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INTRODUCTION

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Notes on the Course

"Human Liberation and Christian Theology"

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taught by
Rubem Alves

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INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian Protestant Rubem Alves came to my attention at the same time that I was becoming weary of reading mainly German theologians and North American theologians effected by these Germans. All their detail, order, aggressiveness--so little play, humor, celebration, looseness. I wanted to read theology which was liberating rather than theology which was limiting.

A young Roman Catholic theologian interested in eschatology was the first to mention to me that Alves' book A Theology of Human Hope was reviewed in the National Catholic Reporter under the title "Listening to the Oppressed". I read that review and another by Harvey Cox in Christian Century before buying the book.

A month later I found myself taking the course described below from Dr. Alves. The course was a continuation of the same passion which I had experienced when reading the book. We found the course very human. Dr. Alves has a poetically-sounding voice and his sensitivity to the English language shames us native speakers.

He began the first day very quietly. Then he happened to see his colleague and countryman Paulo Freire (the educator) at the door, who he apparently had not seen for some time. The warmth of their abrazo was contagious. Upon his return to class, his movements and speaking had been noticeably animated by this greeting. This animation and warmth continued for the two weeks of class. Alves did more than merely utter his words; he preached them, in the finest sense of the word.

Alves was born in Brazil in 1933. After studying theology in Brazil, he went to the United States and received a masters in theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York and his doctorate from Princeton Theological Seminary, studying there under Richard Shaull. He is currently teaching in Brazil and is director of studies of ISAL (Church and Society in Latin America). Though still quite young, he is well-known in both Portuguese-speaking and Spanish-speaking Latin America.

Harvey Cox, in his introduction to Alves' book, warns all those of the affluent "developed" world to beware, lest we fail to listen to voices like Alves'. These notes were compiled with the intention of giving maximum exposure to his voice; they belong to the people. Please feel free to share these notes at your will.

Shepherd Bliss
Cuernavaca, Mexico
February, 1970

January 26

1984 by Orwell is a crucial book for Latin Americans to read. The book describes a totally repressive society, under total social control; social control over consciousness. One means of control is language. "Newspeak" (in 1984) is a language with a minimum number of words. The logic of Newspeak is that the world is mediated by words. If you destroy words, people will not have consciousness of certain aspects of the world. Consequently, language is a means of social control.

Our consciousness of the world is maintained by words.
We see the world through our language.
Words define a world. Language mediates my world.
The Word created the world.

Wittgenstein--the limits of my language define the limits of my world. By examining your language, you find out about the world in which you live and move.

Language is not individual; it exists in the context of social reality, having the function of providing the logic and rules of the game of social interaction. The rules have to be set before we can proceed. Languages exist to the extent that they are spoken by communities.

We are always in the process of inventing new languages. Languages die from dis-use. Communities give languages their status as social realities.

Communities are defined (supported) by languages.
Human liberation is a social process. We must know how language is used for the support of the status quo as well as for social change.

When I learned the word "senor" and how to use it with the proper respect, I learned a social organization; became a social animal, a good boy, able to behave by the rules.

I prefer to drop the word "reason" and replace it by "consciousness".

Communication is the social reality that has the power to shape the world. Thus the relationship between language and power. By defining how the world is, language programs how I should act in the world. For example, the word "senor" programs a certain type of action.

Repetition becomes truth. Note the pledge of allegiance to the flag in the United States.

2 kinds of action:

- that which preserves a certain society.
- that which destroys certain structures of society.

Mannheim (Utopia and Ideology) speaks of two mentalities present in society:

- ideological--to preserve society, as religion usually does. This is a programmed type of action. The growth of Pentacostalism in Chile is directly related to the desire of men to escape the burden of transforming Chilean society. (read Stark, The Sociology of Knowledge)
- utopian--thought which catalyzes social change, creates new social organizations, is in conflict with prevailing social organizations.

Any social revolution must be preceded by a linguistic revolution. There is no revolutionary praxis without revolutionary theory. The first problem in a revolution is to bring about linguistic change, thereby changing consciousness.

Robert K. Merton, the sociologist--attempting to change language is attempting to cause social change. To seek social change without due recognition of the manifest and latent functions performed by the social organization undergoing change is to engage in social ritual rather than social engineering.

There are two ways to bring about social change:

- force the community to redefine its needs. Therefore the structures of society are no longer functional and must change.
- find a better way for fulfilling the needs. That is, make a more functional structure.

The Function of Language

2 possible relationships:

- stable--when something from the outside can alter it.
- unstable--we use the word "life" here, which is characterized by instability, arising from its dialectical give-take relationship to the world. Life is a permanent and energetic struggle, for survival.

Man's ultimate concern is survival. An organism lives to fulfill needs. The body is an instrument of mediation. My body defines my needs. It also provides the tools to satisfy these needs.

Animals adapt their self to the world. Those animals that did not survive did not adapt to the world.

Man tries to transform the world, to adapt it to his organism, to make it more human.

For the animal, its body is its own god, defining and satisfying. The organic process is a permanent struggle to incorporate the nature into the animal's body. All activity is designed to relate the organism to nature such that they become a give-take system. Life depends upon the efficacy of the organism to incorporate nature. If it fails to, it begins to die. Life is a permanent problem, having to be solved over and over again.

The animal seeks to conquer time and make the next moment favorable to his survival.

The difference between men and animals is that the animal tries to adapt to nature, whereas man tries to transform nature.

Marx--human labor seeks to humanize nature, which is an alien out-there, in an attempt to make it part of the body.

Life is activity which is intended to learn solutions for survival. Those who are stupid die.

Animals have a body but no language to mediate the world. The world is mediated by their body.

For the vulture the smell of dead meat is perfume; he responds to the need for survival.

Dogs have eyes up front because they hunt; rabbits have eyes to the side because they are hunted--different worlds.

An organism is a structure that has learned how to survive. This organism programs activity for its survival. The body has the same function for the animal as language has for man.

The body of the animal organizes the world into two different types of relationships--pain and pleasure.

Man is the only animal that can feel pleasure in pain and pain in pleasure (e.g. the Protestant church service).

Pain is the way in which an animal interprets a hostile world. Pain programs avoidance behavior. It informs him that his survival is at stake.

Pleasure informs me that the environment is favorable. Pleasure should be the central thing in announcing the coming Kingdom.

Pleasure, Pain, and Learning

Pain and pleasure are connected to learning. When what was once pleasure, such as the rat pushing the lever for food, ceases to

be pleasurable, the rat must reorganize his way of receiving pleasure. If the rat gets an electric shock from touching the lever, he will not touch the lever again.

All learning which is organized around pain prevents new experiences.

Protestants are so resistant to change because all the symbols of Protestantism are built around pain rather than pleasure. Avoidance of annoying experiences, such as hell or guilt, are key.

Pleasure and pain are relative. What is pleasurable for one animal is pain for another (i.e. the fish world vs. the cat world). Therefore pleasure and pain can only be understood in the context of the organism's body.

The body is learning transformed into organized experience. The organism is the stabilization of a long learning history. This stabilization is the goal of any organism. The organism is the biological memory of all successful experiences of survival which took place in the previous history of that species. The animal has no consciousness of the past because the past has been incorporated into the body. Therefore, the organism behaves like a computer, has a memory.

Peter Berger--man has a body; animals are not free, they are their body. They are programmed by it. They cannot transcend it.

There is a continuity between body and activity for the animal which does not exist for man.

The animal has a closed memory that programs its activity. No question of truth, only the practical, that which is necessary for survival. The only question is: "What is functional?".

Man with man given the biological structure there is nothing you can expect. Man has no closed biological program for his activity. Man is open. Man builds or invents his own humanity. Man is what he wants to be.

January 27

The human happens in the dialectic between the drive for pleasure and the fear of pain. All human liberation has to do with this, an attempt to create a society of pleasure. This is a materialistic starting point. Pain has no right, and pleasure is good.

Hymns relate what Christians see as pain--flesh, world; and as pleasure--church, heaven, Christ, etc.

The Old Testament is critical of nature religions because they all call man to accept nature and to adjust himself to it, rather

than to transform it. of society. It preserves the structure and order of the world.

Human activity is that which humanizes space and time, making them subject to human purpose.

Paulo Freire's cultural action is the transformation of an impersonal situation into a personal situation, an effort to enrich the world with personal meaning.

I am human only to the extent that I can subject the world to myself. The act of liberation is the act of transforming the world. In the beginning was the word...

The question of the liberation of man is the liberation of the world. Something has meaning when that thing is endowed with human values.

Distinction between technology and technological system--technology is a tool until it becomes a system which demands that humans adjust to it.

The U.S. empire has reduplicated nature by making a closed system of its technology. It has created a technological system to which man must adjust himself.

Human liberation is not just the question of satisfying a basic human need like hunger, but involves freedom to play with the world. Play is always open to reorganization.

Man in Society

The first expansion of the body is society. Man has no direct contact with nature apart from society.

Society's language tells him what nature is. Our eyes are never our eyes, but society's eyes. The organs of our senses become social (i.e. culturally conditioned).

NOBODY LIBERATES ANYBODY. WE LIBERATE OURSELVES TOGETHER.

All human activity is effort to make nature into human space and human time (a projection of himself and his purpose).

Man's body is conditioned by society. Therefore, the primary nature of man's pain and pleasure is conditioned by society. Our basic needs change. The objects of pain and pleasure become different. This is why man is not an animal, for his body is conditioned by society.

Man has the need to build symbolic universes, to universalize his own meaning and exorcise the devil or chaos. Man is created by society, but in the end society is created by man.

Language is the memory of society. It preserves the structure and order of the world.

Man invents language as a tool to order his world, to have control over it. Man is here seen as the creator, bringing order. This is an instance of man's transcendence over things.

Man then transforms this world to be the world rather than a possible world, one of many which humans can construct. He has this tendency to universalize his own meaning. We teach children that this is "the world" and they accept it as given by the gods. (But, "In the beginning was the Word...")

Wittgenstein--"Bewitchment of language".

Language becomes the god which defines the truth of the world. That which was an instrument of creation becomes an instrument of repression. Man feels reconciled with his world when there is a correspondence between his values and the structures of society. Society which has the power goes on affirming itself under the protection of language. When contradictions between human needs and social needs occur, man does not rebel because his perception of the world is mediated to him through a language which hides his true perception of the world.

Language hides the contradictions, protects society's preservation of itself. Language can cease to be an instrument of relationship and become the opposite: the opiate of the people (i.e. religious laws, propaganda, TV, etc.).

To the extent that man is kept under the bewitchment of this language, he responds not to the real relations in the world but to reality as defined by language.

The task in the liberation of men is to liberate man from the bewitchment of language; to liberate man from a verbal world which is given the status of reality.

Language is a demonic possession we carry in our heads.

Man does not react to the world, but to symbols which are a substitute for reality, thus once the social order is achieved, man becomes domesticated by his own creation.

Change is caused by pain. When there is a change in reality (pain) this new problem opens up the possibility of new language.

Language is one of the social factors involved in change. I'm not saying that language brings about change, yet a new language can be a catalyst of human liberation. Language has no power by itself, but only to the extent it is used by man as a tool to understand the contradictions in which he lives.

Man is unable to perceive the contradictions of society when his language creates guilt from pleasure and joy from pain, as Christian language does.

January 28

Our concern has been how man builds his world in an attempt to be human. But then he becomes trapped by his language.

The dialectic implies that man is not finished, but is rather in relation to the world, which becomes different, as does man, when he relates to the world.

The first moment in the man-world dialectic is when man sets out to build a world. In the act of creating a world, man learns a world.

Consciousness comes after action, is supported and maintained by action. Consciousness is the memory of that which is practical. Consciousness frees me from the burden of solving tomorrow what I solved yesterday, because experience is remembered.

Language is the socialization of the know-how of solving the problems of the world. Language memorizes the experience and know-how of the community.

The act of creation (language) is an act of power, potency. Man faces a threatening world and through his power, transforms the chaos into order in order to deliver survival and pleasure.

A cultural act equals will (my values) plus power.

Man wants to see not only his immediate environment endowed with meaning, but he wants all reality to have this human meaning. This causes the tendency to universalize.

Man envelops his creation with a symbolic belt or circle which are the glasses whereby he sees all reality as subservient to himself.

Man is subject (as opposed to object). He creates language, world, values, religion, and a universe of symbols.

When man is no longer in a dialectic with the world he is confronted by a consummated act, something finished, a structure, which he created, but which now oppresses him.

Structure, such as a watch, tend to resist change. Man is born inside a finished world with its own structure and logic. This world antecedes him and is already functioning. Man apprehends this world as law. Instead of finding himself as the creator of the world, this man finds himself as the object of law and order,

a function of a certain structure. Man no longer creates a world, he only performs those things he is programmed for.

Education could be learning how to build a new world. Instead, society teaches how the world is, and how men must behave to function as a part of the world.

Clark Kerr--the university is a factory to produce skills which are functional to the current society.

Phases of Consciousness

- 1-freedom--man is creator of a world.
- 2-determinism--oppressive structures bewitch men.
- 3-for man to again be a creator, he needs to forget a world, a language, values, and functional procedures. The learning process is not just adding, but also subtracting and forgetting. Man must undergo a process whereby his consciousness is set against the prevailing structure of society.

Metanoia--conversion, change in the structure of consciousness.

The act of creation is firstly an act of negation, which should occur when the world is no longer an extension of the body; when structures no longer deliver survival and pleasure.

Neurosis emerges when different languages clash in the self.

Franz Fanon--the oppressed man becomes possessed by the oppressor, who dwells within him, bewitches him.

Norman Brown (Life Against Death)--the genesis of rebellion is found when the reality principle begins to oppress rather than bring pleasure.

There cannot be a creative or negative act unless man becomes conscious of the contradiction and the possibility of creation.

Consciousness is not always a mirror. In fact, it often conceals reality. When reality is painful, man takes refuge from it in a verbal world which becomes a substitute for that reality.

This retreat from reality into a verbal world is a result of impotence. When man is impotent, he exercises his power to create a verbal world against the reality of a painful world.

There are two ways of dealing with pain--to overcome and conquer it, and to opiate it and mask the pain.

What causes man to build false worlds? Man builds false worlds when he feels impotent to deal with the real world, and when he doesn't feel powerful enough to express his values in the world.

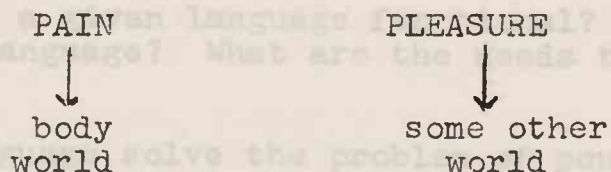
The cultural act is an act of creating a world through activity. This presupposes will (values) and power.

Man has a tendency to universalize. Religion is an expression of this universalizing tendency. Religion, therefore, expresses the universal impotence of man in achieving pleasure.

Only men who love life and affirm the world can talk of resurrection (a body affirmation). Resurrection expresses an attitude of power vis-avis the world.

Two Types of Consciousness

-impotence--man feels impotent and operates in a dualistic structure:



religion in this world view depends on repression of the body (as Nietzsche saw in Europe). This type of religion functions as an ideology (ideas which contribute to the status quo), and does not change the world.

-potency--I or the community feel we have the power to transform the world: the dialectical process.

Bewitchment occurs (as in the Protestant language) when we say that pain is solved in another world and there is no need for man to solve problems now.

Liberation has to do with metanoia--the radical re-structuring of reasoning, going to the roots and transforming. The problem of pain has to be solved by transforming the world. We have to move from a dualistic structure to a dialectic.

Biblical faith is different from what we have come to know as Christianity. Biblical faith begins in confidence about power, body, transformation, the resurrection of the body. There is a commitment to the concreteness of human life.

Task of Liberation

The task of liberation is the task of liberating man from the bewitchment of language, religion, and ideology so that man can transform the world.

Man is of, by, for, and with the world. His task is to become worldly. We need to liberate man from the bewitchment of religion

which is alienation (solving problems in a verbal world). We need to liberate man from the clouds and get him back to the world.

We must still be "in the world but not of the world," (not "adjust" to the world). This is the only way to be for the world. To become adjusted to the world is to lose one's transcendence to transform the world, thereby losing one's dialectical relationship to the world.

We must have the freedom of consciousness to accept the world as task and problem, and therefore relate to the world as mission.

January 29

Questions to consider:

To what needs is a given language functional? What causes men to create this language? What are the needs to which the language responds?

How does the language solve the problem of power? A language is maintained to the extent that it delivers power, solves basic needs. Languages are recipes to deliver power, solve problems.

Protestant Language

How does this language define the world for this community? What is the ultimate existential concern? What is hidden behind and under Protestant language?

We have to go deeper than the conscious, or we would be talking about saving souls, liberating men, etc.

In Latin America one is usually converted to Protestantism, whereas in North America one is usually born to Protestantism. Conversion is linguistic change. Man faces a crisis; his language no longer meets his needs.

Purpose of evangelism--to provoke or raise a need in relation to which the Protestant language is functional. Propaganda creates a need so it can sell its goods.

Problematizing--you have a medicine for aching toes. If the toes do not ache, you first hammer them until they do; then offer the medicine.

Protestant language is a dead corpse. It gets its health from death.

Protestant language depends and concentrates upon the fear of death and finitude--a purely individual concern. The feeling of guilt is added to this.

When man feels the dissolution of the social order, he experiences chaos (anomie) in his immediate environment and is ready for the Protestant language. Evangelism is therefore most effective in areas of rapid social change.

Bonhoeffer--attacked the idea of Christian evangelism, because it is always afraid of the self-assured man.

Protestants are afraid of the man without guilt, who does not fear death, who is happy. The self-assurance of the secular man is threatening. Religion feasts on human misery. Health, simplicity, security are what Protestantism tries to break down.

Protestants believe that only God can provide the answer, thus the need for the church and minister.

Marx--though religious distress is the expression of real distress, religion itself is the sigh of the oppressed creature.

If you solve the problem, religion no longer serves a function. This is why it is so important that the problem not be solved. Church is a social reality supported by the language that remains to the extent that it doesn't solve a problem. Church growth depends on the vicious circle of this process.

People are leaving the church because they no longer feel the problem of which the church speaks.

Revivalism is when the people of a church need to be reminded of the problem of sin, and need it preached before the solution can be offered. The problem must first be created, in order that it can be solved.

How does the Protestant language solve the problem of power? Man feels impotent when he feels powerless to remove pain. The problem of pain is solved by its removal, which requires power.

Reify--to make things out of language, ideas. In Protestant language this is spirituality. Protestantism solves man's pain by reification--by changing man's way of feeling pain--not by changing the pain itself.

There is a problem of subjectivity. Man's relation to the world becomes accidental, man becomes a being on the world, but is unable to have dialectic with the world.

The Protestant says, "Christ is the answer." The answer for what? This is totally an act of subjectivity, something that only happens within myself. The Protestant language believes in the autonomy of subjectivity, infected with idealism. Protestants ignore the fact that consciousness is intentional. Consciousness has no existence by itself. The Protestant language makes the conscious outside of the world. This is why Protestants don't see the pain in the world as a challenge to transform the world. Protestant language sees the world

as a threat to our consciousness. The way for the transformation of society is through the transformation of the individual-- making everyone a Protestant!!

Protestant language was imported into Latin America. Latin America didn't create it.

Pain in the world should be an impetus to transform the world. But for the Protestant, it is evidence that the world is a threat to us, a temptation. Protestants remain in the world, but not in solidarity with it. The pain in the world convinces the Protestant that he must save the world from itself, but not transform the world. Protestant language negates the creative act. Protestants have so little imagination.

Pain in the body is irrelevant to the Protestant because the soul is saved. The pain is a passing trial; the promise is of greater spiritual pleasure to come. Protestants don't know how to mediate pleasure in the world. They are afraid of the body.

The ethics of prohibition in Protestant language is avoidance behavior. Protestant consciousness is blocked to the world. It is not free to reinterpret the world.

The pattern of thought and teaching in the Protestant church is that of repetition. Therefore you often hear a parishioner say, "I don't like him. He says things that I am not used to hearing." This means that he does not repeat and reinforce what he has heard all his life.

These patterns of reinforcement have distorted the Protestant personality.

Roman Catholic language is a different recipe to cook the same pudding--to avoid pain and the body. Both are ways of preserving the old relationship to the world.

Protestants who become revolutionaries repeat the same languages as before (see Weber's sectarian mentality). Protestant values cannot be used to criticize the society because Protestantism programs avoidance of the world. Thus Protestantism is critical of the individual.

February 2

There is no resurrection without death, hence the need to destroy first, before building.

Summary: Man sees his relationship with nature as a problem. Man has to survive. Man works on nature to make it a human time and space. Man has the power to transcend what is and transform the present relationships. Man understands his relationship toward the world as:

- optimistic; feels power, able to transform and change.
- impotent; feels lack of power.

Man's religion reflects these different stances to the world. All our symbolic universes play the same role as religion. Man's religion is either an expression of his will to power, or it reflects his impotence.

Protestant language solves all human problems on the level of the conscious. It gives man a new way of looking at the world. Man no longer feels the contradictions.

To be utopian means that our reason is not only descriptive, describing what is, but that one also uses the imagination to transform the present and look into the future.

Man's religion can reflect either his impotence and fear in the face of the world, or his power.

Note what happens to the protozoa when it encounters fear in the world: it retracts and becomes a cyst, closing itself off from the world and relating itself only to itself.

Protestant language functions in this way, solving human problems at the level of consciousness rather than in actuality. It does not provide man with the tools to reorganize his world, but only a new way to look at the world so you don't see the contradictions inherent in this relationship.

Protestantism has become an instrument against social change. Thus if we are interested in change we must free man from the bewitchment of Protestant language.

The Christian mission today is to liberate men from the church.

Men must be made free from the church in order to be made free for life.

Our immediate task is:

1-secularizing, awakening men from the world of ideas and ideals and helping them relate to the world of things, of vital relationships, of life. The here and now must be our ultimate concern. To secularize is to take the spiritual world and make it mundane, of the world; to bring them together, so that there is no dualism.

2-the creation of a critical consciousness, applying the insights of Freire for religion. Conscientization is the subversion of consciousness. Our task must be to learn how to subvert the Protestant consciousness. To make formerly uncritical men critical.

Words do not have any meaning in themselves. The meaning of the word is how it is used. For example, use the word "salvation". If talking with a man with a dualistic mentality, you find different meanings. Because something comes before the words, the structure of language. All our structures are different because we have different human experiences.

Problem of Communication

We must subvert, problematize, make men aware that there is something wrong with his perception, his structure of translation.

The process of repetition takes place in community where everyone has the same presuppositions and world view. Protestants tend to repeat things over and over, even in different words. That which subverts is that which does not repeat the same.

Most persons leave the church comforted, having been reinforced.

All structures are conservative by nature, wanting to preserve themselves. To challenge a structure is to provoke it.

How not to be rejected in one's attempt to challenge is a key concern.

Languages are sustained by communities to the extent that they solve a vital problem. People are leaving the church because their new relationship to the world is redefining their ultimate concerns. The language is not functional for them. Our problem is those who have not left, who refuse to be problematized by the world. Since they refuse to be problematized from outside, we need to problematize them from the inside. We need to expose the internal contradictions. Structures are like chains; if you break one link, the whole is problematized. (This statement was challenged, someone pointing out the ability to compartmentalize and see the broken link as only another contradiction. e.g. the fundamentalist scientist).

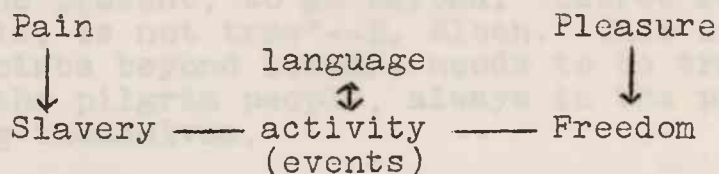
The Nature of Biblical Language

Biblical language is not an end, but a tool for the pedagogy of liberation.

One can understand a language only when one understands the central problem which gave birth to it.

Too many of our sermons and Bible readings do not reflect the gestalt of the Bible--the structuring center; they preach only the peripheral. Preaching takes isolated words from the Bible and relates them to Greek dualistic structures. What gave birth to the whole Biblical language? This is a valid interpretation for any document, to consider what gave birth to it. When was Biblical language born? What situation created Biblical language? What was its core, center? What was the situation that created the consciousness of the people of Israel?

Biblical language refers to certain historical events, something which happened. These events were those which solved the most existential problems--slavery. The Exodus is the center of the whole of Biblical language--liberation from slavery (pain), for the future (pleasure), for life.



"I came that you may have life, and abundantly." The salvations sections, those on the function of the Messiah, all these must be defined in relation to the Center. The New Testament must be read in light of the Old Testament, not the OT in light of the NT. A Christocentric reading is wrong; Christ must be seen in the context of the Old Testament.

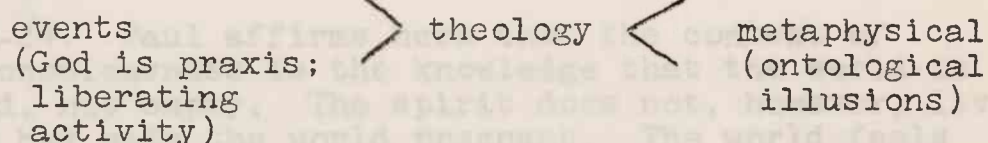
Language is created by a certain community which experiences liberation. The experiences are memorized and these events are extrapolated into the future, enabling man to move toward a future of liberation.

The Exodus was not a past event for the Hebrews, rather an instance of a pattern of politically liberating events and activities. God was mediated to Israel through events--slavery and freedom--these actions. The people of Israel understood history as ongoing liberating activity.

The concept of Messianism is an extrapolation from liberating events.

Biblical language has a radically practical context. When one speaks of God he is talking about events which made man free.

Ernest Wright in God Who Acts talks about theology as recital, repeating and articulating a series of events, God as praxis. His hermeneutical principle is to interpret God as liberating activity.



Reason is created from historical experience, from culture, logos. The community of faith creates a new structure of reason. We are currently bewitched by the Greek reason--which wanted to explain why things are as they are. Then you have to be reconciled with things as they are. They felt that there was a logos behind the obvious contradictions of the world. Greek thought presupposed that "that which is" is true.

The Hebraic reason does not ask for an explanation of the present. The Hebraic reason is turned toward that which is occurring. Not that it needs to be explained, but as an arrow to focus attention, signs of the times, expressions of the will (of God and of a community). Will always tries to transcend the present, to go beyond. Hebrew reason says that "What is, is not true"--E. Bloch. This is because what is always points beyond itself, needs to be transcended. Israel was the pilgrim people, always in the process of transcending themselves.

Hence, Biblical religion is always in conflict with the present order. It is a critical consciousness. The prophets called the people to turn from the nature religions--those which declared man must adapt himself to nature--to the given world.

Love--action for liberation. God's love is manifest in the liberation of man. In the New Testament law is the same thing as the nature religions in the Old Testament.

Law--adaptation. The structure which enslaves you.

The present is present determined for the future. God is the presence of the future in the present.

For the Bible, the experience of God is the perception of transforming necessity.

To talk about realized eschatology--that the future which the Bible talks about is really present experience--is to deny any future, which is what Bultmann, Dodd, and some of the other existentialists do.

For Christ the present was always moving toward something, an ongoing thrust.

Christ was totally consistent with the Hebrew attitude toward time, that each man should be the mid-wife of the future. This is also consistent with Mark.

Romans 8:22-24: Paul affirms here that the context of Christian consciousness is the knowledge that the world is not finished, not empty. The spirit does not, however, live beyond, but has made the world pregnant. The world feels pain, not as the sign only of pain, but as the announcement that something is being formed in the womb of the world. It is not that we are hoping for a new future for nature, but that creation is groaning in the expectancy of human future. Creation exists for us, not the other way around. Our hope is the very redemption of the body. There can be no redemption of the body without the redemption of the world, for the world is what the body has to relate to. We are those who have experienced the first fruits. We are those who have tasted the "aperitif", the appetizer, wetting our appetite.

The problem of revolutionaries is that they view the present as only a period of transition; empty. In this sense they are closely related to "religious" people. This allows the revolutionary to do anything in the name of the future. But the present is more than a period of transition. For in the present we can taste the "first fruits" of the more human future.

February 3

The purpose of Paulo Freire's method is to help men to see their relationships with the world as if from a distance. Man is submerged in the world and cannot admire it from a distance. He needs to be able to distance himself in order to see his world. He needs to assume a phenomenological stance. This is what Freire's pictures do for the observer. Man needs to stop taking for granted his relationship to the world, become critical of it. The teacher is a catalyst, animator, facilitator, helping the group of men to raise the real questions.

An oppressed consciousness cannot coscienticize other oppressed consciousnesses.

Protestant language is a substitute gratification for the world. Instead of trees, horses, streams, the Protestant sees sin, salvation, heaven and souls in the world.

Kant discovered that the act of knowledge depends upon certain mental structures that we have before the experience occurs.

Experience is the synthesis of the structure of my reason and the concrete facts out there. The experience is the result of the organizing thrust of my structures of reason, taking the facts and making them intelligible. For example, in a Latin American situation, David Rockefeller, a typical Latin American, and a revolutionary, given the same data would arrive at different conclusions of that situation. Structure of reason (containers) without data provided by the senses are empty, useless. The locus of experience is the world, not the classroom.

In response to why we have not been more concrete in class, Alves asserts that our purpose here is not to create experience but to abstract, to create praxis over praxis so that we can deal with experience.

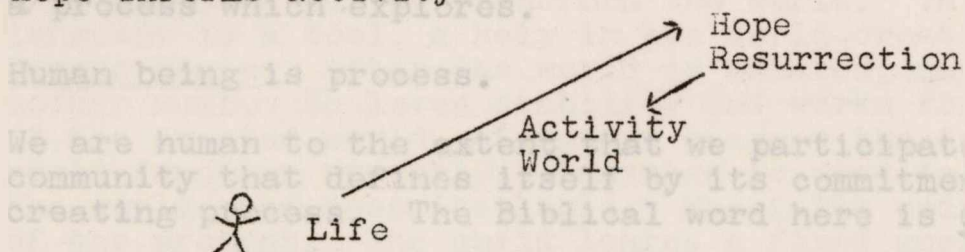
The bearers of the future are those who have tasted the "aperitif" of tomorrow. What characterizes the Christian logic is that it groans. The present produces pain, is not the arrival point, but an arrow. Christian life is mid-wifery.

What is being engendered in the center of history is the redemption of the body. To be adopted as the children of God is to have a redeemed body, which is to have a redeemed world. Christian hope is a hope born out of the world, as hope for the world; an affirmation of life.

Bonhoeffer--only those who truly love life and the world in such a way that without them all would be lost, only these can believe the resurrection of the body and eternal life. "Resurrection" and "eternal life" are ways of talking which show an affirmation of life and a hope for life.

Resurrection creates ethics-as-activity, something we Protestants have failed to see.

Hope informs activity



Marxist polemic against utopias--they can be alienating if they come out of our heads and are not rooted in the world.

Note that Erich Fromm edited the young Marx' manuscripts on philosophy and economics. Alves sees the early Marx as a greater humanist and tends to rely more upon the early Marx.

Man learns to will only that which society can provide him. Augustine--Commandest what thou willst and givest what thou commandest. This describes technology. Propaganda demands the need for a certain thing and then provides this thing (e.g. who would be considered pretty; all static values).

For the scientific socialist it is not necessary to think up a utopia because history will take care of itself. History is its own salvation.

Alves agrees with the Bible and Freud that the dialectic is not between two material poles of the world, but between consciousness and the world. Hence, we need to build utopias. Utopias are language which hold our dreams and direct our social change. Scientific socialism, however, gives a secondary role to ideas and imagination. Marx was not Marxist, he was much more human.

The model of a new society is not given in Marxist contradictions. It must be developed, since history is the process by which man externalizes himself; there are many possibilities.

Animal life adapts to the world. Human life adapts the world to itself. Freire calls human life existence. Man projects his values into the world to humanize it. God created man in His image and then man creates the world in his image. The process of humanizing the world is a dialectic process; man in dialogue with the structures of the world.

Reconciliation, in traditional Protestant language has been between God and man. After this reconciliation man has peace, despite the problems in the world. Man's attitude to the world then becomes one of patience. In Biblical language, however, reconciliation refers to a hopeful world, not existing now, but coming about in the dialectics of the will acting upon the world (the work of man). The world mediates our reconciliation. This means that man is a permanent experiment, a process which explores.

Human being is process.

We are human to the extent that we participate in a certain community that defines itself by its commitment to a world-creating process. The Biblical word here is covenant.

Obedience is responding to the liberating praxis.

Augustine, a good sociologist, says that communities are defined by what they love.

Liberation: world-creating activity.

But when any community thinks that it holds the monopoly of liberating activity, it becomes demonic. Orthodoxy fails to see that the community is an experiment.

The human, therefore, is a gift of grace. My liberation is not my task alone. Nobody liberates himself. Nobody liberates another, as Paulo Freire says. We are, however, involved with others in the process of liberation. Grace means that my liberation and humanness does not depend on me. There is a gift that comes from outside.

The Bible is about a community which defines itself in terms of obedience to the future which God loves. This community came to understand its own liberation not as a result of its own power, but as a gift from "outside". It was this understanding which always gave them hope.

"Happy oppressed consciousness" is a possibility (living in pockets of wonder and allowing the Pentagon to continue as is).

Revelation is immediately accessible to our senses, through the Incarnation.

Three types of consciousness

- 1-open to the future, aiming to create a new world, basically historical.
- 2-once was open, but now is stabilized and closed around itself, dominated by law and the present.
- 3-of conflict, apprehending the world as conflict. Lives between violence to preserve the present and the struggle to be open to the future.

Dialectic of Language

Phases in the dialectic of language:

First phase: Man-Nature--man finds nature as threatening, and then sets out to transform the world. In this stage, language is a tool, a help in his world-creating activity.

Second phase: After the world is created, man falls into the mother womb. He loves stability and works for the preservation of the created world. Language becomes the tool to make the world function properly. Language is used to legitimize the world, and describe logic. Man falls under bewitchment of the present. The child learns a fixed world. The ideal is to eliminate the future. It makes it impossible for the future to become the present. Man adapts to the world.

Third phase: The conflict between structure and men. Man feels the need to break values. A conflict arises between those who sustain the old order and those who want to create the new. Man detects the existential conflict between values in structures and his own values. He therefore feels the need to break the old values. Man is open to the future, but the future is not open to man.

We should conceptualize reason as imagination, projecting and creating the future, rather than merely description.

We need to understand the logic of the Bible, how its language is structured and how it organizes its understanding of history.

Pierce--the meaning of anything is that which we can expect from that thing.

The Bible tells us what we can expect from history. The Bible tells us that history is not the history of freedom only, but of a political reality; a conflict that has always existed between the will to freedom and the fear of freedom.

The Bible speaks of communities which love the future vs. communities loving the past and present. What makes man human is openness to the future.

Myth of "The Fall":

Fallen man--afraid of the future, wanting to become his own God. The myth of the fall was created by the community of Israel as it reflected upon its own historical experience.

N. Berdyaev points out that the bearers of the future often become the preservers of the past and present. Man's openness to future is always counteracted by his fear of death. Man's power of creation becomes fixated on his desire to preserve the present. Life is the process of nullifying the threat of dying.

Bultmann: sin is to fear the future and to act to prevent the future and its birth. Man wants to be like God and have total control over the future.

Norman Brown: Man builds an oppressive world and repressed man in order to create instruments for conquering his own fear.

February 4 (morning)

Nietzsche tells a parable in Thus Spoke Zarathustra. His concern in this parable was the phenomenology of the Spirit. Man at first was a camel in the desert, the beast of burden, accepting everything, unable to say "no". This was his consciousness. He becomes, however, a lion, with the will to power, to say "no" and "I will". The lion speaks then to the dragon, who is an animal covered with golden scales, on each of which is written a law which says "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not", which means that he has internalized all the values, which have already been determined. In the dialectic between I will and Thou shalt not, the lion kills the dragon. The danger here is that the lion can become the dragon. But instead, he becomes a child. "No" and slaying the dragon is not enough for the act of creation. There also has to be the forgetfulness of the child who does not have resentments. Only after the lion kills the dragon can the child live and create. The most difficult thing in the learning process is often this forgetting. The camel (passive consciousness) will not liberate itself unless it becomes a lion.

Man creates repressive structures to protect himself from his existential alienation. As man perpetuates existing structures he has the illusion that he can prevent the future from coming.

Marx--private property causes alienation. Therefore, Marxist theology believes that once private property (means of production, not personal possessions) is abolished, men will be liberated. But Biblical language reverts this. It says that the existential alienation is the cause of repressive structures, and repressive structures create repressed men who in turn continue the repressive structures (a vicious circle). Thus the reality seems to be a dialectical relationship between both of these phenomena.

In one of his early manuscripts Marx says that private property did not create man, but the process was the opposite. He gave this up because the existential element is not scientific, cannot be measured and analyzed.

All Biblical language is a footnote to certain events, after-thoughts to explain and retain these events in memory. "Myth" is an autobiographical reflection of a certain community.

Man is put in a garden. We should not imagine this garden so much as nature but as sculpture. Man finds himself in this garden to give names, to create; from the very beginning this was his task. There is no unity with nature here, but nature is given to man that he might transform it. The Fall today is not fall into nature, but fall into technological society.

Language is a technological device (tool). There was a point at which our tools to dominate the world became a system. When this happened, these tools became our world. This stifles our imagination so that we cannot think anything not given by technology.

In the production-consumption cycle people have to buy what is produced. Yet technology creates false needs (cordless back scratchers; walking machines). This technological system controls our imagination. We are no longer free for history and its creation. We are not world-creators but devices which consume. Technology is the modern form of the religion of nature, which the Bible was so critical of. Alienated men create an alienating world.

Augustine as a political scientist in City of God spoke not of classes but of two polis or cities, which were actually two different political orders in conflict. Augustine is better than Marx because he sees that the real issue is not economics but power. The City of Man is organized by man's love of self, man's love for power. This love for power and domination results in a private form of good; a fall from society to individualism. Man makes himself the navel of the world--universalizes himself.

Laws--the rationalization of injustices. Law is ideology, the rationalization of will to power. Law preserves a world of masters and slaves. Law and order are instruments to serve those who are the center of social order. Laws are prepared by those who have power to show that their world is the best. Augustine showed that laws are not the expression of an eternal order but the rationalization of injustice.

There is no human interaction without power. Power is necessary to sustain any world we create. The stuff of human life is power and violence.

The final triumph of violence is total peace, i.e. when there is no apparent violence, when it is hidden, when there is a calmness, when it appears as if there is no violence. The slave is happy and there is stability. The body of the slave becomes an extension of the body of the master. The master controls the slave to the extent that the slave is a tool and cannot create his own world. The slave can come to love his master (e.g. at the end of 1984, he loved Big Brother), because this is not the slave's time and space. When the slave is open to the world (consciousness that the world is closed to him) he has a will to power and comes into conflict with the master.

The ultimate perversion of religion is to realize oppression but to take happiness and pleasure in it (i.e. "This is my cross to bear").

Crucifixion--traditional theology uses it as a magical act. Yet we need to see that Christ was crucified as a member of a subversive sect, both in religious matters and with respect to the state. There is a close connection between the two. The crucifixion was by political and religious order. The crucifixion was the beginning of the negation of religious and political order.

1st moment--the negative moment in which there is no freedom, but repression, violence, and pain.

2nd moment--the negation of this negative. Since we feel the pain as pain, we need to negate it. This is the movement of liberation.

The lion comes out of pain. He negates that which makes him suffer. The source of hope is those who are suffering, because only they can commence the creative act to terminate their suffering. Suffering is the beginning of the act of liberation because it begins to negate the negative. The problem is with the slaves who love their own slavery and find safety there and need their slavery.

Human liberation does not emerge from this slave mentality. It comes from God--the force who never enjoys slavery. The slave can explain his suffering; God never can. The Biblical Lord is the suffering slave, the culminating image in the Old Testament. He is the one who shows total partiality for the poor.

The senses of God are the senses of the suffering ones. Those who suffer are the body of God.

Biblical Language (dialectical)

World--God--Pain

Redemption of the body

new world

February 4 (afternoon)

All the above about master/slave applies to USA/Latin America.

The technological society is a new form of the Fall.

Degression--balance of power and U.S. imperialism. A balance of power is a tacit agreement between two private forms of "good", with a division of the world into zones of power. The Monroe Doctrine defines the Americas as organized around the will to power of the master (North America). It only deals with the well-being and security of the United States.

Latin America does not have a future of its own. Its space and time is subordinated to the master's (U.S.). Development without liberation will improve the conditions of the slave, as long as the slave remains just that--a slave.

The utopia of technological society has influenced Latin America. Revolutionaries and technocrats want to cook the same pudding, but have different recipes. All are talking of liberating Latin America from economic backwardness, i.e., bridging the gap between the rich and the poor; and technological society is seen as the utopia (the Latin American consciousness is even domesticated by the master).

For Biblical language, hope is born out of suffering.

The body of God is the corporate body of all those who are suffering. The cross stands for powerlessness, but for the New Testament, the cross becomes the symbol of power. God is the ground of hope because he suffers with those who suffer. God feels the world as suffering.

Israelites equated the suffering servant with the Messiah. The power of the Messiah is humanizing power only because it springs from the suffering servant.

To be reconciled with God is to be irreconciled to the world. Redemption of the body implies transformation of the world.

We should use dialectics rather than dualism to resolve our problems.

Traditional Protestant Language (dualistic)

God
World ——— Pain

Biblical Language (dialectical)

World ——— God ——— Pain ——— | ——— Redemption of the body
new world

Explanation: God faces pain in the world (not in dualistic, but dialectic process) by destroying pain, leading to the redemption of the body, and the transformation of the world.

The suffering servant cannot remain as the lamb (powerlessness). The lamb becomes the lion in the Bible. To be the lion is to will, to say no to the oppressor.

Love for the oppressed implies hatred toward the oppressor. What is meant by the wrath of God is the activity of God which destroys the structures of oppression. Read M. Buber's The Prophetic Faith as it develops the this-worldly implications of what the Bible is talking about. Isaiah: God is going to destroy the yoke. The Bible is talking about battle and victory in this history.

Violence is necessary because the will to power of the oppressors can never become the will to liberate the oppressed. But this is more appropriately "counter-violence". Counter-violence is expressed against the violence of the oppressor. The main violence is committed by those who want to preserve the society as it is, even when this violence appears to be peace and stability.

In order to create a world of liberation, one must destroy a world of oppression. You destroy, not because you enjoy it, but because you must.

Wrath is preliminary to the work of building. Only when the master is robbed of his tools of oppression is he free, no longer having his defenses from the future. In politics, love takes a preliminary form as wrath, then comes the building.

Jeremiah 29--Behold I give you a future and a hope (the name of God). God opens the future for men, and men for the future.

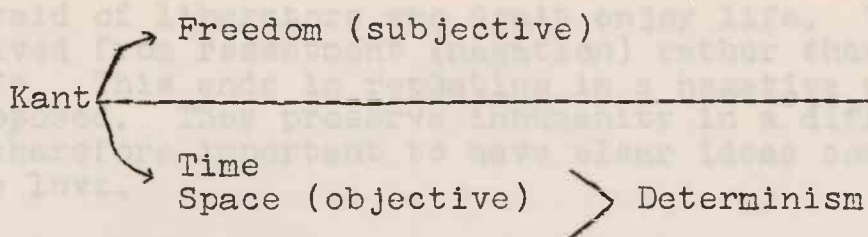
Function of the Language of Resurrection

We lack factual knowledge of and experience with resurrection.

In the past, there have been two ways to deal with the resurrection.

1-as an objective fact (body coming back to life).

2-as a subjective experience. Existential theology says that the language of resurrection is not about fact, but about personal, existential experience. It was to the disciples as if he were still alive. They therefore lived in the presence of Him.



For Protestant dualism the option is to locate resurrection in one of the above categories--either subjective or objective. But the Biblical account is not dualistic.

For the New Testament the resurrection is not a fact because only those with faith could witness it. It has a subjective dimension, it happens in the consciousness of the community. But the resurrection is not merely subjective. The resurrection is not a fact but a factor: a factor is a fact which has the power to create new facts.

How can we verify Resurrection? The resurrection is understood in political terms, by the ongoing praxis of liberation. The resurrection is verified in the present (ongoing praxis of liberation) rather than in the past (a dead and an alive man). The way to bear witness to the resurrection is to fight for the liberation of man and the world, not to speak of resurrection in religious ways. The resurrection says the world is not empty, but that there is a power which brings hope. It is the imperative for human liberation. I verify resurrection by being confronted by new facts of human liberation in the present.

Eschatology has been supplanted by sacramentalism; Christ will not come but is present in the sacraments. Augustine was the first to recapture the political meaning of the Gospel.

Norman Brown's chapter on "Resurrection of the Body" in Life Against Death:

- 1-sublimation is the negation, repression of the body.
- 2-the recovery of the body is where salvation is found.
- 3-the resurrection of the body is a social project facing mankind as a whole--a social, political problem. It will be delivered when the statesmen of the world deliver happiness instead of pain.

The resurrection is the Christian utopia. The idea of resurrection is that new possibility occurs only after death. Death of old structures and the creation of new ones.

The central noun of the Bible is not death but life, freedom for life and life in freedom. Freedom is empty in itself. We must be free to live!

Neurotic revolutionaries are those who affirm only their resentment, and not life.

I'm afraid of liberators who don't enjoy life. Their impulse is derived from resentment (negation) rather than affirmation and life. This ends in repeating in a negative way that which they opposed. They preserve inhumanity in a different form. It is therefore important to have clear ideas concerning what we love.

Freedom for life now is only possible in a context of freedom for the future. Only when we are free for the future are we free--period!

Creation is the act of adding something new to the world, transforming it and giving it new shape. God needs men to do this, to carry on the work of creation.

Biblical language takes life rather than death as the central question. The existentialists take death.

The Christian is one who is willing-to-be-toward-death-for-the-sake-of-the-world. He is willing to take the risk of dying for life. (e.g. a woman who wants a child. The existentialist would say you must be willing to die, then you can have the child; while the Biblical view is that you must love life and children enough to be willing to die.)

Society is pregnant; we must be willing to bear the pain of birth. When man's first commitment is to life, he can die freely. The ethics of death become the ethics of life and an open future (H.R. Niebuhr). To do this is to conquer alienation and recover authentic life. This occurs only as man is engaged in the task of world creation and transformation.

February 5

Overcoming fear and unfreedom comes only in the creative act. Freire calls creative activity "cultural action". This activity is prevented by the master-slave relationship. (read Marx on alienated labor).

Protestant theology never understood work. Protestant theology never understood that we are saved in work. Work is a way of preparing ourselves for death, according to Luther, who felt that through work we redeem our bodies. The Puritans felt that man should work so hard that he cannot enjoy his work. Harnack feels that work is only an escape valve and is not as important as the mind is. But for the Bible the structure of the community of faith is that it is engaged with God in the task of creating a new heaven and earth. It is defined by this project, not by our confession and what we believe. Protestants often define "church" in terms of confession. It is through work that one redeems his body and the world.

Calvin--Work is accidental to a saved consciousness. It is only a testimony to being saved.

Alves--Work is the essence of it all. One has no autonomy, but is engaged in activity. In this activity, consciousness is formed, and the world is transformed.

Theology of Play

"Be ye not like a child and you will not get into the Kingdom of God". What is it about children? They are egotistical, like to destroy, are not pure, etc. But they play, until we force labor upon them (e.g. we force them to go to school). The central element of play is that it is an activity that has no end beyond itself. Its purpose is pleasure. It is not productive. To become like a child is to negate the basic ethos of our society. Our society is geared to production and consumption--modern example of "justifications by works."

The Pope calls reproduction "the grave responsibility to perpetuate mankind." Actually, love and sex are play.

To play is alien to consumption and production. Play is very subversive to a society with a work ethic.

A man is justified by his production, says our society. How much do you earn?, etc. Play is the ultimate utopia for society. We all struggle for a society based upon play. Sabbath is the utopia of the other six days--the fulfillment. All productive activities are forbidden. Play is a way of organizing a society, especially among children. The organization is never permanent. It is reorganized every day with a new game. In play there is always the option of reorganizing and starting over.

But adults harden, reify, ontologize their play. Their play is not open for reorganization.

Children's play ends with universal resurrection of the dead. Adult's with the burial of the dead. When kids play cops and robbers, everyone in the end still lives, and the next day, they change roles. But among adults, this is not so.

Play is subversive. The world as defined by adults has to be reorganized by children. A society of play is much less rich in things, but more rich in pleasure and love.

Love is the renunciation of using the other, even as a means of production, even of children. Love is play.

The focal point of the Bible is not pain and asceticism but joy and play. The garden is a sensual place which provokes one's senses.

We do not have the exotic exuberance today, only the aperitif. This makes suffering even more painful. We have to liberate life from suffering in order to get to the exotic exuberance. "From beyond terror a new day of joy waves to me."

"As two and two are four
I know that it is worthwhile living,
Although bread is scarce
And freedom too little
As your eyes are light
And your skin tanned,
As blue is the ocean
And calm the lagoon,
As the night carries the day on its lap,
From beyond terror
A new time of joy waves to me.
As two and two are four
I know that it is worthwhile living."

Because we feel that life is good, we therefore feel the pain of suffering. This is why we become revolutionaries.

The "Death of God" movement, starting with Nietzsche, was a protest against the degradation of the body, which one finds in the church. This is "good news." A god who is against life can't be God. The essence of Marx' critique of capitalism is exactly the same--its destruction of the body.

Biblical view of pleasure: involves radical criticism against both the conservative and the revolutionary. Pleasure for the conservative is alienation. Pleasure becomes the starting point for transforming society only when it apprehends the pain of life.

Pleasure in North America aims at becoming unconscious of the pain in the world. But the real pleasure is right at the periphery of suffering. Pleasure can be a narcotic, especially as it is propagandized in the United States.

Guaranteed annual income--robs one of a playful relationship with society. The producers define society and one is paid to become irrelevant. Man will be separated from the possibility of transforming society. Thus the guaranteed annual income is no more than another tool to domesticate people.

The sin of some revolutionaries is their loss of the erotic sense of life, their loss of the present.

The transformation of society also demands discipline. Pleasure demands a kind of discipline.

Fasting is disciplining one's self for creative activity.

Revolutionaries feel the burden of transforming the world is on their shoulders. They tend to be so centered on activity, having no Sabbath, that they run the risk of becoming inhuman. They lose the sense of pleasure. Their new society would be devoid of play.

Berdyayev--revolutions always start as the bearers of freedom but then become new forms of slavery.

The community of faith is wherever you have a community with a similar structure of language. The Protestant church does not fit this category.

There is no basis to call the institutional church the community of faith. We inherited this institution, which speaks a language totally opposed to the language of the Biblical community. Our task is not to reform the church but to find it. What are the groups which deliver the aperitif of life? Use the language of liberation? If one works within the institutional church, he must have a clear sense of his mission. Our mission must be to liberate people who are under the bewitchment of the language of the institutional church, to create cracks in the institution, in order that they may be free for life.

January 28 Informal discussion of ISAL and Latin American Theology, at our apartment.

John R. Mott, a leader in ecumenical movement and missionary movement in Latin America, said that the moral doctrine should be the doctrine of our mission. Theology in Latin America was a reflection of the missionary movement. The birth of Latin American theology, if there was such a thing, was similar to what Paulo Freire described as education for domestication. That is, someone who knows and is the actor of the whole process transmits to someone who does not know the contents of his wisdom. Theology which was prevalent in Latin America was never indigenous to L.A. but imported from American and European patterns of thought. The first characteristic, then, is that L.A. theologians learned to think like Europeans and Americans did, and our theologian's world was a mirror of theirs, and of the missionaries. Secondly, by the fact that theology was transmitted in a mechanical way, the habit of learning but not creating theology came about. The nature of the learning process was very important. This was the castration of L.A. potentialities to create theology. This was seen in seminary training where the process was to give back to the professor what one had learned--we never learned that theology was something we can create.

Theology in L.A. has been dull, having nothing to do with life because it was patterned after North American theology. Protestant thought was almost totally oriented towards evangelism. Evangelism and polemics against Roman Catholics have always consumed much of the energy of Protestant theology.

Erazmo Braga was the first creative mind in L.A. theology. He was born pre-maturely, one of the founders of the ecumenical movement.

There are two main lines of Protestant thought:

- 1-fundamentalism, which is the repetition of catechisms and tends to be dry and void, yet pretends to be a mirror of reality.
- 2-Pentacostalism, which has been an emotional wave against the above. The Word is never seen as a mirror of reality but as a provoker of experience and is that experience. It is not important what they say, but how they say it--the dynamics of their prayers and worship.

After W.W. II there were profound changes in L.A. which provoked disruption in the Protestant church. Brunner and Barth led us away from orthodoxy. Barth helped us remain Protestant without domination by the Bible. Once we were free from the dominating patterns of thought, then we were free to explore new possibilities.

One of the most outstanding theologians in L.A. is Jose Miguez Bonino, a man of great integrity. He is teaching at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Buenos Aires. Existential theology did not appeal to L.A., because the problem which forced us to rethink theology was social transformation rather than self-identity and meaninglessness. Miguez has an article on L.A. theology which says the only movement trying to create a theology which responds to the challenge of L.A. is ISAL (and he doesn't belong to ISAL).

ISAL: By the end of the 1950's a representative group of Protestant intellectuals were concerned that the Church be active in rapid social change. They formed a group of which Lewis O. Dell, a lay leader, became the first leader. The original model which guided this group was the church going to the society in order to help it. A tremendous conflict between ISAL and the church began to develop, because the church did not like the conclusions it was arriving at. The church then saw ISAL as just a bunch of radicals. ISAL then began to discover that as the church was negating it, it was possible to work outside the church with secular people--Marxists and athiests; with Catholics who were concerned with the same problems. ISAL began to be more concerned about the world and less about the church. One of ISAL's main concerns was secularization, because the world seems to care more for justice and humanity and love than what is called the church. Where is the real church? The concern now became to develop a new ecclesiology. There became a new awareness of structural problems in L.A. and with revolutionary ways of meeting these problems. The third phase of ISAL then became one of structural reformation, which requires subjects to cause change. It was seen that the church keeps man captive and needs to be problematized. ISAL began to work for the libera-

tion of men within the church--those under the bewitchment of religious ideology. This is the biography of ISAL and its themes. ISAL has no theology or ideology, rather a history. Isal is currently being totally restructured, moving toward local rather than continental issues because the problem of communication in L.A. is today very serious, and the problems are so varied.

We are trying to understand theology as anthropology, (Feuerbach). We want to forget the category of revelation as though we had a special truth in our pocket. We are a community with a certain common experience, and we take the risk of committing our lives to that experience, but we have no transcendental certainties. To talk about theology as an anthropological language is to say that one can talk with atheists, Marxists, etc. But if I contend that I am the bearer of a special higher truth, I cannot have dialogue.

Resurrection is a human experience and must be related to a concrete community.

Political hermeneutics--the basic experience is with things of a political nature. The Bible is full of political images--Messiah, liberation, etc. This is politics in a general sense. The Bible talks often of struggle, and power.

Richard Shaull has a will to destroy everything he has built. He will not defend anything ultimately, but is always ready to abandon all and start all over again. He is not a systematic thinker, but his style is more like a prophet or preacher.

Our group does not like German ways of thinking. They are too cerebral and think they can make theology while sitting in their offices.

The group has a respect though criticism of Harvey Cox. The critique is of his triumphalism about the city. What city was he referring to? Maybe he didn't see its slums.

The prevalent methodology of theological education, at least in the U.S. is that there is a supply, or storage bin, or a body of knowledge. Then you are supposed to dominate the field, which means to swallow all that junk. The whole theological enterprise is focused on what has been written, and so someone writes one thing, and then you write a dissertation about that which the other has written, but the other has written about that which someone has written 400 years ago, and he has written in his turn about some scrolls which were written 500 years ago, so we go on chewing paper.

Our methodology is that thought is a function of life and theology is a tool to understand and analyze problems. If something proves to be ineffective and irrelevant in dealing with such a problem, we simply discard that.

The triumphant feeling is that the revolution is really coming. Colombia has this feeling. But in some places, the task is only to survive. Note the captivity in Jeremiah 29 and what it says.

Humor keeps hope alive. Save yourself for the hour when it comes.

How not to react and repeat the repression you are negating is a crucial question.

You negate because you love something. The central thrust is a creative act.

Marxists have refused to think the model of a new society, saying that history will do it. Witness Russia, Czech, etc. This is the old idea of Providence in which the future is left to God.

Only in the context of celebration can one negate.

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