

The control metaphor of this thinksheet is the act of screening out (e.g., dirt) from what you want in (e.g., carrots): plain fact is we want to eat the carrots, not the dirt; indeed, we want not to eat the dirt. Screening is an "interested" process....This thinksheet continues an unending series on attention, which is for me at age 65 (1983) the primary category of wisdom-exploration.... A woman poet bemoans that whereas formerly she was good enough to eat, she's now not even good enough to look at (e.g., by the boy who puts her groceries in her car): how frail is the "natural" male attention to the female! So this thinksheet is about homo screenens, which is bastard Latin for "man the screener," whose seeing is "interested," i.e., motivated by "What's in it for me?" No, I'm not complaining: that's reality, the way it is. Ministry is not rejecting the question, but investing the answer with further reaches of reality....A poem of mine focuses the concern of this thinksheet:

SCREENING GOD IN/OUT

We climb the mountainside of Screened In
and pause--

somewhat content, somewhat disturbed.

And then

start down the mountainside of Screened Out

at whose foot

God awaits us with open arms...

God,

who has been screened out,

whom we are free

to screen in.

ASCETIC IMPLICATE:
Screening anything IN
involves screening OUT
something else. The Len-
ten question "What are
you going to give up?"
is not just for Lent.

COMMENTARY:

1. Bonhoeffer connoisseurs may object that my poem is of "the God of the gaps," the God whom we cry to in our weakness. I reply (1) that D.B. was writing from prison, a situation of weakness; and (2) that Hitler killed him when he was at an earlier life-stage than I now am.

2. So was history at an earlier stage. When in the late 1960s I was briefed directly and by in-house papers for heuristic projects within the H.I. (Hudson Institute) paradigm, the propaedeutic included scenario projections on "search for meaning and purpose." (All the jargon in the previous sentence is H.I.) Though God had been being screened out in the West by "an 8 or 9 cs. secular trend," Herman Kahn believed we were on the threshold of a burst of heuristic spirituality, a revived/new screening in of the numinous (15 items, including a built-in backlash of neo-cynicism, neo-stoicism, neo-epicureanism/self-actualization, politicized fundamentalisms, and "semi-permanent adolescence"). Let's call this phenomenon, now full upon us, "the god of the gap," who goes by many names: Transformation, Nuclear Umbrella, the God of the Bible, Allah, Self-Esteem, Fulfillment, Peace, Justice, Love. Judaism, Christianity, Islam--the three religions of "the West" (ironically, all three originating in the Mid-East)--are all undergoing (a) a screening out of atheistic secularism (humanist as well as communist) and (b) a screening in of communitarianism (which, on the politico-cultural side, I call retribalization). At a Xmas party yesterday, a state therapist in alcoholism said "They're pro-spiritual but antireligious: "Get A.A., not religion."