

Ordinary Time — Proper 12 — July 25, 2021 — Year B
II Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 145; Ephesians 3:20 to 4:6; John 6:1-12

Origin, Meaning, Morality, Destiny = Identity.

Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: Awareness, Understanding, Taking Action.

Fundamental Stance and Fundamental Option.

The Three Powers of the Soul: Memory, Understanding, Will.

1. Understanding is the most noble of the three and is the glue that holds them together.
2. Illustration: three legged stool.
3. Memory Holds — Understanding Sees — Will Chooses.
4. Understanding + Value + Keeping + Multiplying + Authority Over + Stewarding.
5. Understanding: knowledge/information + experience + testing.

Parable of the Sower and the Seed **Matthew 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8**

The Parable of the Sower and the Seed Explained **Matthew 13:18-23; Mark 4:13-20; Luke 8:11-15**

Mark 4:13

“Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?”

Matthew 13:18-19

“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: when anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received the word by the wayside.”

Matthew 13:23

“But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Introduction: Is philosophy important?

Is philosophy an appropriate thing to be talking about on a Sunday morning at Church?

What does the word “philosophy” mean?

1. The word philosophy just means “love of wisdom.”

What is philosophy?

1. Philosophy is, at its best, a passionate commitment to pursuing and embracing the most fundamental truths and insightful perspectives about life.
2. Philosophy, then, begins in/with wonder. Philosophy is human thought become self-conscious.
3. Thus, if we allow ourselves to really wonder about our lives, about those things that we take for granted, and about those big questions that we usually manage to ignore during the busyness of our daily schedules, we are beginning to act as good philosophers.
4. But we can’t really live philosophically without acting in accordance with our insights.
5. To be philosophers in the deepest sense, we must put our wisdom to work.

Do philosophical ideas have consequences?

Are there any philosophical ideas of the past that are having consequences for today?

Is it important to step back from all the information coming at us?

Fundamental Stance and Fundamental Option — **I Kings 18:21**

The Call to Holiness — **Matthew 5:48; Ephesians 1:4**

The Gospel — **Mark 1:14-15; 3:13-15; 6:12-13**

Call to reconciliation — **II Corinthians 5:17-21**

Hermeneutics — **II Timothy 2:15**

Apologetics — **I Peter 3:15**

Verses

Hermeneutic of Suspicion + Being on the right side of History + Social Justice + Consequences of Ideas

Karl Marx, (1818-1883) a brief historical sketch:

1. He is well known on several different fronts.
2. With the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the downfall of communism in USSR, many may think that Marx and Marxism died out “on the ash heap of history.” It most certainly has not.
3. Marxism has been taught extensively for the past 50 years in many academic institutions.
4. He is one of the most written about persons in western culture.
5. Marx and Marxism has been going through a revival, especially among the young.
6. Marxism explains a lot of what is going on today. It is having a huge impact politically.
7. He comes from a long lineage of Rabbis from both sides of his family.
8. As a young man he studied Hegelian philosophy [e.g. thesis, antithesis, synthesis] and from there drifted into radical politics. He spent time in Germany, France and Belgium and was summarily expelled from all three because of his teachings. He eventually landed in more tolerant England.
9. He lived the rest of his life in London where he wrote his most famous work, *Das Capital*.
10. There are a lot of themes in Marxism. We can only touch on a couple of them. It is vitally important not to underestimate his influence, even if you know nothing about him.

Karl Marx, atheism and economic oppression:

1. Marx was a devotee of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872).
2. Feuerbach was an anthropologist. His most famous work was *The Essence of Christianity*. This work is a scathing critique of Christianity.
3. He advocated atheism and is considered the father of modern atheism. Most atheists of today echo him. (As an aside, some see Feuerbach as the bridge between Hegel and Marx.)
4. Summarizing Feuerbach’s thought:
 - a. “Human beings have a tendency to project outside of themselves an idealized self-understanding of themselves.”
 - b. “I’m intelligent. But I’d like to be all intelligent.”
“I’m loving but I’d like to be all loving.”
“I’ve got some power, but I would like to have all power”
 - c. This is an idealized self-understanding of being all knowing, all loving, and all powerful.
 - d. We project this outward and we call this projection of ourselves God. We call “it” *God*.
 - e. Then we spend our pathetic religious lives petitioning this fictional character to give back to us what we gave to *Him*.
 - f. Feuerbach argued that *God* was a human invention, a spiritual device to help us deal with our fears and aspirations. This was bad news, because human beings projected all their good qualities onto *God* and saw *Him* as compassionate, wise, loving, and so on, while seeing themselves as greatly inferior. *You can see the slave motif beginning to emerge.*
 - g. Feuerbach sees religion as a type of alienation: it is a psychological problem.
 - h. Christianity is a psychological problem. *Dawkins calls it a virus. We need to kill viruses.*
5. Marx takes this in, and remains a devotee of Ludwig Feuerbach throughout his entire life.
 - a. Marx advocates that everyone must be baptized in the Feuerbach, which in German means, “the brook of fire.”
 - b. Everyone must go through Feuerbach’s baptism of atheism. *Everyone!*
6. Marx asks a further question: why are human beings around the world so engaged in this alienating act of religion? His answer: because they are so unhappy and oppressed economically.
7. So to cope with this alienation, (birthed from economic oppression), people invent a fantasy world to live in. This is the plight of most human beings. (*Freud will echo this also.*)
8. Hence, Marx’s famous line: “religion is the opiate of the people.”
Historically this came from Marx seeing the opium dens in London, who were being frequented by many people who were feeling alienated and oppressed: they would get high in order to live in a drug induced fantasy world and destroy their lives in the process.
 - a. Marx analogously saw religion doing the same thing.
Religion is the opium/opiate that dulls peoples sensitivity to their suffering.

Karl Marx and structures:

1. Every culture from ancient times to today has a substructure which is always economic.
2. Whether it is the slave economy of the ancient world, the feudal economy of the middle ages, the surf based economy of Russia in the eighteenth century or the capitalistic economy of his own time.
3. Economics is at the core, or substructure, of any society.
4. This substructure (which is economics) builds (or throws) up around itself what Marx calls the superstructure. The superstructure is everything else in society.
5. The superstructure has one purpose: to enhance and protect the substructure.
6. That is its purpose. So the superstructure(s) is everything else in society.
7. Religion is part of the superstructure.

Karl Marx's assessment of Politics, the Military, Entertainment, Arts, Religion and History:

1. Marx says that politicians talk mostly about economics. Politicians do this because they want to stay in power. This is their ultimate goal. They will support and protect the substructure because that is their livelihood. (*Is it horribly naive to think their chief concern are their constituents?*)
2. The military is tied to the political interests of protecting the substructure of economics.
 - a. The military helps markets expand in foreign markets and then protects them.
 - b. Wars are fought over and around economic matters. That is the chief motivator.
 - c. For Marx: the substructure was the capitalist economic system.
3. Marx says that Entertainment and Arts are like Religion: they all serves as an opiate in order to distract people from their suffering, alienation, and economic oppression.
 - a. The Arts and Entertainment are supported by the wealthy as a distraction from suffering and a protection for the substructure.
4. Marx says history is also shaped to support the substructure. (*History must be rewritten. Is their any rhetoric or actions involved in the destruction of history occurring today?*)
5. The superstructure is supported by the wealthy and powerful to protect the substructure.

Karl Marx and breaking through the superstructure to get to the substructure:

1. The Marxist intellectual must break through the superstructure to expose the substructure for what it is, and then break its power over everyone.
2. Marx says you cannot revolutionize the substructure until you break through the superstructure:
 - a. The protective shell of the superstructure must be broken, demolished and replaced.
 - a. Marx has been called, "the master of suspicion." (*What do you think that means?*)
3. You accomplish this breaking through the superstructure to get to the substructure by stirring up antagonism between the oppressor and the oppressed. (*Is tied into any of the recent riots?*)
 - a. For Marx, capitalist is the oppressor deriving profit from the oppressed worker.
 - b. The Marxist has to break the superstructure and foment a class struggle that will lead to violent revolution that will destroy and replace the substructure. (*Does it ever end?*)
 - c. Violence for a Marxist is not a regrettable side effect.
 - d. Violence is the point! This is the whole premise of Marxism.
4. What is the ultimate superstructure that must be eliminated in Marxism that will allow for dismantling the economic substructure, by fomenting antagonism, creating class struggle, revolution and the reshaping of history and causing a revolution?
 - a. Religion
 - b. **Christianity**
5. *Do you see some vestiges of this occurring today even if you are not familiar with this material?*
6. *What do you think about Marxism?*
7. *Do ideas have consequences?*
8. Karl Marx and the Wizard of Oz Analogy: Tin Man = Industry that has no heart, Lion = Military that has no courage, Scarecrow = Farmer that has no brains, Wizard (the inept little man behind the curtain exposed by Toto) is the substructure surrounded by all the superstructure.

Friedrich Nietzsche, (1844-1900) a brief historical sketch:

1. His dad was a Lutheran pastor. So he grew up in a Christian environment.
2. He abandoned Christianity at an early age.
3. He was very bright. went to the most prestigious schools and was successful academically.
4. He was a strange fellow with bad health that compromised his academic career.
5. The last ten years of his life were lived in seclusion as he was completely insane.
6. Like Marx there are many ideas, (1000's) but only time to look at a couple of them.
7. He is still very influential today politically and privately. He wrote aphoristically.
8. He studied Philology: the study of words and their usage. This became his preoccupation.
 - a. *Nietzsche had a great influence on Sartre and Foucault.*
 - b. *Nietzsche's protocols and the policing of language are rampant in Sartre and Foucault.*

Friedrich Nietzsche and atheism:

1. He is best known for his death of God material: "God is dead and we killed Him."
This is probably his most famous line. (Marx's was, *religion is the opiate of the people.*)
Because of this, he is very similar, therefore, to Feuerbach and Marx via his atheism.
2. He states that the foundation for truth and meaning that has held sway over people from ancient times through biblical times to the present is now giving way. This is monumental.
 - a. This was happening because of the Enlightenment.
3. What does this mean?
 - a. For most of western thought, theology from the Bible and philosophy from ancient Greece stated that God served as the foundation for objective truth and objective moral value: God is the Logos (Supreme Reason) and, therefore, all good, truth, and value are grounded in Him and find their justification in Him.
 - b. But if God is dead, there is no foundation for objective truth or value.
4. So what are we left with?
 - a. Nietzsche calls it *perspective-ism*. This means that everyone now has their own perspective on things. This leads to a radical relativizing of truth and moral value.
 - b. Truth is now relative: what's true for you is not true for me.
 - c. There is no longer any basis or foundation for objective truth, value or good in itself.
 - d. Thus, the situation is bleak because there is no longer any objective truth or value outside of yourself. Remember God is dead and no one is coming to rescue you.
5. So what are you supposed to do?
 - a. Nietzsche says you must now assert your will to power: become your own superman.
 - b. A clash of powerful wills will ensue because there is no longer any ground for arguing for truth because all objective truth and value are gone: so you assert your will over others.
 - c. Now I know what to do: pursue and assert my power of will over others.
6. *This pursuit of power in both Marx and Nietzsche will be embraced and further nuanced by both Sartre and Foucault.*

Friedrich Nietzsche and Christianity:

1. Nietzsche becomes a harsh critic of the morality coming out of Christianity because it stresses pity, compassion, love, forgiveness, and non-violence. He says that is a slave morality.
2. Those who have been put down and oppressed are now petitioning the powerful people to have pity on them and help them. This is enslavement. (*Recall Feuerbach and the slave motif.*)
3. Furthermore, with God dead (and with him all objective truth or value) there is no way to measure/evaluate/critique which person is more right or justified by their actions, because there is no foundation for doing this, given that all truth is relative. This is why each person must will themselves to power. (*Remember: all that had held sway was giving way.*)
4. *Do you see any syllogisms in Nietzsche?*
5. *Do you see anything giving way today?*
6. *Do you see any perspective-ism today?*
7. *Is philology apropos for today?*

Jean-Paul Sartre, (1905-1980) a brief historical sketch:

1. He is born in Paris and dies there.
2. He attended the Ecole Normale Superieure, for the best and the brightest, *the cream of the crop* of the French intellectual system. He stays in education for a time and then moves on.
3. He is enormously influenced by Nietzsche. Sartre was an atheist. His writing was very abstract.
4. He's probably the most famous philosopher of the 20th Century. *This may be a surprise to many.*
5. He was a paradigmatic figure: play write, novelist, social commentator and philosopher.
6. He was involved in resisting the Nazi's.
7. His greatest work is "*Being and Nothingness*."
8. His book *Existentialism is a Humanism*, explains his existentialism as his central idea.

The classical of view of how Essence precedes Existence which Sartre explains and then denounces.

1. What does this mean that essence precedes existence? Or to ask it another way: what does it mean to be human? Sartre explains the classical view as how one's essence is that which has been given to them and the person must (needs to) conform to this because essence precedes their existence.
 - a. There is a system of ideas, patterns, ideals and forms that govern individuals and society. (*There are other voices that give us patterns, etc., that we conform our lives to as well.*)
 - b. This system is presented by the philosophers and theologians of the state.
 - c. These representatives of the state tell the person who and what they are.
 - d. Sartre says this is the individual bringing their essence in line with their existence. The individual subjects their self and freedom to this system.
2. What is an example of this?
 - a. A child is learning to be a responsible adult. Many people will tell him what this will look like. He learns that he needs to bring his existence in line with his essence.
3. Why would a person do this?
 - a. Because essence precedes existence. These essences are already in place.
 - b. Therefore essence has a superiority over existence.
 - c. So one is to humbly accept the objectivity of these essential principles.
 - d. Sartre explains that this is the classical understanding of how things work.
4. This is the drama of life: to bring my existence (my freedom and individual self) in line with the already essence that others are telling/prescribing/dictating to me. One needs to follow these essential prescribed principles of essence. This occurs both chronologically and ontologically.
5. Sartre will reject all of this.
 - a. It is important to note that Sartre saw Christianity as embracing the classical view of reality: essence precedes existence. Sartre rejects the Christian world view of reality.
6. *For Sartre, Christ is not "the measure of all things," man is.*
7. *What is the drama of life for Christians?*

Jean-Paul Sartre — his view:

1. Sartre's says that existence precedes essence.
2. He compares this change that he is bringing as being akin to a Copernican revolution:
 - a. He proclaims to be turning things upside down.
3. He declares a plague on this system of ideas, patterns, ideals, and forms imposed on people.
4. He declares that existence comes before essence.
5. Sartre states that his individual self and especially his freedom is the determiner of who he will be. This is the basis for his position: that his existence (*that he determines*) precedes any essence.
6. Sartre declares that he will determine the pattern and form of his life.
7. *It is vital to see that Sartre follows Nietzsche in denying objective truth and value.*
8. *It is also important to see the vestiges of Nietzsche's superman:*
 - a. *asserting your will;*
 - b. *a clashing of the wills in order to come to power;*
 - c. *become your own superman and determiner of your essence.*

Jean-Paul Sartre — on Being and Nothingness:

1. Sartre sees being and nothingness as being like a blank canvas. I can do my own painting.
 - a. This for Sartre, is not negative or oppressive. It is an opportunity for creativity.
2. Sartre says that he can now invent his own life:
 - a. "I determine who I am: my sexuality, my gender, my human nature, my morality, my moral system, etc. I use my liberty to assert my existence."
3. Therefore, Sartre asserts, that all social constructs (*the myriad of voices*) are nothing more than the inventions of other people asserting their wills onto you.
4. So what do you do in the face of this: you overturn all of this by employing the heroic self assertive freedom that you have by determining it so by willing it so. Note the power grid.
5. *Like Nietzsche's death of God philosophy that opened up the space so the will to power could assert itself, so now in Sartre's philosophy, he opens up space for the existence of the self to assert its' freedom and to say:*
 - a. "This is who I am!" "Here's who I am!" "Here's what I am about!"
6. Thus on the basis of that freedom in asserting your existence, Sartre states:
 - a. "I determine who I will be!"
 - b. "I determine the form and pattern of my life."
 - c. "You don't tell me how to live.!"
 - d. Thus, no institution, no society, no church tells me how to live.
I will decide how to live.
7. This is what is meant when Sartre states that existence precedes essence.

Jean-Paul Sartre and atheism:

1. *Marx and Nietzsche are atheists but Sartre is aggressively atheist. How come?*
2. Sartre creates a formula that existentialism is a humanism. (The title of one of his books.)
3. This is Sartre's syllogism:
 - a. If God exists then I cannot be free.
 - b. But I am free.
 - c. Therefore, God does not exist.
4. Sartre asserts that God is the ultimate limit and threat to his freedom.
 - a. It is God that proposes to us the essential form of life that we should conform too.
 - b. So as I discover the primacy of my freedom, God therefore does not exist.
 - c. *Does this sound at all like Nietzsche's, God is dead diatribe?*
5. What did this classical view of essence precede existence rest upon? Sartre explains:
 - a. Political structures, family and culture can all be what the classical view rests on.
 - b. Family can be a form of this.
 - c. Culture can be a form of this.
6. What is the primary and ultimate avatar of essence over existence in the classical view?
 - a. Sartre says that it is God. He tells me how to behave and who I am.
 - b. Sartre of course emphatically denies this.
 - c. *Is their ground for critiquing Christianity in Sartre?*
 - d. *Has Christianity and the Church embraced any of Sartre's philosophy?*

Michel Foucault, (1926-1984) a brief historical sketch:

1. Born in Poitiers.
2. Educated at the Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris. Like Sartre, *the cream of the crop*.
3. Taught in Germany, Sweden and Algiers and held chairs at Clermont-Ferrand and Vincennes
4. before being appointed professor of the history of systems of thought at the College of France.
5. His studies on sexuality, madness, and incarceration were very widely read.
6. Died of AIDS in Paris in 1984.
7. Like the other three, he was an atheist.
8. His writing is dense. Like the other three, we will only look at a couple of his ideas.
9. *He sort of sums up the three figures we have already looked at.*
10. *He is not well known but is the most influential for what is happening today.*

Michel Foucault thoughts on the archaeology of knowledge as a process for digging deeper:

1. How his process works: you begin on the surface and dig down in the same location and come to an earlier version of that place your digging at.
2. You keep digging down, going through various layers in the same spot, in the same area and you will begin to discover different incarnations of that same place.
3. *This is a master metaphor for how he sees how things work and what he does.*

Michel Foucault view of sexuality using the archaeology of knowledge:

1. What does our society typically say about sexuality: what behavior is acceptable and what behavior is not?
2. The digging down, like an archaeologist, allows you to find earlier expressions of what you once thought was acceptable and/or unacceptable, what was right and what was wrong.
3. You keep digging down deeper until you reach the ancient times and what you'll find that there is an extraordinary variety.
4. Example would be the social/sexual mores of ancient Rome are different than ours are today.
5. Thus, what we say now that is ordinary and acceptable wasn't true back in ancient times where sexuality was different than ours is today.
6. *The same is done with incarceration: why do we punish certain people for certain crimes; why capital punishment for some things and not others One needs to keep digging in the same place to discover different findings.*

Michel Foucault on Nietzsche and power:

1. Foucault says that there are no clear objective state of affairs.
2. Example: there is no single right way to think about sexuality (*or incarceration*). Why?
 - a. Because throughout history these have been practiced differently.
 - b. *Foucault picks up Nietzsche's relativism and therefore his perspective-ism.*
3. Foucault asks a second question: how do you account for these differences in sexuality?
 - a. The answer: it is a function of power.
 - b. *This is similar to both Marx and Nietzsche.*
 - c. *Is there any outright rejection of Christianity here?*
4. Those who are in power arrange things and organize language with specific modes of discourse in order to keep themselves in power.
 - a. In other words, there is a specific way of talking about things.
 - b. Language is a prime weapon that is to be used to manipulate and intimidate.
5. A particular class of people who are in power will manipulate circumstances through the policing and protocols of language to keep themselves in power.
6. Examples:
 - a. Heterosexuals will demonize homosexuals. Why? To maintain power.
 - b. Males will characterize females as misbegotten incomplete versions of themselves in order to maintain power.
 - c. One race will demonize another race as socially inferior to maintain power.

Michel Foucault on Nietzsche and Marx on the oppressor and oppressed:

1. Foucault then develops the interplay between oppressor and oppressed.
 - a. *This is Marx.*
2. He wants to unmask the oppressor by seeing how language contributes to it.
 - a. *This is Marx.*
3. This will cause a clashing of the wills.
 - a. *This is Nietzsche.*
4. Foucault has an intense preoccupation with policing language.
 - a. He talks about micro aggressions and triggers, sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia that is carried on by language to control others or keep them at a distance.
5. *He combines the antagonistic social theory of Marx with Nietzsche's great stress on power.*
6. Like the other three, Foucault is an atheist:
 - a. If God exists there is an objective ground for truth and value for examining such issues as sexuality, incarceration and madness.
 - b. But, Foucault states God does not exist.
 - c. Therefore those in power decide these issues through language in order to keep themselves in power.
 - d. *Does this sound like a syllogism that is similar to Sartre's.*