

THE THING YOU WALK AROUND IN:  
YOUR BOD & THE THIRD-WORLD DEBT CRISIS

Elliott #2142

FACT: Everybody walks around in a thing. A local, depletional, vulnerable, mortal, unidirectional, relational thing. When my thing (here, my physical body) serves "me" (my consciousness/felt needs-wants/purposes) tolerably well, I scarcely notice it unless (1) I give it a special treat, like a superdinner, or (2) I make an unusual demand on it, like supertravel (eg, 15 hours at the wheel of our Skylark four days ago, 5Mar87, driving home to Cape Cod from the Great Southland, Loree at the wheel the other two hours--a driving binge such as I'd not been on since young). So lately I've been a bit more bod-conscious, so may as well make something of it Thinksheetwise, connecting first with the Third-World debt crisis:

1. Which is pinching the bods, and so also the souls, of 1/3rd of humanity--including, by repercussions, many Americans. PARADOX: Physical human needs are now (1) easier to meet, technologically, than ever before, and (2) geocopolitically harder to meet than ever before. We are a social species, so direct aid is a "natural" biospiritual response to seen need; but we are also the intellectual species and have used our minds in ways that have proved both good & bad news to ourselves and to our fellow-creatures.

2. Any analysis of a social situation is an announcement of what the analyst (1) intends to do about it, if anything, and (2) an invitation to support from others for the particular analysis. What's the root of the Third-World debt crisis? (a) Multinational corporations. (b) First & Second world ecopolitical manipulations in Third World countries. (c) Ignorant "foreign aid," whether or not seen as having a high goodwill component. (d) Venal Third World governments, siphoning off foreign aid for their power & glory instead of for their peoples' good. (e) Ecopolitically dysfunctional ideological commitments-&-allergies. (f) All of the above, and more? (g) None of the above; instead, some supernatural or philosophical explanation (eg, ecological: a mysterious revolt of the rest of the biosphere against our species, which is exponential bad news for the rest of the biosphere)....TRUTH demands that we see the complexity, but ACTION requires a plausible target to attack (negatively) & a persuadable goal to attack (positively)....WARNING: Goodwill persons-institutions, in choosing "+" targets, should guard against the self-seduction of simplism in enemy identification, ie in choosing "-" targets. Most of what I read & hear that tries to motivate toward meeting Third World needs (including poverty in America) fails the tests of intelligence and/or honesty. Good will is not enough, though it was what a Fr. revolutionary, executed in 1797, pleaded: "The ends justified the means."....PREDICTION: Garbage in, garbage out: Goodwill actions (missions, "Live Aid," et al) skewed in their critical-analytical bases will, as in the past, have baneful, or at least ambiguous, results. We Americans are esp. open to calls to go into unmindful-mindless action, and the penalty for not going along to get along is to be (to use the latest Am.Eng. vb. for it) "sidelined," which to most is such a nightmare as to squelch even the thought of critical confrontation....HERMENEUTICAL PROBLEM: The Gospels, with their shocking appeals for hands-on attention to immediate human need, are abused as supports for mindless dogoodism (the left hand & right hand doing their thing without consulting the mind, whose brain connects L/R hands). Jesus was (1) restoring the basic biospiritual appeal, prophetically neglecting the ecosociopolitical overlays (which Christian intelligence requires, in his name, that we not neglect),

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\* In all ecopolitical systems, "capital" is as blood flowing in the "bodies" of these skins--as constant a need, in the trans-individual bodies, as blood is in your bod; and therefore as constant a call to "stewardship," the dutiful-responsible-accountable use of capital.

and (2) appealing for openness (glasnost!) to the inbreaking Kingdom-Reign of God, whose arrangements will be so radically different from this present world's as to challenge & relativize how the disciple relates to the latter....IRONY: While scribists ("fundamentalists") literalize the individual-soul aspects of the gospel, actionists (including SOJOURNERS, which is among the best of them) literalize the social aspects of the gospel, esp. what they identify as the social sayings of Jesus. I anticipate that we'll soon be seeing expositions of these two false hermeneutical projects brought face to face, so that the bad faith & uncritical consciousness of each may illumine the other....CULTURAL TABOO: Actionism is so inbred in Americans as to exclude the notion that, in private & public (including domestic/foreign affairs), sometimes doing nothing but praying is better than doing something with or without praying. The doctrine of do-something is sentimental, so Carter's 444 hostage days & Reagan's Iran/Contra affair were not surprising.

3. Correlate, with Christian social consciousness-conscience, the adjectives underlined in this Thinksheet's intro. (No, I won't do it for you!) Then correlate the adjectives with what you consider to be human needs (a category now getting development in the minds of all sorts of humanists). GREEK NOTE: The root "de-" combines these two, conscience-duty & need, two dimensions of (the root's meaning) "binding." Bodies are "bound" (and bound-ed) by their needs, & consciences are "bound" by the sense of duty.

4. Biblical soulbody-bodysoul unity resists both materialism (the teaching that soul-mind-spirit is epiphenomenal to brain-body) & the various East/West forms of spiritualism (the teaching that the body is only-merely the temporary vehicle of the soul). Note the straightline relation, here, of metaphysics and how human beings are treated (individual, social, ecopolitical ethics, policies, programs). Christian mission & evangelism is gradually closing its historic gap between individualistic soul-savers & socialistic society-changers (society being the "body" in which bodies, therefore souls, are oppressed/liberated). Instead of leaning ideologically toward visible or invisible, we should be free to focus on the "deontological" (in both senses: the needs & our duties vis-a-vis the needs). In a Third World country, a Hindu evangelist tried to get me to focus on the driver (soul) instead of the car (body)--holding up a drawing of an automobile. He'd have been right had he claimed that I come from a culture that focuses on the car instead of the driver: Western commercialism. But in biblical perspective, both are wrong--as I witnessed to him, in Jesus' name.

5. SKINS is a useful category here. Think of them as concentric circles, beginning with your dermis; clothing; housing; "family" (support system of intimate human relations); "nation" (as protective people/state); the global prohuman human network; the biosphere; the geosphere; the heliosphere; the angels; God (the last two being nice Thomistic touches signaling profound truths). All these skins correlate with needs & duties. Christian thinkers believe we have something to contribute to the public mind, from our distinctive perspective, in discussions-decisions on needs & duties relative to all these skins. Something substantial, not sentimental or only subjective.

6. Now notice the adjectives in the intro. Your bod is local even when (as a car!) in locomotion; it's depletional (like a car, needing fueling & servicing); it's vulnerable, 'nuff said--and mortal, the ultimate vulnerability; it's unidirectional, as are your eyes; and it's relational, as is your soul.