Sanctuary
21st century survival manual

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William Ernest Hocking, my mentor and a man whom I could not admire more, once said, “Ask not if it is impossible. Ask if it needs to be done and if the finger of responsibility points to you.” The answers to these two questions are both yes and since Hocking is my ideal, I appear to have a duty.

The problem is no less than finding a way to avoid our headlong rush to destroy the planet. We are well on our way and the answers are not going to be found by shuffling the cards. The answer is not outside us, such as more equality, less greenhouse gases, or more pro-biotics. It is going to be found by learning what we are. Today we simply grab onto dogma or presume common sense. Common sense is an oxymoron. Common is a just what it says, and we only reach that by looking away. Common sense says to ignore death. There is nothing you can do about it, and thinking of it drags everything down with it. In a sane world should we have to look away from life’s most pressing issue? Is the world so badly designed that the best we can do is turn away? And how does one avoid that elephant? Bucket lists are fun things that are supposed to keep us from thinking about kicking the bucket, a gallows humor way of trying to lessen the sting. Death figures in every decision we make. Might we not pay a price for letting it run loose? Bucket lists are to avoid thinking about death, but paradoxically they make everything revolve around it. To forget something we have to remember what we are trying to forget. Game over.

The strange thing is that I have no doubt the works of some philosophers from early last century have all the concepts necessary to turn the ship around. These include Er-
nestic Hocking, Gabriel Marcel, Henri Bergson, Josiah Royce, William James, and from an earlier day, George Berkeley. They are not flashing lights these days. Some of their books are almost out of print, and perhaps with Hocking because I bought the remaining few. But it does not worry me not that the are not popular today. Being popular now is a contraindicator to truth. These guys inspire me and that is all I need. They are smart, good people, and they care. Try to find that anymore. It becomes the bedrock of my work. I can doubt that I might add anything to them, but not that they have all the pieces necessary to succeed. The basic problem is that they are idealists rather than materialists. Don’t take these names literally; idealist is not about ideals it is about ideas. The inserted “l” is for phonetics. And materialism has a host of synonyms that almost adds up to a posse. The critical issue here is that materialists feel the world is made up of objects, whereas idealists see the world as essentially spiritual. We have gone materialistic for the past four hundred years. Materialists view the world as dead; for idealists it is alive. Do not think for a minute that this makes little difference. It makes all the difference. Physical is about facts, spiritual about meaning. They lead in totally different directions, as do cause and purpose. There is no purpose in a causal world, yet is there anyone who does not experience purpose? Is that not worth nothing? Talk about looking the other way.

So we have the idea. Whence comes the inspiration? This issue has a quite ugly history that significantly enters into the mix here. I fit with almost no one on the planet, which leads to an almost deafening aloneness. This is a consequence of my experience, not an indictment of my character. I am done blaming everything on myself and covering for others. Some actions are simply despicable. I suffered the consequences. But every cloud has a silver lining; different can lead to creativity.

Give me liberty or give me death has become real for me and forced a search for alternatives. We can will what we do, but not will what we will. Conscious determination can get us through nine to five, but only beatific inspiration will get us to purpose and satisfaction. My new system views that intuition is the communicative form of God. I intend to stick around here thebook feels finished. Subjectivity will tell me when that happens. And by God I do not mean an idol of religious dogma, but rather a living Being with whom we are one and with whom we communicate through an enhanced empiricism which incorporates both objectivity and subjectivity.

**Introduction.**

It is always hard to start a book. Dreams can outrun their leash and the opening options are almost infinite. The first written word excludes all the others. Reality bites. But each path has its beauty, and one real transcends a multitude of imaginary. We can share real; imaginary dies on the vine.

So we are going to start with the broad and then focus on the narrow. William Hocking wrote Types of Philosophy in 1929. The first chapter shall track that book. Other introductions to philosophy from that era are more cited, but then, of course, they are written by materialists. Intuition speaks louder than reason to me here. Quite simply, Hocking strikes me as a more admirable person than the others, and as we become products of our philosophies, idealism works for me. Competent and caring is simply a more attractive package. Hocking never lets me down. Others always seem to get around to their special offer, for only $19.95.

Dominant authors of today extol the virtues of excluding God in a world view, and they are prone to castigate as cowards those who do. Balanced people can listen to criticism and evaluate its validity for the possibility of improvement. But these pit bulls fear bite, and it reveals their duplicity. Sigmund Freud was an example. He thought people
who embraced God were fearfully clinging to an idealized father—certainly not seeking creative inspiration. And he lost his major supporters, Adler, Jung, and Rank over his insistence that they never abandon the sanctity of the oedipal complex. Freud lost me when he claimed that fear of being blinded in battle was a displaced oedipal complex. He ran the concept into the ground, and Ernest Becker in his Pulitzer award winning book, The Denial of Death, felt that the oedipal complex was Freud’s immortality project. Freud felt humans lack the capacity to comprehend death. But fear generated when an airliner hits an air pocket suggests quite the opposite. We can be blind to anything if it bothers us enough. And looking away is not a free lunch.
Section One:
Types of Philosophy

Chapter One. Naturalism

Just what is philosophy? Is it some esoteric tower where people go when they want to feel superior to others, as if intellect ruled the roost? Few are inspired by the chance of a possible philosophic encounter, and yet our lives are guided by our personal philosophies, whether we see that or not. Philosophy can be defined as the sum total of our beliefs, and by beliefs we mean those things that determine our actions. Philosophy also includes the big picture—God, immortality, purpose, free will—that which provides meaning and purpose, thus turns us into beings rather than objects.

Philosophy and psychology appear to merge. Neither thoughts nor concepts are visible, so being scientific is impossible. Psychology gives it a giant effort, changing its name to Behavioral Science, which throws away subjectivity. It was said of the behaviorist David Hume that he was like a man who goes outside of his house, and looking in the window, reports that he cannot find himself at home. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy throws out belief for perception and in the process throw out the person.

Someone outside the area of mental health would have no idea how misguided the field is today, but I could not shake my experience otherwise even to keep my job. I saw probably more combat vets in out-patient therapy groups than anyone on the planet 170,000 patient hours with no suicides, which seems to be a problem for the clinics today. A CBS affiliate wanted to do a program on our (my) group. The VA would let the patients go on TV but not me, since I am not cognitive behavioral. I quit the next day,
knowing where this was headed and having been there before. But the numbers do not lie and I cannot do otherwise.

They bought a new building just for PTSD at our hospital, but my understanding is that nobody comes. Reason alone is not strong enough to address the pressure of combat. That requires empathy, compassion, and togetherness. Reason, cognitive exercises, and classes are not enough. Consider this manual a continuing effort for a new psychology, which must start with a new metaphysics.

So while philosophy and psychology intertwine, it is obvious that philosophy is dominant. The choice of the whole limits the evolution of its parts. Materialism, the father of science and the dominant philosophy today, eliminates God and anything that cannot be seen and counted. That works for external objects but not for living beings. Experience, memory, intuition, empathy, will, caring, spirituality and love are all off limits. The puppy goes out with the newspapers on the floor.

Few set out deliberately to form a personal philosophy. Instead, we pick it up haphazardly along the way: tradition, authority, admired figures, loved figures, the arts, etc. The good is that these are likely to carry some truth; the bad is that we hardly notice we embrace them. Reason without intuition is empty, while intuition without reason is blind. We need both. Socrates felt that the unexamined life was not worth living. Take that for what it is worth, but do not overlook that he died for his convictions. That must mean something. And we can add Jesus Christ, Joan of Arc, Giordano Bruno to that list also.

Naturalism is the dominant philosophy of the day and has been for several centuries. It explains the external world very well, but falls flat trying to explain living beings. And it does not disprove the supernatural, it just rules it out of court. Like our primary language, we grow up in it, but upon reflection I find myself incredulous that anyone would wish to embrace it. Void of hope and purpose, it seems to survive on pretentious arrogance. The force of naturalism lies in what it denies. As Hocking lists its points it appears

humanity got drunk with objective success and howled at the moon.

Here is no frills description of naturalism, a system which is most prominent in what it leaves out, its endemic arrogance, and the darkness to which it leads. Humanity has consorted with this system forever. It speaks some truth, just not all of it.

**Hocking’s Description:**

1. There is no God.

2. There is no immortality or any sort of survival of death.

3. There is nothing in the human being more than what he derives from the natural causes which have produced him. If we mean by “soul” something in man distinct from nature, there is no soul.

4. Miracle and providence are excluded; and prayer becomes a meaningless performance, unless one keeps it up for aesthetic, disciplinary or therapeutic effect.

5. And there can be no “freedom of the will.” Materialism implies determinism. The laws which govern man’s behavior are the same as the laws of the movements of the stars and the atoms. Your atoms have decided, together with the rest of the world: you will do what you must.

6. The ruling powers of the world appear indifferent to individual human interests and to the hopes of the race. And if no earlier catastrophe occurs, the decline of available heat must some day destroy all life on the planet. Human life is mounted upon a sub-human pedestal, and must shift for itself alone in the heart of a silent and mindless universe. Naturalism is the philosophy of our disillusionment.
Purpose requires a subject. Something has to look forward in time and then determine today what changes can get us to tomorrow. Purpose lives in time. Cause lives in today. As materialism, the concept that all things are simply aggregates of eternal atoms, has been challenged and weakened by the awareness of sub-atomic particles, let alone Schrödinger cats, simultaneous particle/waves, and effects changed by an observer, so time and space have transformed as things out there. There is no time and space out there. New space could continuously be being generated out of time/space contingency which evolves out of each genuine combination of spirit and object in the process of an ever evolving creativity. The more the world embraces, richer becomes the orchestra and so on forever and all time. Not happy, perhaps, not rest, certainly, but definitely capable of generating satisfaction.

But it is easier to see time as a mental construct than space, although both trip over themselves over eternity. Where does space end, and then what is outside it? How does time begin when there is nothing to remember from which to start it. Obviously, time is not a thing outside; it is a thing inside. How do I know how long I have been out of high school, without a memory of having been there. I have left no rings on a tree. A specific time frame starts with a memory. Where is that memory? It is not in time space, yet no one doubts ideas are real. So we use our consciousness to span the gap and create the duration. Today is always in the “now”. Only memory can capture time. And ideas, not being in time/space become quantum. I can imagine going to the edge of the Cosmos instantaneously, or ten times instantaneously for that matter. Time avoids contingency, being quantum, which means that to go from Illinois to New York, you do not having to traverse everything in between. This is Star Wars stuff.

For our purposes, we organize our sense of self on the basis of time. There is no pendulum in our brain, but there is a rate at which conceptions occur. I would guess that happens naturally about seven times a second. But

Naturalism can prove none of this. It simply rules it out of court. Reason without feeling is empty (naturalism’s criticism of pure abstraction), but feeling without reason is blind (the only way I can view those who embrace this).

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It might be impossible to convey how horrifying it is for me to never see this before. I took science courses in school, not the arts; and my heroes in medical school opted for penicillin before prayer. Credibility went down the drain when the Bible, a blood mess in the First Testament, was the literal word of God; not to mention that whales eat plankton, not people, and kangaroos would have been a stretch to get on the ark. Obviously, religion, has its dogma as well, probably more so because abstract know no limits, whereas the physical cannot walk through walls, or on water. (Today we would demand a video.)

Nothing about this system is congenial. And it is even worse than Hocking described. If we say the world appears indifferent to human interests, it suggests it might have an interest in something else. But it can have nothing at all. A rock cannot even sit. It just is, forever, or at least the atoms comprising it are, forever and all time, not able to crawl out of existing. And out of this uninspiring entity we are going to paint a landscape?

We can save a lot of trouble as to how people tried to fashion a more livable philosophy than materialism, which in itself was hardly stupid. Tied together have been: mind/body, mental/physical, spiritual/physical, body/soul, body/self, sacred/secular, idealism/naturalism. The essence we are trying to establish is the absolute versus the contingent, which one is self-sufficient. Which is a product of the other. What captures this best for humanity is idealism/materialism; for the individual it is simply cause versus purpose. If cause is absolute, purpose is ruled out; the past determines the present. If purpose is absolute then there is a final cause, and the future determines the present.
there is little basis for that guess. We cannot count here because each time we count we shift to counting and lose track of looking.

We may never get answers to the ultimate questions. Something has to play judge and that itself is what is in question. Kant felt this was above our pay grade and simply gave it a name, then looked away, as though naming adds some control. I guess it is important to know what you do not know, but this becomes what will never be known. If only we could let it go, which we cannot.

Philosophy has been called that which gives reasons for what we wish to do instinctively, basically it generates excuses. So I do not expect to find a reason at the end of this rainbow. Schopenhauer saw this problem which led to his major work, Will and Representation. Basically, we wish and we perceive. All the rest is splashing. My reaction to reading Hocking’s description is going to be sufficient for me. If it is not blatantly wrong, I am going to side for friendly. Why aim for hell if you have a chance for heaven? And just what is that heaven—eternal rest, constant harp music, praising the glory of God for an eternity? None of that works more than a few weeks at best for me and certainly not for eternity. I want to do what I conceive to be the reason for my existence. My will is that there be a living world, and the finest logic in the world is not going to dissuade me of that. I need more than logic to reach truth. Numbers are too opaque. This is about heart not head, feeling not conception, love not hubris. Providence guides me. I am going to come to love that word. Reflecting back I see that I quickly came to love Frederick Bastiat, a french economist who made the case that if God created us, he certainly provide for us. That is Providence. Bastiat died at age 43, another life wasted by tuberculosis, but I have my t-shirt to commemorate him with.

So be it with intuition here. I do not need a stone tablet. I do not need a book guaranteed by the word of God, backed up by an organization that appears to specialize in dogma. I just need to be open to the communicative form of God, intuition, or in it’s more complete form, Providence. If I am going to go wrong, I want to go down my way, not just mouthing empty words. Providence tells me that God placed me here to follow His inspiration and through love turn purpose into reality. In simpler terms that means to care for those you love, which one does by turning inspiration driven purpose into external reality. Enter materialism, interface with the external world, and help our loved ones prosper. That never gets boring, and if there is such a thing as eternity, it is the only thing I could see doing worthy of that much time.

I do not want to suppress my feelings to remain objective. I want to express my feelings to create objective. There is not one without the other, but once again, which is contingent? That takes us to metaphysics and the endless battle between idealism and naturalism. One will be absolute but not sufficient. Both are necessary to enter into community, so lets figure out how to make that happen.

Naturalism has to be a component of any philosophical system because no one questions the existence of external reality. We bump into it, survive off of it, communicate through it. This is so apparent that its reality is not proclaimed by experts, but by the race. It is easy to grasp. Since everything comes from dust, it can all be explained by dust. One does not have to juggle multiple parameters, such as mind and matter, spiritual and physical, supernatural, etc. Focusing on objective, science has taken measurement to an amazing degree. Landing on the moon is not a walk in the park. Science and naturalism appear to be traveling in tandem which lends credence to each.

But science and naturalism are not joined at the hip. It is not science which adopts naturalism, it is naturalism which adopts science as its metaphysical guide. Science is not a philosophy as it deals only with its specific domain and not with the world as a whole. It asks what, but not why. Should we simply throw that word away? The power of sci-
ence is reinforced by the amazing details of our measurement. We have long since pasted Materialism, which was the world as atoms, flown through quarks to the almost unthinkable. Paradoxically, while that adds prestige to field it also undermines it by attempting to explain the ever smaller by the inconceivable. Simultaneously (potentially) particle and wave until crystallized by an observer is hardly intuitive. Schoedinger Cat jokes walk point here and are funny until we are asked to believe they are real. We are not in Kansas anymore.

To no small degree, naturalism implicitly places mankind at the center of the cosmos, since without reflection we impute consciousness to ourselves to the exclusion of everything else. (How would we know that everything else is not conscious if we ourselves could not consciously come to that conclusion?) And finally, naturalism is immanently social. We can all see a tree, or hear a bluebird. And words fit better with objects than with intuitions. Metaphors translate abstract into tangible, not the other way around. And language is metaphorical.

But naturalism can never be sure that it is complete. It rules out spiritual by simply saying so, and if wrong, it is wrong all the way down. It imputes courage to face the cold, hard facts described above and then just looks the other way. Naturalism is a social post-traumatic stress disorder, which stifles intuition, inspiration, and purpose, leaving us with bucket lists and piles of things. Satisfaction is connected to truth and love, but it bears no relation to eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Given an option why would anyone settle for that? And how do we know there is no option if we don’t try to find it? Life should be more than just looking away”, and what if faith is the very factor which makes it so?

Finally, some differences will not go away, and cannot be explained by naturalism:
1. The mind observes itself; the brain does not.
2. The brain is in space; the mind is not.
3. The brain is in the present only; the mind is extended in time to the past and the future.
4. The brain is a set of facts; the mind is a set of facts and their meanings.
5. Qualities exist only in the mind.

There is no green in the tree, the light reflecting from the tree, nor any part of then neural system. The experience of green is only in the mind, as it is for all sensory perceptions, as well as ideas and images. Where is the vision of my grade school?— stored in some preconscious warehouse in my brain stem given an obtuse name? If mental images do not exist in space, then where?

At every point we see that the mind is greater than the brain. So when do we stop trying to explain greater by the less and consider it might be better explained by the greater? At some point naturalism becomes something up with which we can no longer put. Churchill and I have reached that point (his idiom), and I suggest that you join us.

Chapter Two: Idealism

Ernest Hocking’s Types of Philosophy is the text from which I am trying to learn. But this is a survival manual; we are only trying to save the world, not organize all of philosophy. So we follow intuition here, not reason, lest we fail to see the forest for the trees. There are only two reasonable choices: spirit or material. Settle that and we settle the world. Does the Boeing 787, given enough time, come together by random chance, or is there a design department. And if a design department, then a chief, and in the spiritual world that is God. There would be no disagreement about that term were it not for how we make that connection. Intuition guided humanity for 99.8% of its 200,000 years, but naturalism has prevailed for the last 0.2%. So now, if you cannot perceive it you cannot count it. That is overlooking a
lot of “likes”, which even on Facebook must be worth something. Are we shooting ourselves in the foot?

God does not use a cell phone. But there is such a thing as Providence. Might we not do better seeking a connection in real life, rather than on a cell phone? The big issues in life are decided by the heart, not the head. If God is truth and love, then all the big things become about heart. Throwing away subjective to promote objective appears beyond reason. Then again, arrogance knows no limits.

But we are confusing intuitionism with idealism, the theory of knowledge with the structure of the world. The intuitionist experiences feeling as a valid source of information, not just as subjectivity which allegedly compromises perception. Objectivity is sterile without affect which drives it, useful for quantitative analysis of objects, but prone to provoke resentment from living beings. Subjectivity lends itself less easily to language, appearing more at home in metaphor. My favorite metaphor is whether my tail is wagging or not. That usually answers everything I need to know.

Idealism, however, is the philosophy which holds that reality is in the nature of mind. It is a view of the big picture of our world, a view from which thinking simply cannot rest until it feels content. Consider it a mental rule that mind will expand until comfortable. The options are two: physical or mental (space or space/time), the world is made from pieces to the whole, or from the whole to the pieces. The problem for physical is that it can never have a first cause. The problem for mental is how can something come out of nothing.

But the latter is not so hard to explain. We all believe we can act with purpose and create concrete new items in the world. This book will be new in he world, not just a repeat. So if we can create new with borrowed media, then something greater than us can create both new and media. It should not be hard to imagine something greater than us if you have ever looked at the sky at night.

Idealism comes in two types: subjective and objective. Subjective is held back only by the limits of imagination. For some people that might be fun, but then they might be in padded rooms. Objective is where we will come to rest. Not only is it friendly and inviting, but it appears the most rational. That might seem strange to some, or perhaps many, but that is only because they are simply company men (or women) doing what they are told. Objective idealism can only be grounded by one entity—a personal God. Trying to ground it back in matter would be bizarre, and probably also illegal.

Intuition and idealism run together. The logic of objective idealism gives us that there is a God. The corollaries of intuition tells us how we might communicate with that God. We need a personal connection, not one mediated through human authority. I, for one, have a big problem believing the Bible is the word of God. If it is we are home free (at least in the New Testament), but if we are wrong everything will have to rest entirely on faith. However, faith without belief is frail. Just today Pope Francis made two children saints who saw the Virgin Mary one hundred years ago. It appears to me faith could use a little reason here. Are we to believe the biblical characters just drop in from time to time? Nature does not work that way.

Intuition offers an option. It can be seen as the communicative form of God. We presume that, but we have to presume any other option also. Providence says essentially that if we are put here on this earth by God, And He would likely provide for sustenance. Why waste his creation? We can say that there is no author, but then we have to believe that a Boeing Dreamliner given enough time could just randomly gather out of a pile of dust; anything could, given eternity. But actually, the mathematics of eternity goes the other way, it favors dissolution.

So I am going to trust there is purpose in the world. That is not hard to do, since everyone on the planet believes he or she can act on purpose. And even if we cannot prove God exists, which presumably would be something like him walking on water or hovering in the hallway, why would we opt for naturalism. That would be like choosing a bowl of
carpet tacks for breakfast instead of blueberries and cream. Naturalism is the philosophy of disillusionment. Tolstoy saw the end of the world as eternal darkness which sends a zero back through time cancelling out all that came before. If we know the ending, then all that is left is to eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. Frankly, there are not enough drinks.

The critical element here is to view God’s communication with us via full experience (external and internal) not just perception. Naturalism throws out intuition, subjectivity, will, and feelings. If it does not entail external perception you can’t count it. When we empathize with someone we instantaneously grasp their experience. Physiological monitors simply raise a dust, where upon we complain we cannot see.

Empathy is the gold standard of understanding. It is not just something that corrupts our intellect. Objectivity is for objects, subjectivity (specifically intersubjectivity) is for living beings. Try an interview on a new patient after connecting him to a lie detector and see how well that works. Or rotely assess suicidal risk from a list of any number of questions and most patients will see how the professional is more worried about law suits than knowing the patient.

My rule for assessing suicide was not to ask a lot of questions or focusing on body language. I simply asked myself if we made an empathic connection. If so, then the patient was still engaging with the world and I could relax. It never failed. I could also tell a few seconds after a new patient walked into my office whether he would fit into group. That proved wrong about five percent of the time. Intuition speaks louder than language. It takes in all the notes together, which constitutes the song, rather than random notes, which can only make scales.

Recently the pope was looking for God in the stars. Since truth is not a social power issue in a free society then let me be so blasphemous as to say he is looking in the wrong place. God is not out there; he is in us. We are one with him and in experiencing ourselves we experience the world. But like the fish do not notice the water we do not notice intuition. It is not on a mountain top, or in a cathedral, or at the end of ten day fast. We simply shift our mind set, not in an instant because the shift is outside time, but rather with a disposition, not in a location. Nor is it a Devine intervention. We grasp the world like we grasp ourselves. It is becoming with, not standing outside others or the world. And we know ourselves in terms of meaning, purpose, and will, as we also know the world.

When I reflect on myself at the age of four, while the machinery of my life has changed, my self is pretty constant. I cried about a dead bird back then; I cry about all the critters today. That evolution, the constant process that incessantly defines ourselves, we do not notice because it is always there. It is the absolute; everything else is the specific actions we take with this disposition. We do not change much, yet we evolve constantly. Let it come to you. It is your truth, the only strategic truth you will ever need; the only one you will ever have. Truth is not in the stars. It is in the heart. Perhaps the Pope will prove this wrong, by mere declaration most likely.

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Psychology today is the modern way of milking stones. It gets lumped with science, although if perception is the gold standard of reality then mental and spiritual have no standing at all. Psychology changes its name to Behavioral Science, which means it explains the meaningful by the meaningless. Science entails a causal world. There is no purpose. Everything is blind chance. Einstein could not believe that God played dice with the world. Nor can I, although Einstein arrived at this position several moves ahead of me. My professional experience dragged me through the theoretical mistakes until the numbers could no longer be ignored. And it has given me the basis to know we are wrong along with the responsibility to do something about it. That something, is in part this manual.

I perhaps saw more combat vets in out-patient PTSD groups than anyone else on the planet (170,000 visits).
saw them as people, not objects, and hence did things with them, not to them. People can be viewed as biological machines, but if they see that is what you are doing— they will prove otherwise—they will leave, on purpose. and stay away, on purpose. I fought a constant war of intuition versus science with the administration, the major battles which we won, but like our international situation today, nothing was resolved. and I got out while I could, leaving no time for a farewell. So I penned one for my website, calling it my Gettysburg Address. It becomes both a clarification and a responsibility. Behavioral Science is us observed from the outside. But we also experience ourselves from the inside through intuition. From the outside we get perception; from the inside we get experience. Experience is more comprehensive, as it includes both subjective and objective. We are grounded by both.

This would have been my farewell speech to the vets, had the two perspectives been able to coexist.

—My Gettysburg Address: June 2013—

“Physical science has made great progress in the past three hundred years. Psychology has not. Three hundred years ago Descartes said there were two types of substances in the world, mental and physical, each of which affects the other. But no one has been able to figure out how they interact—perhaps because they do not. Maybe they are mediated through something else, like spirit or soul. Three hundred years ought to be enough time for us to rephrase the question.

Psychology is trying to catch up to the magic of physics. They are trying to be scientists of the mind. But they have a problem. Science eliminates subjective in favor of objective. However, experience is all subjective. So they eliminate their subject. Science can study the brain, but not the mind.

Nevertheless, the Veterans Administration has bought into Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as the only treatment for PTSD because of its claim to be scientific. They are putting all their eggs in one basket, and, frankly, the basket has holes in it. Regardless of orientation, the only thing that has ever correlated with psychotherapeutic success has been the quality of the patient/therapist relationship. Yalom said that all therapy can be summarized in the verb “to be”. CBT, however, is about ideas, not relationships. Ideas are not strong enough to support the weight of combat.

My group logged about 170,000 patient hours. That is probably more than any other outpatient combat PTSD group in the country. I formulated some principles from those hours. One is that PTSD is chronic. Ignoring it will not make it go away. Seeing PTSD as chronic is not failing to aim for a cure; it is stopping the bleeding. The worst thing to do is to try to go back to life before the trauma. One has to let go of those days and craft purpose and relationships consistent with one’s new personal truth. Living pretend is not living at all. It leads to empty, and empty leads to disaster. Resolution of PTSD is common sense and hard work. It is blocking and tackling, letting go and starting over. There are no trick plays to victory.

CBT sees it that ideas have a causal effect on action. They believe this even though no one can explain that process. If they are wrong, they are wrong all the way down. As mentioned, not finding the answer in three hundred years suggests there might be an alternative explanation. Quantum mechanics is revolutionizing physics. Perhaps someday quantum psychology will give us an explanation. Until then, all positions are merely conjecture.

What matters here is not who is right or wrong. No one knows that today. What matters here is that the government is taking a one-size-fits-all approach. It could produce a one-size-fits-none result. It is essentially cost free to offer both approaches. So let the patient choose. People are supposed to be ends, not simply means. Are psychologists such experts they can take away the veteran’s option to choose? It is the veteran’s life; let him or her make the choice. These soldiers fought for freedom; they deserve the opportunity to express it.”

—Robert Andersen, M.D.