



The Pragmatic Effect of Secular Theology

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- ¶1. “...So much of the contemporary discussion in the philosophy of religion centres around questions of meaning and epistemology for religious assertions.”[\[1\]](#)
- ¶2. According to the Bible, to Moses’ question of His name, God answered: “I am what I am” (Exodus 3:14). In the terms of philosophy, this reply means: “I am Being”. In other words, God’s name is Being, or the essence of being as a real, genuine being is -- in religious terms – God. By the way, God Himself informed all people about it. His characteristics are properties of infinite being; His mystery is a mystery of nature, Cosmos, life, human being. In my view, the version of God’s answer proposed by Erich Fromm -- “I am becoming that which I am becoming”[\[2\]](#) – is also very interesting. Becoming God (i.e., the Cosmos, life, human being essence) is more real than His static, motionless existence.
- ¶3. But what is a pragmatic effect, benefit from the philosophical conception of God for epistemology, metaphysics, human knowledge and conduct in general? Let us consider such example.

- ¶4. Discussing the free will problem, E. Fromm noted: “Man can choose. God cannot save him; all God can do is to confront him with the basic alternatives, life and death -- and encourage him to choose life.”^[3] From this point of view, man himself saves himself. God is not able to save humans. He can only demand from them the choice between life and death, good and evil. In Fromm’s view, God appears to be an indifferent and so malevolent witness of human activities. However, the philosopher was mistaken concerning God.
- ¶5. Not denying human free will, St. Augustine believed that without the grace of God “we are not able to do any good thing,”^[4] God’s grace comes “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephes. 2:9). According to Augustine, just God saves humans out of His charity, just God leads us to everlasting life.
- ¶6. According A. Guseinov and G. Irrlitz, Augustine’s conclusion that God’s grace does not depend on personal services shocked even his partisans.^[5] Nevertheless, the deep sense is in Augustine’s commentaries. Philosophy can interpret God as infinite being (as the essence of the real world) which is the absolute. Being, life are good. Non-being, nothing, death are evil (devil), and it “ennothings”. Having his modus of being, the human creature is concerned with interminable being (i.e., God shines in him) and hence he is concerned with good. From this secular theology viewpoint, the next conclusions are possible.
- ¶7. Firstly, everything what man makes for life, every good issues from being (from God). In other words, when humans affirm life, they follow principles of the very life; moreover, being (God) guides human affairs. The voice of interminable being, the very life, i.e., the voice of God, is heard in the development of life. Narrating about life, a person tells about God. Making life, s/he acts to the glory of God, i.e., of infinite being. An alternative individual sows death; devil (non-being, nothing) acts with such person mouth and hands.
- ¶8. Secondly, God’s/being’s kindness consists in that He/it gives humans new opportunities for their creating of life, good. The real world with its unique possibilities turns to all living people. The world offers openly, even one may say, imposes itself on us. However, we do not often believe in life, in ourselves, in those opportunities which are given to us by the objective reality. We turn often aside being and appeal to non-being. Instead of life (God), we begin to love and cultivate death (devil).

- ¶9. Thirdly, just God-being saves humans for everlasting life still because today's personality cannot know what will be good in a distant tomorrow. For example, in its time the inquisition made bonfires of people. According to secular theology, demanding one's faith in God, inquisitors forced her/him to believe in particular in infinite being, in the existence of the endless Cosmos essence (logos). "The knights of bonfire" had no doubts of that they did the very kind deed. However, today it is becoming to be clear that the souls of those "justs" did not find everlasting life: nowadays the making bonfires of people is considered at least to be bad form. Infinite being, history itself defines, chooses what is good, i.e., what is life, being. Apropos, this choice is not beforehand predetermined and known for history. Infinite being does not know itself, it has no the pre-established program of its development. Nature and humankind are becoming that which they are becoming. From this point of view, God/being (including human history and life) does not know Himself/itself, but He/it learns Himself/itself in the process of His/its becoming.
- ¶10. Thus, humans have reasons for "God's helping", i.e., for the help of being. We should believe in life and love it but not death. The human belief in potentialities of interminable being strengthens his faith in himself. In the very desperate situation, at the last moment of his living, an individual has even if one chance for the choice in favor of life. Only the deads are not able to choose. Therefore, man can and must always give preference to life (in other terms: serve God) but not promote death (in other terms: not collaborate with devil).
- ¶11. That is why, for instance, euthanasia is inadmissible.^[6] According to secular theology, philosophers, lawyers, physicians, and other persons who admit and practise euthanasia are servants of devil (death) since they help humans to die. Some of them assure this action comes from their compassion for humans. However, they are mistaken. Our compassion for people must help them to keep their living but not their dying.
- ¶12. From the secular theology viewpoint, the question "Why should I be moral?" can get the most general answer. We should be moral to keep our living, to co-create life, to affirm the human race existence. Life is good, and death is evil. "To be good" means to strengthen life (being), "to commit evil" means to increase death (nothing). Therefore, we should learn to distinguish the forms of life (God) and death (devil), of good and evil.
- ¶13. Thus, God is being, life, good. Devil is nothing, death, evil. Being and non-being, life and death, good and evil constitute two opposite principles of the cosmic order and human nature.

END NOTES

1. L Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature, 2nd ed.*, New York: Oxford University Press (1987), 45.
2. Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, New York: Harper & Row (1974), 58.
3. Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man. Its Genius for Good and Evil*, New York: Harper & Row (1964), 148.
4. Augustine, *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, W. J. Oates (Ed.), New York: Random House (1948), 739, Chapter VII.
5. Abdusalam A. Guseinov and Gerd Irrlitz, *A Short History of Ethics*, Moscow: Mysl (1987), 235.
6. Jeanne Simonelli, *Out on the Floe*, *Anthropology Newsletter*, 36(3) 1995, 46, 48.

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