

*The other major feeling-component in guilt is distance, separation-alienation-loneliness.
 The Heb. for "repentance" is in this spatial metaphor: return to relationship. So, "the Prodigal Son."
 Notice the order: "Nature and Nature's God."

As is true of some of the others, this biblical-paradigms thinksheet, instead of furnishing material easily available in your Bible dictionary, provides for the biblical view the wider context of alternative views contemporary with, and subsequent to, biblical times. Observe that the biblical view on anything never stands, cannot stand, by itself: it's always in dialectical relationship with competing views whether or not the competition is active-- i.e., whether or not actual confrontation is in process. Further observe that any view real enough to have significant life-support does not die, but continues and indeed spreads as it flows from its source into the sea of global human consciousness--any view, i.e., of a basic human experience-feeling.

1. Always-everywhere, we humans have experienced-felt a discomfort over something wrong that without me wouldn't be wrong, someone betrayed who without me wouldn't have been betrayed, something out of place that without me would be in place. In our time, a master novelist in the exploration of guilt is Alan Paton, who said this to his fellow S.African whites [OpEd 24June76]: "Unless we can understand our guilt, we shall never understand anything at all."....The polar term, "atonement," describes all efforts to get free of this discomfort--e.g., the placation-purification polar to petition, in all sacrificial systems (of which, in psychopathology, compulsive hand-washing is an instance)....Let's call it "religious guilt" when our efforts to overcome its inward effects [by repentance, attitudinal-behavioral change] and, insofar as we may, the outer consequences of the sin for which we feel guilty [by restoration or reparation] are directed primarily to Life itself, Reality itself, or--biblically--the God of truth-justice-love. And let's distinguish it sharply from "neurotic guilt," which is a life-discomfiting hubris of guilt-discomfort --in traditional psychoanalysis, hypertropied to include all guilt (religiously, as guilt before God is neurotic if God does not exist).

2. Biblically, the essence of guilt-before-God, i.e. in God's presence, is precisely the failure to be "before God," i.e. to stand steadily in his presence [and not run hide AdamEve-like into the bushes] and form sentences [make decisions] with God as subject. Second-c. Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar was guilty when, having said to a man "You are the ugliest man I've ever seen!" the man replied "Tell that to my Maker!" The essence of Israelite prophetism is the tension between "the God of Israel" [the people becoming ec-centric, centering in their corporate self] and "the God of Israel." Christianity, of the Hellenistic mentality, applied this view to the individual: my destiny is self-made. Guilt, therefore, functions as early-warning signal to my soul just as pain does to my body: guilt is the soul's pain [though pain is not the body's guilt].

3. How radical this biblical view is can be seen by comparing it with its pro-tean alternative, viz. the monistic belief that the soul-d~~is~~comfort from having distorted objective reality [not, note, from neurotic illusion] is an offense not against a god but against the universal power-order that calls to account the cosmic ["nature" or "world"] and the metacosmic ["gods" and "people(s)"].... The GREEKS called this ultimate reality or principle dike (basis of NT "righteousness") or logos (which Jn.1 captures for Jesus)--so the Gk. sense of "the wrong," as in Anaximander: "All beings must atone and do justice [dike] to one another for the wrong they have done." In India, rita [Eng., "right"]; in China, tao; in Iran, urta(asha). This identity of the cosmic and moral order is, in my opinion, supremely expressed in the Stoics (and captured for Jesus, by Paul). But the Sophists wrecked it: "Man," said Protagoras, "is the measure of all things." Plato countered: "God [the Ideas, supremely the Good] is the measure of all things." America's Founding Fathers^o were Platonic, but the relativization of values and alienation of man-from-world continued--and is now under attack by the Human Potential Movement [e.g., Maslow] and Socialism [especially Marx]; in philosophy, Whitehead and Tillich; in psychotherapy, Jung [who thus chooses the alternative to the biblical vision].