

"It's all accident, except perhaps for the chambers of the human heart."--
In the 1999 film "Snow Falling on Cedars" (which last evening we saw & discussed
in Craigville [MA] Tabernacle), Max von Sydow as the defense attorney
in a murder trial, after the discovery that the death was not intentional but
accidental

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HUMANISM'S CAPTIVITY OF THE PUBLIC MIND

The 1934 Humanist Manifesto predicted that America's public schools would soon be religion-free, free from religion, religion-cleansed. The cleansing would be done when the public mind was "naturally" humanistic, i.e., when the humanistic presuppositions & thought-processes had become habitual & therefore unconscious--becoming conscious (& defended!) only when encountering another thought-world, such as that of the Bible (so, Judaism & Christianity).

1 Earlier yesterday, right after morning worship, a woman with a worried look on her face said to me "Does 'Nature' ever do anything?" She was reassured when I said "Not independently"; for her underlying question was "Is God in charge?"

2 When humanism's great sucking sound transferred the virtues (both meanings: powers & values) downward from heaven to earth, the universe became as disenchanted of God as biblical religion had disenchanted nature in the interest of God's freedom, the transcendence of Creator over creature. As this film is humanism for the eyeballs, we are not surprised that the story proceeds without benefit of clery, laity (who exist linguistically only as the antonym of clergy), or deity. "It's all [only] accident" out there, though "the human heart" may "perhaps" exercise some intentionality, have some free will (which God had when he existed).

3 After the two-hour film last evening, the discussion had gone on for some time before I quoted what is this Thinksheet's first line & discoursed briefly on "accident" vs. intention as cosmological concepts. There's a difference between the French Revolution's romantic atheism (Rousseau) & WWII's French existential romanticism (Camus, who famously said "We must be kind, for God is not"): $\frac{1}{2}$ c. after the former, & 1 c. before the latter, Darwin, under pressure from his materialist-humanist friends, inferred that "God"--&--cosmic-order violated the law of parsimony: all existence was explicable as emergent from the random-accidental process of atomic-molecular collisions which underlay his philosophical (not scientific!) notions of "spontaneous [i.e., not divine-intentional] generation" & "natural [i.e., not supernatural] selection."

4 What is *not* accidental is that the humanists, with their Darwinian bio-floor, have convinced the U.S. Supreme Court to declare the Darwinian paradigm the *only* world picture to be taught, in our public schools, as science. Our lower courts, being closer to the people, have not all fallen for this ideological rigidity. E.g., the Eleventh Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, Chandler v. James, 7.13.99, had this to say: "'Cleansing' our public schools of all religious expression...inevitably results in the 'establishment' of disbelief--atheism--as the State's religion. Since the Constitution requires neutrality, it cannot be the case that government may prefer disbelief over religion."

5 The film's good news is that it promotes a wide band of virtues whose roots are Christian. It's bad news is its naive humanist assumption that these virtues can be sustained & promoted without continuing vital connection with the roots. A few human beings--Camus for one--can live intentionality in a universe they consider nonintentional, random. A few. A very few are up to orderly living in a disorderly, chaotic "cosmos." "The total drift of the world and man's total experience" (Peter A. Bertocci, "A Rationale for a Cosmoteleological Argument for God," JR Oct76 323-337) inclines most thinkers to agree with Plato & Aristotle (& the Bible) that (in my words) meaning is, besides something we make, something we discover; & this discovery includes a directive element in reality (alongside the random element, if indeed this is not an illusion): "there is no thoroughgoing understanding of order without understanding the goal immanent in it." (Bertocci most seminal work was RELIGION AS CREATIVE INSECURITY.)

6 Because of the Patty Hearst syndrome (captive coming to love prisoner), fighting humanism in the name of theism is bloody hard work with bloody few soldiers: most of the captives, even (at least secretly) clergy, love humanism more than (if not indeed instead of) God. The humanist public-school mentality is the public mind.

7 To my knowledge, the 1st appearance of the noun "Post-Christianity" occurred 32 years ago in a book by a scientific poet (married to a UCC clergyman: I knew them both), Mary Jean Irion: FROM THE ASHES OF CHRISTIANITY: A Post-Christian View (J.B.Lippincott). Jean was a great reader, & she'd gone atheist reading humanistic stuff in the natural sciences & in philosophy. Two revealing quotes: (1) p8: "A new religion [! the phrase I've much used against hyper-feministic publications such as THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL], too embryonic to have been named, but referred to here as Post-Christianity, will soon begin to emerge....a humanistic, naturalistic, nontheistic religion." (This "new religion" was, falsely, claiming for itself Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity.") (2) p9: "If the transition from one religion to another could be accomplished within the church, which we hear from many sources is...dying, that church might find itself with a lively, vigorous function in society." Well, here we are 32 years later. The Unitarian-Universalist Association has made the transition to humanism (most UUs no longer claiming to be Christians); but few would claim that its churches, while a few of them are lively & vigorous, have anything but a marginal social function. After the UUA, my own UCC has among the oldline churches most yielded to the humanist temptation; but in the almost $\frac{1}{2}$ c. of its existence, its social function has declined.

Jean's 1st sentence (p7) is "Christianity was a great religion." Well, her new religion *was*; but Christianity still, & worldwide increasingly, *is*.

I give her this, though (& this is the main reason she's in this Thinksheet): humanism is indeed, though public-school defenders deny it, *a new religion*. And I give the U.S. Supreme Court this, that humanism is now in the "religion" category.

8 The slide into humanism in its modern form began when the stars stopped obeying God & instead just did their thing, whatever. My reference is to Isaac Watts' hymn "I sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise, / That spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies. / I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day; / The moon shines full at his* command, and all the stars obey." (*Of course THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL drops Watts' use of the Bible's all-masculine pronouns for God & is too God-is-love for Watts' God who orders that "tempests blow.") Somebody to sing about: In the Old Testament's 1st chapter (1.16)* & the New Testament's 2nd chapter (2.2)*--& in this Watts' hymn--that somebody is God. In Darwin-&-humanism's origins-account, nobody to sing about (though in the 1st ed. of Darwin's classic, at the very end, a faded [deistic] deity is briefly sung about)....*Specifically in Gn. & Mt. (as well as in many Psalms), stars are God-made/ God-obedient (a theological doctrine ruling out ancient/modern astrology).

Refer again, please, to this Thinksheet's title. What the public schools teach, viz. Darwin, makes nonsense of Watts' hymn (& of Judaism's & Christianity's & Islam's foundational doctrine of creation). For 70 years now I've been sad & angry about our society's double-mindedness on God/Darwin. "How low will you limp between two opinions?" (1K.18.21) "Purify your hearts, you double-minded!" (Jas.4.8) The "double-minded" are "unstable in every way" (Jas.1.8): the origins-instability in our society exists in our hearts, in our schools, in our churches, in our homes, & in the verbal fights between the two fundamentalisms (on the right, the anti-intellectuals; on the left, the anti-religionists). Mercy, Lord!

9 But never lose heart! Watts will win over Darwin, & the old anti-religious humanism is losing ground. Only a few years after Jean's book (§7, above), Robert Theobald came to my office to promote his post-scientism vision, which soon (1976) appeared as BEYOND DESPAIR: Directions for America's Third Century (New Republic Book Co.). It's no longer, said he, the age of science (as Jean thought) but the age of communication, in which "the competitive model" (p20) is an impediment to "developing our lives in...valuable ways." Pp21-22: "Religions have taught that human beings should be honest, responsible, humble, and loving with each other, and in many parts of the country this is still the dominant value....Basic religious values are precisely what is needed for any society to function successfully. It is impossible, we have come to learn, for dishonest, irresponsible, proud, and hating individuals to make intelligent decisions for themselves and others."

Sin has all the advantages over righteousness except that, "at the end of the day," it won't work. And humanism only thought it was a cure for sin (& religion!).