

5. The appeal of Maslowism--and of Freudianism before it and of Marxism before and after that--is that it provides, with at least the patina of scientific respectability, an alternative ethic and religion for refugees from theism [in the West] and, to the extent that it's making inroads into Eastern thinking [as I found while teaching at the U. of Hawaii], from polytheism and philosophical alternatives thereto [in the East].

Maslow did a gospel tract on his religion--H&R/70 revision of his MOTIVATION AND PERSONALITY--which well deserves exposition and critique vis-a-vis biblical religion. This thinksheet is chiefly exposition rather than critique, but implies the latter in extenso.

1. Humanistic psychology is [x] "a comprehensive life-philosophy," i.e. a religion though not so called, for "religion" is a pejorative word for him--used to designate what former generations tended to use to provide coherence in the interest of safety [41f--a need now better provided for in Maslowism], and to describe something optional if not useless in the self-actualized [169]. We have here aggressive behavior, a counter-gospel that does not even intend to be fair in its evangelism. As a psycho-version of N.V. Peale-ism, it points to the worst form of the biblical religion's image of man: "the despairing belief that human nature is ultimately and basically depraved and evil," a view--a straw view never held by any significant Jewish or Christian theologian--which he "firmly rejects" as "blind and ignorant" and as "personal projection" [xi]. A friendly enemy to us Christians and Jews he is, but a nasty one we should be wary of. After his second heart attack, he wrote an article rueing his nastiness--like the deathbed scene of Ivan Illych that he used to like to refer to; but most of his disciples would rather forget this.

2. An interrogative reductionism--a neurotic throw-off from the Enlightenment--is at the heart of Maslow's life-project. E.g., consider the pinched, egoic, anthropocentric set of questions on p.279: "the age-old questions 'How can I be a good man?' 'How can I live a good life?' 'How can I be fruitful?' 'Happy?' 'At peace with myself?'" Sociology of knowledge asks immediately, Where did these questions come from? Not from Maslow's Jewish ancestors, whom he's still in the process of rejecting [on which see Cuddihy's THE ORDEAL OF CIVILITY]! One reason his religion has an antibiblical animus is this adolescent shame for rude parents, as in Freud and Perls [who told me "Moses and Jesus are the two worst characters in history"--see Maslow's Index of Names, where you'll find Mowrer (a real sicky!) but not Moses, Jung half a dozen times but never Jesus]. This inauthentic animus appears many times in the book's adverbs--e.g., on the same p., "strictly naturalistic" instead of plain "naturalistic." Further--and this applies to the whole HPM [human potential movement]--he loves the word "potential," a philosophical notion essentially atheist and parallel to the evolutionistic phrase "spontaneous generation." His "the Unnoticed Revolution" rests on unexamined philosophical assumptions, and its philosophical naivete gives the religion a callow, pathetic ecstasy which mature reflection would deprive it of. As humanistic psychology ages, it may--as most religions do--mature philosophically. At its present stage it has characteristics of both cult and virus.

3. His basic insight that health is more than absence of sickness makes a good reverse theodicy [like *How can you believe in God in the light of evil?* reversed to *How can you not believe in God in the light of good?*]. E.g., p.33: "The most important concerns of the greatest and finest people in human history must all be encompassed and explained." Great basis for dialog with biblical religion, and too bad he died before getting to it.

4. As he's trying to derive an ethic and religion from within the skinbag, he doesn't get around to sanctions, i.e. socially offered persuaders, motivators, incentives--"pulls" rather than "pushes." On p.26 he uses both terms for inside the skinbag, the latter for "drives" and the former for "basic needs." His thesis-project [279]: "the organism tells us what it needs...by sickening and withering when deprived of these values," thus "telling us what is good for it." Note the crypto-theism in the talking skinbag.