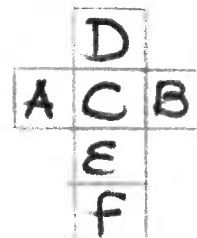


In the dirty tricks division of human deception, language department, is calling death insurance--insurance in the event of death--life insurance, which should mean the insuring of life, i.e. giving surety--security to life. The following ways of doing this are all vis-a-vis death, which as the diametrical of life is what life insurance seeks to insure against. This thinksheet is a contribution to the current American fascination with death (as revealed, e.g., in the Betty Kuebler-Ross fad and mordant books like THE AMERICAN WAY OF DYING and THE LOVED ONE and the particular pitch of fund appeals of institutions dedicated to attack on fatal diseases). Our culture's present individualizing fears have opened up the chthonic and afterlife interests that are never far below the surface of the human psyche, with the result that these aspects of traditional religions, especially nonWestern, are in revival. Add to this the collectivizing anxieties vis-a-vis nuclear, biospheric, and political-social-economic-cultural-spiritual death. And add to this the pathology called necrophilism (death-love): what gets our attention gets our love. The demonic (with and without skin) is pro-death and therefore anti-divine, which is pro-life. Counselors are becoming more courageous in confronting counselees with the speculation, "I think you intend to be bad news, and you will not find me a helpful reinforcing ally to that intention." The diagram, a cube when folded into three dimensions, is both a cultural evaluator and a psychoanalytic tool. The discussion follows the numbers in the boxes.



THIS SIDE OF BIODEATH

"A" is GOD vs. the necrophilic-demonic. Be concerned to "do theology," discerning and being with the living God in the living and dead world. See your life as fundamentally life-in-God's-life--and God's life in you ("yet not I, but Christ lives in me"; "Christ in you, the hope of glory")...."B," when the box is folded, interfaces with "A," and the two sandwich the four powers of the person. "B" thus obviously is all that is neither God nor "I": it is SOCIETY in the comprehensive sense of nature-history-society. Insure, care for, the life that is not yours but in which you participate, the life of creation, both as a nurturer of life and as an enemy of the forces, processes, structures that cripple, impoverish, destroy life. (This mode of life insurance is "heavy" with "the kids" and should be with us all--and is with all who take the biblical tradition seriously.)...."C" is BODY. Rejoice in, and pay intelligent attention to, your own soma (physical actuality/potentiality, pro-life metabolism, growth-anabolism) vs. entropic, catabolic sarx ("fleshly" misuse of soma)...."D" is PSYCHE, one's imaginal actual/potential, day-fantasy and night-dream. Keep your imagination alive both by participation in the arts (creative/appreciative) and by cultivating the homo-ludens, playful attitude...."E" is MIND, lineal/lateral thinking. Perpetual, probing idea-curiosity punching brain-buttons, that's the mind's version of immortality...."F" is SPIRIT, the decisional life. Drift and despair is death; decisiveness in attitude/action is "existential" life, life's immortality of initiative.

THAT SIDE OF BIODEATH

....ALTERNATIVE STANCES: (1) Ignore the question of personal survival of death, in favor of the immortality of influence (e.g., Hebrew mitzvot, good deeds of meritorious/vicarious consequences). (2) Defy death and pride ourselves in the noble courage of the defiance (Stoic, Camus). (3) Accept death as natural (Neo-Stoic, Taoist, renegade Christian). (4) Accept death within the present condition of creation, and defy death as "the last enemy" of God's design (Christian, with Jesus' crucifixion/resurrection as dual model). (5) Attack death in hope of medical victory over it (a rising "thing" in the HP movement; Greeky feel: cp. Orphism; Prometheanism, Faustianism).
ALTERNATIVE DESTINY-PICTURES (all biblical, on which see my #33): (1) MATERIALISM. We die like dogs and that's it; nobody survives his/her skin. Says naturalism and some humanisms, forget the post-skin life-insurance schemes; they're worse than a waste of time. Value: good for humility (fellow-creaturehood), tranquility, ecology. (2) UNIVERSALISM. Everybody makes it, as though incarnate god/goddess. Value: victorious benevolence, divine and human. (3) CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY. Only the worthy survive. Value: the ultimate in religious seriousness. (4) ETERNALISM. Go to hell or heaven. Value: the ultimate in ethical seriousness....All four pics are true, useful, and (rationally) mutually exclusive.