

A No-Fault Holocaust

In 20 years of college teaching, Prof. Robert Simon has never met a student who denied that the Holocaust happened. What he sees quite often, though, is worse: students who acknowledge the fact of the Holocaust but can't bring themselves to say that killing millions of people is wrong. Simon reports that 10 to 20 percent of his students think this way. Usually they deplore what the Nazis did, but their disapproval is expressed as a matter of taste or personal preference, not moral judgment. "Of course I dislike the Nazis," one student told Simon, "but who is to say they are morally wrong?"

Overdosing on non-judgmentalism is a growing problem in the schools. Two disturbing articles in the Chronicle of Higher Education say that some students are unwilling to oppose large moral horrors, including human sacrifice, ethnic cleansing, and slavery, because they think that no one has the right to criticize the moral views of another group or culture.

One of the articles is by Simon, who teaches philosophy at Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y. The other is by Kay Haugaard, a freelance writer who teaches creative writing at Pasadena City College in California. Haugaard writes that her current students have a lot of trouble expressing any moral reservations or objections about human sacrifice. The subject came up when she taught her class Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*, a short story about a small American farm town where one person is killed each year to make the crops grow. In the tale, a woman is ritually stoned to death by her husband, her 12-year-old daughter, and her 4-year-old son.

Haugaard has been teaching since 1970. Until recently, she says, "Jackson's message about blind conformity always spoke to my students' sense of right and wrong." No longer, apparently. A class discussion of human sacrifice yielded no moral comments, even under Haugaard's persistent questioning. One male said the ritual killing in *The Lottery* "almost seems a need." Asked if she believed in human sacrifice, a woman said, "I really don't know. If it was a religion of long standing. . ." Haugaard writes: "I was stunned. This was the woman who wrote so passionately of saving the whales, of concern for the rain forests, of her rescue and tender care of a stray dog."

The Aztecs did it. Both writers believe multiculturalism has played a role in spreading the vapors of nonjudgmentalism. Haugaard quotes a woman in her class, a "50-something redhead nurse," who says, "I teach a course for our hospital personnel in multicultural understanding, and if it is part of a person's culture, we are taught not to judge. . ." Simon says we should "welcome diversity rather than fear it" but says his students often think they are so locked into their own group perspectives of ethnicity, race, and gender that moral judgment is impossible, even in the face of great evils.

In the new multicultural canon, human sacrifice is hard to condemn, because the Aztecs practiced it. In fact, however, this nonjudgmental stance is not held consistently. Japanese whaling and the genital cutting of girls in Africa are criticized all the time by white multiculturalists. Christina Hoff Sommers, author and professor of philosophy at Clark University in Massachusetts, says that students who can't bring themselves to condemn the Holocaust will often say flatly that treating humans as superior to dogs and rodents is immoral. Moral shrugging may be on the rise, but old-fashioned and rigorous moral criticism is alive and well on certain selected issues: smoking, environmentalism, women's rights, animal rights.

Sommers points beyond multiculturalism to a general problem of so many students coming to college "dogmatically committed to a moral relativism that offers them no grounds to think" about cheating,

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stealing, and other moral issues. Simon calls this "absolutophobia"--the unwillingness to say that some behavior is just plain wrong. Many trends feed this fashionable phobia. Postmodern theory on campuses denies the existence of any objective truth: All we can have are clashing perspectives, not true moral knowledge. The pop-therapeutic culture has pushed nonjudgmentalism very hard. Intellectual laziness and the simple fear of unpleasantness are also factors. By saying that one opinion or moral stance is as good as another, we can draw attention to our own tolerance, avoid antagonizing others, and get on with our careers.

The "values clarification" programs in the schools surely should come in for some lumps, too. Based on the principle that teachers should not indoctrinate other people's children, they leave the creation of values up to each student. Values emerge as personal preferences, equally as unsuited for criticism or argument as personal decisions on pop music or clothes.

But the wheel is turning now, and "values clarification" is giving way to "character education," and the paralyzing fear of indoctrinating children is gradually fading. The search is on for a teachable consensus rooted in simple decency and respect. As a spur to shaping it, we might discuss a culture so morally confused that students are showing up at colleges reluctant to say anything negative about mass slaughter.

Respond to the reading by answer and defending your answers to the following questions:

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1. Is murder wrong? Defend your answer.

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2. Was the holocaust wrong? Defend your answer.

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3. Is ethnic cleansing wrong? Defend your answer.

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4. Is abortion wrong? Defend your answer.

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5. Define Absolutophobia.

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6. Define "Values Clarification"

Manson's Motto

By David Feddes

When musician Brian Warner decided to call himself “Marilyn Manson,” he created his new name by combining the names of suicidal sex symbol Marilyn Monroe and savage serial killer Charles Manson. Marilyn Manson’s music made him a “shock rock” millionaire. He got rich proclaiming himself the “Antichrist Superstar” and peddling slogans like “We hate love; we love hate” and “Kill God, kill your mom and dad, kill yourself.”

Few parents want Marilyn Manson to shape the way their kids think. But, strange as it may sound, many parents pay big bucks to send their children to schools and universities that have more in common with Marilyn Manson than most people realize.

Marilyn Manson says, “I try to show people that everything is a lie—pick the lie you like best, and I hope mine is the best.” His motto is a blunt way of saying what some leading intellectuals and educators have been saying for years: there is no objective truth and no unchanging standard of right and wrong. This denial of truth and morality is infecting our culture, and the consequences are devastating.

Questions:

1. What is the similarity between many leading intellectuals of today, and Marilyn Manson?

2. What is one specific example in our society that promotes the idea that there is no unchanging standard of right and wrong?

Everything is a Lie

Postmodern relativism is all around us. This worldview assumes that there are no facts, only opinions. Beliefs and moral codes cannot be based on anything divine or eternal. All beliefs are merely human inventions aimed at pushing an agenda and controlling others. In the words of Marilyn Manson, “Everything is a lie.”

Charles Darwin theorized that human beings (and the minds and consciences they possess) resulted from a series of accidents. If one believes Darwin’s theory, then moral responsibility is an illusion. As Darwin himself put it, “Wickedness is no more a man’s fault than bodily disease.” Indeed, there’s no good reason to think our minds have any reliable, rational connection with reality.

According to postmodern intellectuals, you should not bother asking whether a statement is true, sincere there is no such thing as truth. If you insist on some standard for truth, then truth should

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be defined as whatever adds to your power and pleasure and whatever you can get away with telling others in your group.

New Age religion often takes this approach. Recently I had a conversation with a woman involved in Wicca, a religion of nature worship that includes fascination with occult powers. This woman likes to put witchcraft in a positive light. She prays to what she calls “the goddess.” But even as she does these things, this Wiccan doesn’t claim her religion is true. “Religion is a choice,” she insists. “There is no such thing as a true religion. We each have our own views and needs as far as religion is concerned.”

It’s pointless, then, to discuss whether Christianity is more accurate than Wicca. Wicca makes this woman feel empowered; that’s all that matters. All religion is myth, and she has picked Wicca as her favorite myth.

Postmodernism has flooded popular culture with this message: there’s no objective standard for truth, so believe what you like; there’s no divine definition of right and wrong, so do what you please. The late John Lennon sang a hymn of this approach, suggesting it as the key to peace and happiness. Lennon didn’t appeal to any facts. Instead, he called us to get rid of our beliefs and to simply “Imagine”: *Imagine there's no heaven. It's easy if you try. No hell below us, above us only sky. Imagine all the people living for today. You may say that I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one.*

Questions:

1. What does the postmodern relative worldview assume?

2. What are people’s beliefs described as and what is the purpose of these beliefs (according to a relativist)?

3. If we believe that humans are accidents (Darwin’s Theory of Evolution – taught in our schools) then what is the conclusion about our moral responsibility toward each other?

4. If a relativist needed to define truth, how would it be defined?

Dream or Nightmare?

Most people would not connect Lennon’s tender dream of peace and harmony with Marilyn Manson’s nightmarish slogans. But whatever their differences, Lennon and Manson have this much in common: rejection of divine truth and moral absolutes, rejection of Jesus, rejection of what the Bible says about heaven and hell—and, as a result, freedom to imagine your own version of the world as you want it to be.

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Lennon tried to imagine heaven on earth without God; Manson shrieks that it would be more fun to create hell on earth. Lennon once claimed to be more popular than Jesus Christ; Manson has declared himself the Antichrist Superstar.

Some middle-aged baby boomers may think John Lennon's dream was wonderful and Marilyn Manson's nightmare is awful. But once you accept Lennon's approach—once you believe in nothing and claim that truth can be whatever you imagine—you have no basis for calling Manson's message evil. If all we're doing is dreaming up our own world as we go along, there is no supreme, objective standard to show that love is better than hate, and there is no God to hold anyone accountable.

When Marilyn Manson does disgusting things and shrieks horrid songs, it's hard to say whether he is serious or just putting on an act to grab money from teenagers fascinated with the occult, with rebellion, and with death. But whether or not Manson is serious, some of his fans have taken him seriously by killing others and killing themselves. The columbine killers, for example, were said to be Manson fans.

Who is to say that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold (Columbine killers of 1999) were wrong if there is no such thing as right and wrong? And what about the man whose birthday they celebrated with their killing spree; Adolph Hitler? Maybe Hitler wasn't a monster after all. Maybe he just saw things from a different perspective and was asserting his will to power. Who is to say Hitler was evil?

Questions:

1. What do Marilyn Manson and John Lennon teach that is very similar?

2. If we believe John Lennon's claim that truth can be whatever you imagine it to be, then why can't we call Manson's message evil?

3.

Hitler's Helpers

"At some future period," predicted Charles Darwin, "the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races."

In a Darwinist worldview, genocide is not so much a moral monstrosity as it's an inevitable development. If evolution is ultimate reality, and if mind and conscience are evolutionary accidents, then any revulsion toward Hitler and other mass murderers is just an accidental feeling, not a righteous reaction to horrendous evil.

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Indeed, several prominent postmodern thinkers provided intellectual ammunition for the Nazis. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who lived from 1844 to 1900, went further than anyone of his time in using Darwinism to destroy morality. Nietzsche attacked Christianity, dismissed ideas of objective truth, glorified the individual's will to power—and eventually went insane.

A few decades later, Adolph Hitler and his Nazi propagandists were fond of quoting Nietzsche.

Martin Heidegger, an existentialist thinker and perhaps the most influential philosopher of the 20th century, harbored sympathy for the Nazis. He signed his correspondence, "Heil Hitler." When the Nazis cracked down on dissenting views in the university, Heidegger approved. He declared, "The Führer, and he alone, is the sole German reality and law, today and in the future." If there is no reality or law higher than the Führer, then there's no reason Hitler shouldn't be a law unto himself.

Paul de Man was an intellectual who wrote pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic articles during the early 1940's in a Belgian newspaper. De Man called for Jews to be deported and praised French collaboration with Hitler. De Man later became a Yale professor and a promoter of postmodernism.

Nietzsche, Heidegger, and de Man are not obscure names from a dusty book. These men continue to exert enormous influence among prominent intellectuals and among many who produce movies and music. As a new millennium dawns, much of our culture is being shaped by the worldview of people who denied objective truth and served as Hitler's helpers.

Questions:

1. What does the above section say about the types of people who have shaped much of our modern culture?

Fatal Freedom

Nihilism, existentialism, deconstructionism, and postmodernism, are different brand-names of the same product: absolute freedom. Without God, everything is permitted. "Believe what you want, do what you please"—that approach is supposed to set us free, and indeed it does. It sets the society free from the pursuit of justice. It sets the mind free from the pursuit of truth. It sets the conscience free from the pursuit of goodness. It sets the soul free from the pursuit of God.

"Imagine all the people living for today," free to follow their desires. Free to indulge any sexual appetite. Free to enjoy whatever drugs give the most exotic experience. Free to pile up wealth while others starve. Free to destroy humans in the womb, to shoot up the Columbine library, or to run a death camp.

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Postmodernism talks about freedom, but an individual or society with this kind of freedom is like a fish that has finally freed itself of water. All it can do is thrash about and die.

Questions:

1. The above section discusses “absolute freedom”. According to the article, what sorts of things does absolute freedom set us free to do or be?

2. What does absolute freedom eventually result in?

Truth or Consequences

Whether you’re listening to a professor making perversion sound scholarly, to Marilyn Manson howling hellishly, to John Lennon singing sweetly, or to your own inner voice telling you to do your own thing, the message that there is no such thing as absolute truth or divinely given moral standards is really the hissing of that old serpent Satan. Satan says that if you ignore God and make up your own standards of right and wrong, you will be like a god yourself. But God says that if you do that, you will end up like Satan, in hell.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God addresses people who are tempted to invent their own ultimate reality. To those who think there’s no such thing as truth, God says, “I, the Lord, speak the truth.” To those who think there’s no standard for right and wrong, God says, “I declare what is right.” To those who imagine they can create their own ideal world, God says, “Turn to me and be saved... for I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 45:19,22).

God’s truth is written in the Bible and embodied in Jesus Christ. Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8: 31-32). If you embrace the truth, you will have genuine freedom and eternal life. If you ignore the truth, the consequences are deadly.

Question:

1. Write out three verses that speak about truth in the bible.

2. Who ultimately claims to be *the truth*? _____

3. What does the bible claim will result if you seek and know the truth?

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Name: _____

Instructions: Using the readings *Manson's Motto*, *No Fault Holocaust* and *Postmodernism*, define each of the following terms. Next, explain how each word relates to the concept of Relativism/Post-Modernism:

1. Deconstructionism:

Definition –

What does Relativism say about this?

2. Feelings:

Definition –

What does Relativism say about this?

3. Truth:

Definition –

What does Relativism say about this?

4. Objective Truth:

Definition –

What does Relativism say about this?

5. Marilyn Manson:

Definition –

How it relates to Post-Modernism –

6. Charles Darwin and Darwinism:

Definition –

How it relates to Post-Modernism –

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7. Nazi Supporters:

Definition –

How it relates to Post-Modernism –

8. Absolutophobia:

Definition –

What does Relativism say about this?

9. Values Clarification:

Definition –

What does Relativism say about this?