

This Thinksheet's occasion: Just read an article, "On Defining Spirit," that makes it all the way to the final period without ever mentioning God (even as "the Spirit," or "Spirit") or even "the spirit." Dodging all our traditional Western words for the Source of "the spiritual" in human life, the author carries "the spiritual" ball for a secularistic, so-called ecumenical, touchdown. Is pluralism's demand for a neutral lexicon neutering spiritual, as well as religious, experience? I'm worried not for God but for us, for what's becoming of "the American civilization." In particular, I'm concerned, with Good-wife Loree, a Hospice chaplain/pastoral counselor, about Hospice's spiritual-religious language problem. And about the infiltration, into America's medical-care nonsystem, of New Age cultish jargon as a pseudoreligious substitute for the West's biblical words (on which see "Nursing's New Age" & "New Age Medicine" in 14:3/89 SPIRITUAL COUNTERFEITS PROJECT NEWSLETTER).

1. Why the "v." in the title? Isn't what's after it a creature--human "spirituality"--of Who's before it? Of course. But in the context I'm dealing with, "the Spirit" is an **enemy** by omission; &, in biblical religion, "the Spirit" is **enemy** #1 of the omitters, "those who forget God." I would prefer the unembattled title, "The Spirit & 'the spiritual'" if I weren't talking about the battle....Important aside: The media play against "the Spirit" on an unlevel battlefield, tipped in their favor. Roger Rosenblatt's 24 Nov 89 MacNeil-Lehrer essay was nothing but an attack on the biblical God. He could get away with that: he couldn't get away with an essay that was nothing but a defense of the biblical God.

2. The Enlightenment collapse of God into humanity (1) eliminated the denotation of "God," viz his being, & transposed to "man" the word's connotation, viz sacrality: "the holiness of God" became "the sacredness of 'man'" & "the infinite value of the individual"; & thus (2) absorbed "the [divine] Spirit" into "the [human] spirit," the numinous into "the spiritual," viz human experiencing of the mystical-personal-&-transpersonal dimension or aspect of monistic (no Creator/creature) reality. I need hardly note that this quasireligious, poetic-romantic-mystical thinking is wide open to Eastern mysticism, especially in its New Age (westernized) dress. (A ludicrous instance: The East's reincarnation is something to avoid, New Age's reincarnation is something to achieve! My guess is that 25% of Americans now believe in New Age reincarnation.)

3. My baseball-diamond diagram puts "the spiritual" at 2nd base, "the intellectual" (analytic power) on 3rd (as mainly left-brain), "the psychic" (imaginative-intuitive-dream power) on 1st (as mainly right-brain), & "the physical" at home plate. Of course the four human dimensions form one vital reality, but there's reality also in the fact that the four powers are so obviously discrete from one another in both thought & experience: by via negativa, asking what each is not, each is not any of the others. And none of them is essentially moral (concerned about right/wrong), ethical (concerned about good/bad, or good/evil, or in/appropriate), or religious (concerned with the praxis, the expression in liturgy & life, of the central way one sees, understands, reality). On this game field, "the spiritual" is the decisional, the location of "values" in action, the place where we decide, again & again throughout life, whether to open up or close down on reality, on God & the creature each of us is & our fellow-creatures. The spiritual is not in itself God or the numinous or the locus of ultimate value & meaning. It is part of the flatland, the flat field of human existence. But because it is where we make life/death, godly/godless choices, we experience the spiritual as close to God (an illusion, for it's no closer than are the other three dimensions) & as close to religion (the reality, for religion is the human spirit's bridge to the divine Spirit). All this is commonplace to those who have what Germans call *Bibelgefühl*, the feel for the Bible's message.

4. The spiritual can be attended to, ignored, or denied. In the latter two cases, pertinent **pathologies** appear (parallel with the pathologies appearing when body, mind, or psyche are ignored or denied). Here lies the duty & expertise of the spiritual counselor....**God** is on a playing field above; & thus my **cube** (#896).