

FALLEN SPARROW AND LAST JUDGMENT:

FOCAL ANGLE AS FACTOR IN POLITICS AND RELIGION ----- ELLIOTT #1808

This thinksheet looks at power and at religious consciousness through the optical analogy. (So pervasive, in language as in life, is the sense of sight that even that first sentence uses it, a metaphor so smooth-worn as to pass unnoticed: to "look at...through.")...My life-experience of sight will illumine this meditation. Here, I both am and am not an "equal opportunity" case. I was born physically unequal: my eyes never developed "normal" binocular vision, and autonomic convergent strabismus makes me daily more conscious of seeing, and the miracle it is, than are those with "normal" binocularity. (Psychologically the same as an old man, born without legs, once said to me "Willis, you can't imagine how awesome a miracle it is for me to see a great runner." Said I "And it is awesome for me to see that you see without glasses.") Intensifying this fact was my age-14 serious eye operation: what a miracle the world of color and form when the bandages came off, especially since I'd had to sign a form that I'd not sue if it turned out I saw nothing (because of eyeballs having, literally, flipped)! But, sightwise, I was more-than-"equal" in that (1) I could have the best eye-care available at that time, (2) God gave me an above-avg. power to connect outer and inner eyes, (3) my family's culture included professional and hobbyist achievement in optical technology (esp. eyeglasses and camera--e.g., my father in his mid-teens getting articles on photochemistry published; his father and brother professionals in eye-optics, as is his brother's only son). A note on the complexity of "equal opportunity": Given my pains and powers, without the above advantages I would have been discriminated against--and the additional advantage that, financially, I could have the tools (light-lab at home during schoolyears, cameras, other equipment) I needed to develop my photo-fascination (my passion for light/sight/sight-instruments). (Some results: age 15, as president of the highschool science club, a 2 3/4 - hour lecture on astronomical spectroscopy; various unpatented inventions and devices, including at age 19 the internal synchronization of the Graflex; lifelong interest in picturetaking, "don't leave home without one"--always a camera with me.) At its deepest, an "equal opportunity" society is one in which each person is fully free to develop her/his gifts by nature/family/grace (in contrast to an "egalitarian" society, which discriminates against "the gifted" in favor of social leveling)--more on this is #1809. My occupation requires a better ear than eye (biblical religion being ear-oriented and eye-suspicious)--and while I have a good ear (languages, listening skills), I have superb eyes (with the defect noted above): yesterday (27Feb84) I told a cabinet-installer in Dorothy Payne's new house that a cabinet was 1/8th-inch off true, and it was (and shopping quickly exhausts me because of my supersensitivity to forms and colors). Enough about me to explain this thinksheet's "focal angle" and focal-angle analogy. But don't worry that the below may be too technical for you: there's nothing here that isn't known to everybody with a moderate interest in photography.

1. Jesus uses the focal extremes from narrow (e.g., the fallen sparrow and every hair of your head) to wide (e.g., the Last Judgment). His way of seeing nailed him, literally, as a **power-disturber** because, instead of being abstract-unfocused (as a philosopher, moralist, or legalist) or egomyopic (interested only in what advantaged him, like all those whom he attacked), he pointed precisely to **this** poor one (instead of prating about "poverty") and that final assize from which **none** could find escape. In contrast, the religious and political **power-oriented** persons he confronted, to his own undoing, were midrange-focal: they avoided seeing Lazarus sick and begging at their gate (L.16.19-31) and avoided thinking about "that Day" that will, else you repent, "suddenly catch you like a trap" (L.'s version of the Little Apocalypse, chap.21; vv.34f TEV).

2. As in the history of science the irrigation pump was for Harvey mirrored as heart-powered circulation of the blood, and in our time the electronic computer mirrors the workings of brain/mind, so Archimedes' discovery of focal power (the solar burning of enemy ships in the

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*#1804, "Demographic Contexting of 'Foreign Policy,'" is an LL (long-lens) example of my thinking, which differs decidedly from that of power persons in both politics and religion: I'm "oddball" to both.

port of Athens) and Leeuwenhoek's invention of the focusing microscope and Galileo's invention (with materials and methods from Leeuwenhoek) of the focusing telescope--so all these mirror the human mind's "seeing," its powers of variable lateral-and-distance attending. (Here note (1) the parallel development of epistemology in science-enthusiastic Europe, and (2) the subsequent development of the psychology and pathology of perception, and (3) my definition of a religion as "a way of seeing and living in the world," a philosophy being only the former.)Irresistible digression: As Jesus was both very-near- and very-far-seeing, so, respectively, Leeuwenhoek and Galileo turned microscope as near-seer and telescope as far-seer from rigid (unfocusing) toys into scientific (focusing) tools. Further, L. was the first scientific lens-grinder; and for this + the focusing factor is worthy of his accolade as "father of microscopy." Still further, because of his scientific handling of microscope-procured data, he's the "father of biological science" (disproving, by the by, the spontaneous generation of life, a nutty notion two centuries later exhumed and revived by Darwin). What a 17th-c. twosome they were (though L. was only 10 when G. died, making the dependence of G. on L. scifi in the "history" of science as now appearing in television series)! G. thirsting for knowledge of the **macroworld**, L. on the trail of minutiae, thirsting for knowledge of the **microworld**. (Note on my lifelong fascination with lens-making: At 15 I ground a 10-inch lens of 38-foot focal length, as large a lens as most astronomical observatories of the time had.)

3. In photo-optics, the latest development is the automatic-focus zoom lens, which to me still feels uncanny in so closely approximating the functioning of the human eye (technology mimicking nature). Unless you've got hardening of the eyeballs from aging, these two "imperfect" spheres take infinite-range shapes precisely appropriate to whatever you're focusing on at whatever distance--and without your ever thinking about it! (till you have to wear unifocals, bifocals, or trifocals; me, I took to trifocals at age 14). Wonderful invention, but I don't like it: it takes all the fun of fiddling with focusing away; and, combined as it almost always is with automatic light-control (by electronic sensor), it freezes field-depth (the in-focus distance between the two points at which what the camera sees is out of focus).so kills all the fun of fiddling with field-depth. All in all a miserable contrivance, besides being outrageously expensive. Besides, for my various cameras I enjoy carrying **sets of lenses**....so forget zooms for the rest of this thinksheet.

4. Biblically, **God** both **sees** and hears us, but we only hear God (yet see God's "mighty works" in nature and history). God's eye is in the apse of many a church of the Christian East, and on the prow of many a Portuguese fishingboat (God being able to see deep and wide in the water, and spot any schools of fish). And God, as Lord of time, time-stops, time-collapses, and time-preserves (quasidivine powers the camera shares--which is part of the spirituality of photography). (Which brings to mind Susan Sontag's PHOTOGRAPHY AS METAPHOR).

5. Power-oriented persons are self-myopic, "seeing-understanding" only so far as is required to position them for power-action. Beyond this short-sighted range of interest lie (1) all that is necessary for deeper and wider contexting, and (2) all farsighted persons, whom the power-oriented see as ludicrous or dangerous dreamers and, either way, nuisances (e.g., the Bible's standoff between kings/priests and prophets).*

6. Because of my type of mind, I seldom use a "normal" lens (meaning one whose focal length = the diameter of the lens' field). I like WA (wide-angle) when traveling and LL (long-lens) at home: "the big picture" abroad, "detail" at home. Power, which is "normal," is not for me.