The Feeling of What Happens* NY:Harcourt Brace. p43.
4. LeDoux *op cit.* page 318
5. Nathanson, D. 1992 *Shame and Pride*. NY:WW Norton. p27.
6. Cytowic, R. 1993 *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*. NY:Tarcher/ Putnam, p. 213.
7. Tomkins, S. S. (1962) *Affect, Imagery and Consciousness, Vol II*. NY:Springer. p. 330-3, 365-7; Vol IV (Springer, 1991) p. 140-5. These passages contain extensive descriptions of his definitions of “address” and “name” in the usage special to his work.
8. Bible, Acts 9:1-9.
9. Bible, Romans 7:19.

Belief and the Ballot Box: Parenting, Politics, and Polarity



Susan Leigh Deppe, MD

Part I: A New Language for Ideological Polarity

Like the character Guy Noir, Private Eye, in Garrison Keillor’s *A Prairie Home Companion*, we are all “looking for the answers to life’s persistent questions.”

It is through our ideological scripts that such answers are provided. They place us in the cosmos and society, provide values, guidance, and sanctions, and define our faith, religious or secular. They define power and divinity. Ideology is determined by group membership: class, nation, age, gender, etc. Ideologies can cause both bonding and conflict.

I have been both intrigued and horrified as I have watched political and religious ideology play out over the past decade in the United States. Like Dick Sindall and Dave McShane, I also disagree with those who claim to represent a single “Christian worldview” that bears little resemblance to the Christ of humility, grace, and compassion. Many non-Christians have analogous scripts valuing the empathy, service, community, humility, and diversity that I personally find so important.

We all have ideoaffective postures: loosely organized sets of emotions and feelings about ideas. We do not always have an ideological posture (a highly organized and articulate set of ideas about anything), nor do we have the same ideology in all fields. We resonate to a particular ideology because of underlying scripts. Ideoaffective resonance is the engagement of ideoaffective posture (one’s scripts) and ideology when they are sufficiently similar to reinforce and strengthen each other. This is the key to the current co-optation of American Christianity by the political Right.

Tomkins⁶ talked of a left-right polarity across many fields, such differences caused by variations in affect socialization. A “normative” is negatively predisposed to other humans and socializes the child more punitively. The “humanist” is positively predisposed to other humans and more empathic. Parents may split, mix, alternate, or soften their normative stances and reinforce their humanism. In a loving and empathic way, humanist parents require their children to meet culturally acceptable standards. However differently, both groups teach children to manage their affects and develop group-specific attitudes about empathy.

“I have demonstrated a deep coherence between the differential magnification of specific affects and quite remote ideological derivatives,” Tomkins wrote.⁶ (p. 173) Humanists usually believe human beings are basically trustworthy, and that the primary role of government is to promote social welfare rather than ensure law and order. Tomkins found that “... the individual continues to respond as though he lives in a world consistent in behavior, cognition, perception, and affect. It is, however, a world that is systematically different if he views it from the left or from the right.” (p. 173) Of course, early socialization is not completely predictive; many life experiences contribute to the scripts that operate in the adult. One may question or reject earlier scripts. Stories characteristic of these scripts may be found in the books mentioned herein and listed in my bibliography.

Tomkins pointed out that the development of personality involves differential stratification of both positive and negative affects. In his language, the feminine attitude celebrates the display of shame, enjoyment, fear, and distress. The masculine attitude preferentially displays excitement, surprise, anger, disgust, and dissmell as what was termed the macho script. Tomkins saw this polarity in cosmology, gender relations, and many kinds of ideological conflict.

This polarity best describes variations within ideologies. Each group will contain people with a range of attitudes. Politically, in the USA, we have, from right to left: Neoconservatives or radical conservatives (I will use Reich's term "Radcons"), moderate conservatives (fiscally or socially conservative Republicans), moderate Democrats, liberal Democrats, and Progressives. As individuals, we may occupy different positions on the polarity in different areas of our lives, e.g., a social, fiscal, or theological conservative might be a more humanistic parent.

Polarities may change, over life---or history. Societies tend to become more normative when negative affect predominates. Since the September 11 attacks, Congress has passed the Patriot Act, which limits personal privacy and liberties in ways unthinkable in the 1950s. Polarity is universal, Tomkins said, but in form also unique to each society and each age. Current Radcon politics echo those of the 1920s and the Gilded Age of the late 19th century. Radcons now dominate the Legislative and the Executive branches of our government.

There are several variations on conservative ideology (e.g., religious, financial, and social). Libertarians would severely limit the state power that is so important to Radcons. Today's Radcons are not traditional conservatives. Traditional conservatives value fiscal responsibility, hard work, charity, restraint, tolerance, civility, limited government, and dedication to family, community, and freedom. They avoid big risks; they want to conserve America's good aspects. They follow the rules; means are as important as ends.

Cognitive linguist George Lakoff examines the language of polarity in his recent book *Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. Lakoff discusses frames; cognitive structures that evoke ideas and feelings. Reframing requires new ideas and language, and means changing how people see the world and what counts as common sense. Common sense is determined by ideoaffective posture and ideological scripts. Lakoff noted two models of the nation, and realized they reflected two understandings of the family. His strict father and nurturant parent models correspond nicely to Tomkins's normative and humanistic scripts.

The "strict father" believes that life is competitive and the world dangerous; evil is real, right and wrong are absolutes. This system requires a strong, moral authority figure who protects and supports the family, and disciplines children so they do what is defined as right. Morality is defined as dependent on such behavior and teaching, and internalized discipline helps one succeed. Society benefits when people pursue their self-interest, prosper, and become self-reliant. Morality is linked with prosperity: wealth comes from and requires discipline. "Do-gooders" subvert the system by trying to help others, thus making them dependent.

Here it is taken for granted that an undisciplined child becomes neither independent nor prosperous; the presence or absence of discipline identifies the character and success of an individual. Fathers and governments should not, then, meddle in the life of any adult — social programs are immoral because they reduce incentive. Government exists to protect lives and property, maintain order, punish wrongdoers, and promote business, conservative morality, and religion. Free competitive markets, privatization, and government subsidies support growth. Regulation is bad. Taxes (for other than the foregoing) punish good, disciplined people, and waste resources on those who have not earned them. With respect to foreign policy from this point of view, the United States is the moral authority. Moral authorities do not ask for permission.

God is like the strict father who issues commands and punishes or rewards people. Moral order is God over man as man is over child. Or, for some Radcons, man over woman over children; straight over gay; white over non-white; American over other cultures. The goal of morality is the preservation and extension of strict paternal control.

Lakoff's humanistic model — the nurturing parent — is, by contrast, gender-neutral and in dimension from individual to the world. In this model, the world is basically good, despite dangers and challenges; and one should try to make it better. Children are born good, and can be made better. Parents share child-rearing. The goal is to rear happy, fulfilled children who become nurturers. Nurturing involves empathy and responsibility. These lead to Progressive/Liberal political values of protection, competence, fairness, opportunity, freedom, and open communication. Resulting policies include a social safety net, government regulation, environmental, worker and consumer protection. Universal education, an economy that benefits everyone, civil liberties, and equal treatment are goals. Freedom (consistent with responsibility), open government, public service, trust, commitment, and community building also follow. Government is responsible for the infrastructure capable of enacting these values. Taxes are the dues for a civilized society.

The nation should promote cooperation and extend these values to the world. As a category, Liberals/Progressives make clear their interest in the environment, socioeconomic matters, identity politics, civil liberties, antiauthoritarian stances, and spiritual freedom. Contemporary Liberals oppose totalitarianism, violence, bigotry, nationalist and religious zealotry. They prize interdependence, international law and cooperation, human rights, decency, and tolerance. While they accept the discipline of the market, they believe people should be protected against misfortune. They prefer to fight tyranny and brutality with prosperity and democracy, rather than with military force.

From the writings of Robert Reich⁵ (former US Secretary of Labor), former Radcon journalist David Brock¹, and author Thomas Frank³ we learn the history of these forces: Liberalism emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries. It sought to improve

the wellbeing of all and give a voice even to the minor actors in a democracy. This was the energy behind abolition, women's suffrage, and the civil rights movement. It balanced the excesses of capitalism (monopolies, corruption, low wages, and poor working conditions) and cleaned up and regulated banking. It gave us safety, health, food and drug regulations, the New Deal, public works spending, Social Security, and unemployment insurance.

From the 1920s through the '70s, Democrats controlled the Executive branch, Congress, and many state governments. Since the 1980s, the Liberal/Progressive message has been incoherent. Democrats began to rely on wealthy and corporate donors rather than the support of individuals and the union movement, thus moving them toward the center. Since 1980, they have been losing support with the middle and working classes, people with great economic insecurity. One would expect these citizens to vote for their own interests, but they have been voting Republican! Let us examine the reasons for this shift.

Part II. The Radical Right

Lakoff defines the Radcon goal as the unrestrained use of power (including government power) to extend strict paternal values into both domestic and international arenas.

Reich summarizes the Radcon agenda: Opposition to sex outside of marriage, gay marriage, abortion, and affirmative action. Support for tax breaks for the wealthy, prayer in public schools, cuts in social services, privatization of Social Security, deregulation of business, and the weakening of environmental regulations. Criminal justice should be punitive, prison terms long, and the death penalty maintained. Radcons support the invasion of countries that may help terrorists, a strong military, independence rather than cooperation in foreign affairs, and the suppression of dissent on foreign policy. They are willing to restrict civil liberties in the service of national security, and accept "collateral damage" in the war against evil.

Much Radcon public discourse is characterized by stridency, incivility, and meanness. The ideology is based on fear, punishment, and coercion. Radcons focus on private morality, but ignore the public morality questions of abuse of power, uneven distribution of wealth, and government and corporate malfeasance.

Radcon intellectuals realized, as did Tomkins, that many working people and Evangelical Protestants live their work and religious lives by normative scripts. Radcons link the two by careful use of language and framing. Scripts may be either strengthened or disconfirmed by analogue formation. A highly magnified script is easily triggered and involves very intense emotion. Radcons also realized that people often vote their values and identities rather than their self-interest. By portraying Liberals as threatening their way of life, culture, religion, and identity, Radcons use the culture war to reinforce the scripts they promote and maintain their alliance with the electorate.

Part III. Going Forward: Language and Script

When many people use the same language (e.g., "tax relief") to frame an issue, it has become a cultural script that automatically evokes images and affects. This jump is instant, unconscious, and tends to cut off debate. "Tax relief" implies that taxation imposes an unfair burden; whoever eliminates it is designated heroic. To change peoples' frames, one must have good ideas, not just words. For example, taxes are also the dues we pay for civilized society. If people heard this repeatedly, the frame would shift, and taxes could be seen as expressions of personal responsibility and wise investments for the future.

Lakoff points out that our votes are determined by the currently active scripted model for politics. Votes always reflect polarity. The 35-40% of voters clustered at each end of the polarity scale represent either strict father or nurturant parent morality. The middle 20-30% may accept ideas from both scripts, and in order to win a majority, candidates must capture one bloc without driving away the other. Many of the logical points made by Democrats in the 2004 presidential campaign fell on deaf ears. Radcons won by framing their ideals, not their practice. Images and ideological scripts will always trump the facts they frame. Rather than modifying our scripts, we usually ignore data that does not fit. People vote their values, ideals, and cultural stereotypes. Good frames evoke such intense affect that they require little explanation. The language of each faction reinforces its frame.

Part IV. God's Politics

The Reverend Jim Wallis is an Evangelical Christian pastor and head of the Sojourners Community in Washington, D.C. He is a social liberal who models his life on the compassionate Jesus. For years, Sojourners has ministered to the poor, people with AIDS, and others in inner-city Washington. Their new project: "God is not a Republican...Or a Democrat" began last fall. Wallis's book, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*, applies to today's issues the scripts they identify in the witness of the prophets and Jesus.

"Abraham Lincoln had it right. Our task should not be to invoke religion and the name of God by claiming God's blessing and endorsement for all our national policies and practices---saying, in effect, that God is on our side. Rather, Lincoln said, we should ask whether we are on God's side."⁷ (xiv) The result of the former is self-righteousness, idiosyncratic theology, and risky foreign policy. The latter would call us to repentance, humility, and other values described by Wallis and the Sojourners as sorely needed. "Clearly God is not a Republican or a Democrat, and the best contribution of religion is precisely not to be ideologically predictable or loyally partisan but to maintain the moral independence to critique both the Left and the Right." (xix)

Wallis reminds us that the national debate need not be so polarized. In his Introduction, he points out that many people of faith agree with some positions of both parties, and don't want

forced and perhaps false choices. So joined, these apparently opposing factions could be a force for unity and change. "Personal and social responsibility both, are at the heart of religion, and the two together could make a very powerful and compelling political vision for the future of our bitterly divided nation."⁷ (p xix)

Amen, Brother Wallis.

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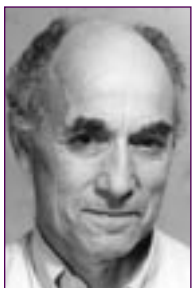
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Afterword

From the Editors



Don Nathanson



John Brodsky

It has been a privilege to assemble this edition of the newsletter. The opinions and analyses of these three members bring the psychology of affect and script to the age-old issues of "truth" and "mission" in religious belief and practice.

These essays focus on the divide within conceptions of morality, and on its basis in the interaction of our biology with our personal biographical circumstances. From the left or from the right, it would seem we are charged with the responsibility of doing what is possible to diminish what each of us sees as evil. From the standpoint of our discipline we must wonder whether the category of evil could exist independent of the food centered drive derivatives dissmell and disgust; for as we thrive toward adulthood these biological imperatives morph into

powerful motivation to avoid, repel, and often to destroy.

The problem of evil is central to theology. For deists, acceptable solutions have focused on human freedom. This "feeling" of freedom is associated with the sort of imagery that characterizes higher level consciousness. If the lack of external

control associated with freedom allows a shift from service to selfish in our behavioral balance, various mechanisms are brought into play for the maintenance of social order. Shame, amplified by conflicts between behavior and our concept of an ideal self is one such mechanism — it deals with sins in the heart. Penal law deals with sins of the hand and therefore the complex emotionality of guilt. Restorative Justice (the social movement most attuned to the psychology represented by our organization) seeks to heal the breach between the hurt and the warring. Even during the most noxious periods of strife may grow systems that offer solace, the possibility of individual safety, and new ways we may all live together in harmony.

John Brodsky
Don Nathanson

From the Executive Director

End of year secular and religious holidays resonate with this current issue of our Newsletter. War/peace, success/sacrifice, self/other, public display/ private meditation, visual/verbal/ musical material; a wide range of concerns, beliefs, hopes, struggles. A college professor prepared me for Tomkins's ideological scripts by defining religion as "intimate and ultimate concern; whatever is of deepest meaning to any of us." These days "depth" of concern becomes "affective intensity," and its "source" personal script. Our authors earn deep gratitude as they shed costumes to explain their concerns and request the direction of our attention.

Next you pass any religious institution watch parade, processional, performance, pulpit, or podium; allow what Coleridge called the "willing suspension of disbelief" and enter the drama unfolding for your benefit; or feel the reflexive urge to avoid passion meant for another's tribe, I ask you to think suddenly differently. Whoever mounts and maintains such an energy-consuming event has made sacred an enormous amount of affect and cognition, has allowed the needs, hopes, fears, sense of self and other, indeed an entire world view of others to be of intimate and ultimate concern.

Freedom privileges any level of religious acceptance. But merge enough with that broadcast to understand the sheer work required to learn and express publicly what you may now experience. Our clergy are some of the hardest working adults you will ever meet, and we must respect their willingness to stand as exemplars and broadcasters of their faith while holding inside a lifetime fear that they may ever appear "self proud." Few "occupations" demand such careful and constant internal debate. We are lucky and quite grateful that so diverse a group of clergy cleaves to our discipline and agrees we are one.

Don Nathanson