

Dichotomy or Trichotomy?

by Ernest O'Neill

Ernest O'Neill explores the importance of recognizing the spirit in understanding human existence and addressing life's challenges.

Scripture: Genesis 2:7, Psalm 139:14, John 4:24, John 14:16, Romans 8:6, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Human Nature", "Spiritual Fulfillment"

Description

Ernest O'Neill discusses the three levels of life that humans operate on - physical, psychological, and spiritual. He highlights how many problems in today's society stem from neglecting the spiritual aspect of our nature and trying to solve them with physical or psychological solutions. O'Neill points out that issues like self-esteem, drug dependency, and marital struggles often arise from a lack of spiritual fulfillment and seeking validation from sources other than God. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the role of our spirit, soul, and body in achieving a balanced and fulfilling life.

Transcript

The Person who made us humans explained very clearly down through history that we operated on three levels of life-not two! Even in the simple outline of our creation which He presented to mankind in his childhood at the beginning of the world, he showed Moses that He made man out of the dust of the earth, breathed into him life, and man became a living soul. Today we can easily see the physical body which returns to dust at death; we talk a lot about the psychological which owes its name to the Greek word for "soul"-psyche; but we don't know what to make of the spiritual which owes its name to the Hebrew word for the "breath" of God. Those of us who see life as just soul and body think of our personalities as a dichotomy while those of us who see life as spirit, soul, and body think of them as a trichotomy.

The Problems of Dichotomy

Because so many of us today think of ourselves as having only physical and psychological life, we end up trying to solve human problems with animal answers. Most of our serious human difficulties originate in the spiritual part of our natures though they may exhibit physical or psychological symptoms.

So one of the most common problems in today's "mass-production" society is self-esteem. This is really a problem of the spirit and our lack of God's approval, but we try to solve it as if we were only physical and psychological organisms. The result is self-adulation groups or achievement-praise techniques which

leave us feeling as inferior as ever.

It's the same with today's drug problem: we have concluded rightly that human happiness is a combination of serenity and excitement so we are now trying to devise harmless drugs which will provide these "highs". What we really need is the enlargement of spirit that comes from a sense of the Infinite Creator within us, but we think we simply need to stimulate the emotions through injecting drugs into the body. The result is physical and emotional dependency instead of ecstasy.

Most of our marriage problems are due to the fact that we expect from our partner the security, esteem, and happiness we should get from God. The result is that we put superhuman demands on our husbands and wives, expecting them to supply the reassurance and security, the emotional and physical satisfaction that can come only from a balanced life under the Creator of the world. So marriage has become almost unbearable for the majority of people in the latter half of the 20th century.

The Psychoanalyst's Couch

You know the problems you face if you have run out of petrol in your car but don't realize it. You check the battery, the plugs, the timing, the alternator, the starting motor, the distributor, the coil, the carburettor, the fuel pump, the fuel lines etc., etc., ad infinitum. You may improve the car as you replace each of these, but the time and money and final futility of it all wears you and the mechanic out. This is what we do with our psychoanalysts. They provide a legitimate service at times when they deal with disordered souls or psyches--minds and emotions. But we usually take the problems that stem from lack of the right fuel in our spirits. Our psychological problems are only symptoms of a deeper spiritual deprivation, but we spend hours on the psychoanalyst's couch trying to motivate wheels, gears, and crankshafts that will never work smoothly until the underlying "fuel problem is solved.

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So, because we assume that all our personal life can be explained in terms of two kinds of existence -- physical and psychological -- we face myriad problems that are never solved. Those of us who are repelled by church never consider the possibility that we have spirits, while those of us in church usually run to the psychiatrist because we think the psychological and the spiritual are the same. Meanwhile, all of us suffer lives that are basically the result of the spirit-world that sustains and pervades the world in which we live. Since we don't understand what our spirit is or what it does, we wander through life burdened with various insoluble problems that will yield to no treatment we or others can devise. How does our spirit work? What does it do? How is it related to our souls -- our minds, emotions, and wills? And how do these levels of consciousness relate to our bodies?

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