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# The Iranian Yearbook of Phenomenology

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## MADness, and “Luciferism”

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### Abstract

This paper continues applying the notion of the “Luciferian Existential” as a way of accounting for the extreme violence humans seem to be willing to perpetrate both in nuclear war and in ignoring climate change. We begin by letting humankind and Lucifer mutually reflect what initially seems to be their distinguishing attributes. This is done as a speculative attempt to shed light on the seemingly impossible sin or crime of the greatest of all creatures in relation to God and, on the side of human beings, the unimaginable horror of the actualization of the preparation for nuclear war and continued ignoring of climate change. The hope is that we may illuminate human experience as it underwrites both horrors and how possibly human experience may illuminate the mythic-theological figure of Lucifer. Although we feature human kind’s essential being out of balance, its dodging of its mortality, and its ontological restlessness, culminating in blinding “Luciferian” rage as a way of understanding the human propensity to extreme violence, it is clear that neither the build-up of nuclear armaments nor ignoring climate change seem to be rooted in ontological restlessness or sort of blindness caused by suppression of death, or its capacity for rage or even jealousy, but in something else. Antiquity singled out pride or inordinate self-love as the perennial culprit. There is doubtless inordinate self-love in play here too, but here we suggest that it is also [inseparably the dulling of a sense of what is of ultimate importance, i.e., there is a loss of interest in what used to be called wisdom. This blunting of spiritual sensibilities approaches a sense of stupidity and it is, if not caused by, fostered by what we, especially in the West, call modern life-style, to the extent that the comforts, goals, and conveniences of everyday life seem to define for humans what is central and essential to human life. Thus “Luciferian existential,” although initially neatly tied to Luciferian rage, becomes less precise and finally is made to cover whatever it is in humans which can account for the blindness by which humans are party to the moral outrages such as nuclear war and the climate apocalypse.

**Keywords:** Christian tradition, violence, phenomenology, climate change, atomic war.



## 1. Introduction

This essay studies an ancient theological theme in the Abrahamic religions (I am calling the theme “Luciferism”) [1] as it might be related to *peace studies*. It is especially in relation to the focal concern raised since the 1960’s of MAD, or the madness of “mutually assured destruction.” The basic philosophical theses are based on analyses within the phenomenological and existential tradition. Obviously, the issues of war, violence, and peace encompass all cultures and ages. In the Christian tradition, following St. Augustine, peace was thought of as the “tranquility of order.” He and St. Thomas Aquinas reflected on the conditions of peace in terms of what threatened or violated peace in terms of the disorders within the body-politic but also within the individuals. This latter is a theme in twentieth-century existential-phenomenological philosophy, also especially with the analyses of human frailty and fragility by Jean-Paul Sartre, Michele Sciacca, and Paul Ricoeur.

No less important is the theme of the social-political order and disorder as measured by the pursuit of the common good. In a prior presentation to the Iranian Phenomenological Society, (“The Goods that are Necessarily Common and the Goods that are Commonly Necessary: A Husserlian Theory of the Common Good”), as well as in *Who One Is*, [2] I attempted to show that what Husserl calls “universal ethical love” and the inviolable dignity of the Other were woven into the issues “the common good.” The theme of the inviolable dignity of the Other, we have proposed, is not a subsequently discovered property but comes to light of necessity in the appropriate presencing of another person. Thus, we claim here without argument that a key to social-political peace is the robust awareness and institutional-legal promotion of the value of the common good.

Although the “common good” goes back to the discussions in Plato and Aristotle the focus in this presentation is “Luciferism.” The circle of conceptual issues surrounding “Lucifer” would seem to antedate these formative Greek thinkers, perhaps at least a thousand years. But of course, in the religion of ancient Greece, the very old myth of Prometheus reverberates a form of “Luciferism” and Plato’s *Timaeus* wrestles with how the moral and physical surds in the universe can be accounted for if one holds that it is the work of an all-wise architect. For Judaism and Christianity, the key texts are *Isaiah* 14, especially



verses 12-15, and *Ezekiel* 28, especially 1-19. In Islam, we have in the *Qu'ran* presentations of the Jinns, Iblis, and Shaytan which would seem to echo earlier references in Judaism and Christianity. Here is the paradigmatic passage from *Isaiah*:

O Day Star, son of Dawn!  
 How you are cut down to the ground,  
 You who laid the nations low!  
 You said in your heart,  
 'I will set my throne on high:  
 I will sit on the mount of the assembly  
 In the far north;  
 I will ascend above the heights  
 Of the clouds,  
 I will make myself like the most High.'  
 But you are brought down to Sheol  
 To the depths of the Pit.

## **2. Some of the Theological Themes Connected to Various Historical “Lucifer” References**

The Abrahamic traditions emphasize the exalted status of the human being by rendering the human in some respects superior to the “archangels” (and Jinns of Islam) and as the glory of all creation. One discovers a particularly poignant formulation in the *Qu'ran* where we find in several texts reference to *Iblis* in terms of his reprehensible pride at *not adoring* Adam. Before the assembly of angels or Jinns, God announces that he is about to place Adam as a vicegerent on the earth. God told Adam the names of all the creatures, and Adam then revealed their names to the assembly. And then God said to the angels: “Adore Adam,” and the text continues: “They adored him save only Iblis, who refused and was too proud and became one of the misbelievers.” (II, 42[MRM1], Chapter of the Heifer.)

In the Jewish and Christian traditions Adam and Lucifer, the Light-Bearer, have a status that is similarly extraordinarily eminent. Indeed, in some traditions, Lucifer is the greatest of all creation. However, with the subsequent creation of man, a tension surfaces because man is made in the image of God in a special way. For example, for some of the Christian narratives, when Lucifer learns that man will be even

more eminent because Godself’s own Son will elevate humans by becoming one of them, a blinding jealousy breaks forth. In the later Christian tradition, the Isaiah motif (just quoted above) was believed to be repeated in *Jeremiah* 2:20. This passage clearly refers historically to Israel’s rebelliousness but was applied to the more metaphysical rebellious figure of Lucifer. In the later tradition, e.g., in St. Thomas Aquinas,[3] the *Jeremiah* passage was taken to signify the exemplarily sinful pride found in Lucifer, who, at this time, was believed to be the chief Archangel. The relevant passage, which was to echo for the next millennia, has Yahweh (God) saying to Lucifer: “Thou has broken My yoke, thou has burst My bands, and thou has said: I will not serve (*non serviam* in the Latin Vulgate translation).” We see here an interpretation integrating the impious collective-social behavior of the people or state of Israel, along with a reflection of the metaphysically puzzling deed of the rebellion of the archangel Lucifer, the most beautiful and intelligent creature, against the all-good Creator.

This interrelating of Luciferian behavior with both the individual and the collective social-political realms is the core focus of this paper. There are numerous other integrations of Lucifer, e.g., in the figure of Satan as the Tempter and Liar and primal force of disorder in the guise of a serpent in *Genesis* 3; or Lucifer’s place in accounting for the origin or etiology of evil, i.e., for answering the question: What can be the source of evil if all creation is the effect of the all-good omnipotent creator God. Some early Christian writers, e.g., Marcion, wanted to posit an anti-God God as co-equal with God; others sought to posit a dark side of God immanent within Godself. We may also recall the more ancient dualism of Zoroaster, and then much later Manichaeism. In this regard Lucifer, like the *Lux-Ferens*, bearer of Light, the bringer of light, the morning star (see the *Isaiah* passage above), becomes the opposite of his original gloriously beautiful and wise self: He becomes the Father of Lies and Prince of Darkness, etc., as in numerous New Testament passages. Another integration of Lucifer into other contexts bears mentioning: In passages in the Hebrew Bible (“The Old Testament”) the very act of creation has to deal with the forces of chaos or the “formless void” (*tohu wa bohu* of *Genesis* 1:2) which, on occasion, is filled (as in *Job* and the *Psalms*) with water monsters (perhaps suggesting Satan) that must be conquered and slain in order for God’s creation to prevail – thus

echoing the Babylonian-Mesopotamian myth of Marduk and Tiamat in the *Enuma Elish* which scholars have argued was Israel's own historical conceptual context for formulating its grasp of the divine revelation. Here, clearly, we do not yet have the doctrine of a *creatio ex nihilo* which appears later in the Hebrew Bible in *2 Maccabees* 7:28, perhaps under Greek philosophical influence. Rather we have an account resembling more Plato's *Timaeus* where the world-architect must deal with a prior not completely compliant realm of chaos with its *ananke*, i.e., unique sense of inevitability and necessity.

The early Christian theologians took passages, like the serpent reference in *Genesis* and the references to "Satan," and sometimes to the "demons," to be a form of a metamorphosis of Lucifer and other fallen angels (analogous to the *Qu'ran's* connecting Iblis and Satan (*Shaytan*) to the *Jinns*, i.e., those magnificent ("angelic") spiritual creatures some of whom aligned themselves with Iblis). Thus, we have an extension in the history of Lucifer, who was created an "archangel" and who then appeared as the tempting serpent of Chapter 1 of *Genesis* and eventually *Satan*, the Accuser (in *Job*), and in the New Testament, along with these guises in the Hebrew Bible, he appears as the father of lies, prince of this world, of devils and demons, and the arch-enemy of God and humankind. *The deepest mystery of all*, and I will return to this, is how this greatest, most beautiful, and intelligent being of all creation, was tempted and succumbed to the temptation to be the anti-God god. In what follows we will propose that this temptation is not as strange as it appears in its ancient mythic-theological form if human existence itself may be said to reflect, i.e., be an "image" and likeness of God, and thus reflect also the exalted status of Lucifer. The angels came to be thought of as pure "spiritual substances," i.e., those beings which essentially cannot perish or die and who like the embodied spirit, man, are immediately created by God, and were regarded as the most excellent of all creatures. Yet in some texts in the Abrahamic traditions, humankind had unique excellence which occasioned jealousy (cf. the reference to Iblis's rebellious pride above in Section 2.) Thus, we propose positing some sort of symmetry between humankind and Lucifer where we may transpose aspects of Luciferism onto humankind and use human self-awareness to illuminate the theological figure of Lucifer. But, along with the distinctive ontological excellences of Luciferism and humankind being perhaps able to illuminate each other especially in

terms of momentary blindness we have in both cases the ensuing acts of profound ingratitude. Thus, the blindness has the result of out a mode of self-and world-understanding whereby one thinks one has a right to exist and that somehow because one must act freely to creatively fulfill one’s calling one is moved to conveniently forget that one need not have been at all. And having forgotten or suppressed the source of one’s being one has a right to dispose of oneself and the created world as one wants. But what is this forgetfulness and/or blindness, especially in the case of the most perfect and intelligent of all creatures?

This integration and interrelating of Lucifer with the basic doctrines of the creation and fall, or original sin, in an account of how evil could possibly come to be, is an enormously rich complex tapestry of themes.[4] At the same time, the Abrahamic traditions face the clear tension between the exalted status of the human being and at the same time a disturbing fragility. The human has a capacity of self-deception in regard to its calling to realize through personal responsibility its divine and heavenly vocation. This fragility is frequently sprinkled with the active treacherous tempting presence of Lucifer, the “archangel” in the guise of “Satan.” Again, we must ponder how this greatest, most beautiful, and intelligent being of all creation, succumbed to the temptation to be the anti-God god. In what follows we will propose a Luciferian context for considering how such a moral catastrophe happens in humans and how this construct of too familiar and yet, thankfully rare, human behavior perhaps sheds some light on the suicidal blasphemy of the figure of Lucifer. We propose also that this may shed light on the current crisis for humanity, i.e., the normalization of nuclear weaponry (and, in addition, the indifference to climate change).

It would seem that Satan, as a subsequent form of Lucifer’s (or Iblis’s) involvement in human history and individual life, does not exonerate humans from wickedness, but rather the presence of this theological figure may be said to emphasize the exalted status of humans in their being not only called to be self-creating creatures but to be capable of anti-God godlike agency. The creation by God of spiritual beings was a mandate for the creature to be always disposed to do God’s will in the face of all of life’s decisions and challenges to do the opposite. But this elevated ontological status appears to have as the correlate, in both the angelic and human cases, the capacity to



capitulate to temptation, to self-deceive, to forget, or be distracted from God and God's goodness and think one has a right to be, i.e., a right to be or to have been created. In addition, and of special relevance to our focus on Luciferism, is the capacity to somehow be disposed to assume the same status as the Creator, which when acted upon affects the correlative arrogance and treachery. For Christianity, this is highlighted in all humanity's participation in the Son of God's crucifixion. All this points us to the theme of human fallibility, instability, frailty, and being out-of-balance. All these may be seen as manifestations of and pre-conditions for the Luciferian disorder but also, of course, for those pre-conditions that account for the often elusive but necessary goal of peace among humans.

### **3. Some Philosophical Analyses of the Fragility of Human Existence: Sciacca and Ricoeur**

We here offer a sketch of more lengthy analyses by two twentieth-century thinkers which will prepare us for the later sketch of the analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre which will be crucial for our thesis.

Michele Sciacca,[5] an Italian thinker inspired by especially by St. Augustine, Maurice Blondel, and the nineteenth-century philosophical theologian, Antonio Rosmini, argues that man is a complex whole that is basically pervaded by restlessness and imbalance. The human being existing in his concreteness is a synthesis of his particular self-aware finite existence, but this is pervaded by a divine constitutive principle, the idea of Being. This idea of Being, which is constitutive of human consciousness as its light, goes in advance of all theoretical and practical agency. It is infinite and as the idea of Being it is an awareness that is implicitly absolute, i.e., is related to nothing beyond itself. With Rosmini, Sciacca calls this constitutive idea of Being "the divine" in man because it is man's openness to God. Yet man has a propensity to be drawn to beings and ignore the presence of Being, the light of being, by and through which beings are manifest.[6] The human is a synthesis of the finite and infinite, which accounts for both his restlessness and imbalance, his grandeur and misery. The awareness of the idea of Being means one always knows implicitly more than one knows explicitly. And although one is taken up with finite beings in one's life, one is always aware of more than these things. Further, although one is delighted and distracted by the

endless flow of attractions and repulsions in the stream of experiences, the human is always beyond these and restless in regard to these because of the awareness of the infinity of being in terms of value and truth means that his heart, will, and intellect always exceeds all the good and true beings he encounters. In short, because human destiny and consciousness are determined by being inseparably bound up with the infinite Being and goodness of God, all of the particular experiences of good in life ultimately are unsatisfying.

One’s life is an interplay of presence and absence, i.e., we exist suffused with immense expectation and permanent absence. Whereas I am present to me myself in each act of my existing, nevertheless in each act the total presence that I want to be, know, and love is not immediately present and given. Thus, each act points to a “more” which is absent. It is the divine Absence because it is one’s essential present end and destiny and it is this merely signified presence and not yet present destiny that affects such a deficient presence. This mysterious Absence calls to an ulterior presence, to a subsequent search, to a future feeling, understanding and willing, to a ulteriority without weariness or relaxation. The awareness of this Absence itself constitutes a dynamism that activates itself without ceasing. Living in the presence and absence of the total presence of Being establishes the tension between, on the one hand, peace and order and, on the other, restlessness and disorder.

We are called while in the flow of time facing ineluctably transiency and contingency, to constitute ourselves as the trans-temporal essence to which God calls us; we are called, to essentialize ourselves as partakers of Godliness. We are called not to waste, superficializing our existence in the variety of moments; rather we are to profit from the passing transiency, deepen it, and as far as possible to essentialize the moments of existence in value, through aligning these moments with the transcendent values of being, “And it is not a matter of weaving the surface of life, which is weaving a veil which hides the void, in order then to weave and weave again, but rather to weave the web of life itself with values which alone are able to give it consistency and significance.” We properly weave the web of life by answering the calling to a form of self-creation, “by following the orientation of spirit which orientation is intrinsically turned toward (divine) Being, guided by that compass-beacon which is the presence of (divine) Being in us.” Again: Because Being is implicitly *present* in

the partiality of each of our acts it is *absent* in its totality from each of them. Thus, and as such, this absence disquiets, perturbs, and is also at the roots of our ongoing quest for distraction and constant stimulation. But such titillation satisfies without ever satisfying the way we want to be satisfied.[7]

The achievement of solidity, consistency, and depth, i.e., of moral and spiritual *greatness*, is always accompanied by an actual *smallness* and fragility, of which we are occasionally aware. The theme of the constitutive presence of being renders man essentially great and stable. But his greatness implies fragility, just as his fragility implies greatness. His essential participation in Being reveals his solidity and stability and at the same time his distance from Being by virtue of his finitude. Being finite means not being able, on one's own, to fulfill and complete the essential being which he is. Thus, is revealed his fragility "through a thousand ways in which he loses and finds himself, in which he disperses and reintegrates himself, impoverishes himself and ennobles himself, damns himself, and redeems himself."

In each moment the solidity, the greatness, and the immortality of our person as tied to our awareness of Being can slide away and collapse like a house of cards. Sciacca notes that even in life at its best, even in its fullness and when we are consistent and aware of the fullest and most effective possession of ourselves, even when we find ourselves having unshakable confidence and a most imperious hope, "there bears in upon us a sense so acute and cruel of our fragile and momentary existentiality that if we do not grab hold of a memory without beginning and cling to a hope without end, we are plunged into ourselves." Sciacca compares this crumbling, collapsing, and interior plunging in terms which today we would use to describe a "black hole," into which the edifice of our lives collapses as if we were caught in an interior powerful sucking vacuum or dragged down by quicksand which is both us and somehow not in our grasp.[8] (Cf. our later Sartre-inspired description of the "Luciferian moment.")

Let us very briefly continue this meditation of the interplay of human being's greatness and fragility, the human person's being both power of darkness and bearer of Light, by attending to some of Paul Ricoeur's [9] reflections on the interplay of infinity and finitude in man. We sketched Sciacca's dialectic and synthesis in terms of the presence of being in the face of beings which amounts to a synthesis of the ubiquitous absence (or present absence) of (divine) Being

accounting for the presence of beings, and thus the longing and disquiet in our encounter with beings. Husserl makes this accessible and clear in how the perceptual presence of things in the world is always pervaded by the absences of their unseen sides, their surroundings, and the context of the ultimate horizon or world within which all things are met. Connected with this is the consideration that if human existence is defined through its being-for-itself and by itself, it is keenly aware of its not being truly by itself or through itself. Its imagination is aware of its not always having been, that it could very well not be at any moment, that it did not choose to exist, that it need not be, that it is massively dependent on its surroundings to continue to exist. In short, one gets an “existential vertigo” at the precariousness of one’s existence. Indeed, Spinoza is echoed by Ricoeur: Human existing has an undercurrent of sadness which is the sadness of being finite.

But if we keenly experience our limitation and finitude, it is because we also, as a pre-condition experience what is beyond our finitude. As the sense of our finitude requires acts of negation and privation, i.e., acts by which I am compelled to acknowledge what I am not and what is not me, and what deprives or negates me, and what things are by *not* being this or that, so such negation implies a prior positing or affirmation of being which is more than what I am *not*, what is *not*, and what is negating, limiting, or tormenting me. (Cf. Sciacca above.) Similarly, the sense of our fragility and fallibility and even our wickedness necessarily presupposes somehow an inkling of what is more and other than fragility, fallibility, and wickedness, i.e., what is stable, infallible, and good. And, so if there is in one’s being the pervasiveness and sadness of finitude so Ricoeur adds that at the same time “Man is the Joy of Yes in the sadness of the finite.”

A basic philosophical question which we neither can repress nor pursue here is whether this tension or dialectic in human existence of finitude/infinity or presence/absence or immanence/ transcendence really does involve the knowing or justified affirmation of a positive sense of infinity and transcendence. It might seem more correct to say that even though human existence knows throughout all of its experience of finitude that something is beyond it, and even though it never knows itself in its finitude without transcending it, nevertheless we may, as philosophers, ask: Is it so that this indeed is an affirmation of an actually infinite being which could be made present in its infinite transcendence? Is it not rather so that we know infinity and

transcendence only as of the disquiet, the restlessness, the constant transcending of finite existence seeking transcendence of itself? But is this a seeking of a possible transcendence which is essentially not just more, and more beyond that, etc., etc., but an actual infinity of absolute being that is transcendence in and for itself? Or does this mere endless transcending of finitude exhaust the sense we have of “transcendence”? In which case, is it “only” religious, not merely philosophical faith, which is able to posit a transcendent being which is not merely the endlessness of our striving and seeking but rather their fulfillment in an actual infinite eternal Being?[10]

Apart from this philosophical question, it seems fairly clear that part of the condition of finitude is obviously ignorance, weakness, inability to possess oneself fully, e.g., to remember one’s past or imagine one’s future inerrantly. Even when one does entertain what is not yet and what is possible in terms of what is desirable and realizable there is a gap between these and one’s ability to actualize these. One may, for example, see what the desirable agency is and yet fail to muster the courage and appropriate attitude to accomplish it – out of, e.g., a sudden unexpected weakness or cowardice or failed assessment of the situation. We simply but mysteriously fail to show up for ourselves. Thus, the life of thought and action is pervaded not only by the negations of fallibility, error, ugliness, and weakness there is prior to these senses inklings, of soundness, truth, beauty, and strength. Thus Ricoeur may claim that “it is undeniable that it is only *through* the presently evil condition of man’s heart that one can detect a condition more primordial than any evil: it is through hate and strife that one can perceive the intersubjective structure of the respect which constitutes the difference of consciousnesses; it is through misunderstanding and lying that the primordial structure of speech reveals the identity and otherness of minds.”[11] Needless to say, such a dialectic is the foundation of and motivation for peace studies, even if it be true that the quest for eternal and true peace in this life is eternal only in the sense of an unending quest.

#### **4. Luciferism as the Most Dangerous Human “Existential”**

Let us entertain the hypothesis that the Lucifer figure may be said to have experienced the undercurrent of sadness that comes from being finite. As with humans being essentially tied to the question of being

in all its infinity and absoluteness, so in Lucifer, there was always a discrepancy between his will to be God-like and/or Godself and not being able to be so. This means that even though Lucifer is portrayed in some traditions as the most beautiful and intelligent of all creatures, he too is beset with a kind of fragility in not being able to be, on his own terms, God's equal. Even though he knew with utter clarity such was stupid, irrational, and wicked, nevertheless, he too was capable of not doing the good that he would and of doing what he would not (cf. St. Paul in *Romans* 7:15-19). The Lucifer narrative, at least in the Christian tradition, suggests that he too was capable of a colossal self-blinding, self-deceiving moral collapse. The clairvoyant perspicacity in Lucifer would be such that he would at once grasp that his revolt would mean the loss of his pre-eminence and that he henceforth would be the target of universal condemnation and revulsion. This grasp of anticipated inevitable humiliation, along with the awareness of his own capacity to be blindingly arrogant, means that Lucifer too had an ontological fragility. Let us hypothesize that this could induce him not to be himself in all his supernal intelligence and beauty and to repress the gift of his excellence as a gift and to let himself be swallowed up into a self-blinding arrogance that enabled him to commit an unsurpassable metaphysical crime. The question then is: How can the greatest of all creatures who, constitutively is united with the divine fullness of being by reason of being so created, and whose constitutive desire is to be united, in his finitude as a creature, to the uncreated infinity of God, appease that desire by aspiring equality or superiority to God - while knowing full well it is hideously blasphemous and disgracefully ungrateful in the eyes of his Creator as well as all fellow creatures? How can he choose himself to be God without being the absolute enemy of his Creator and all his fellow-creatures, and ultimately his own worst enemy? Later we will consider the appropriateness of naming this “stupid.”

We perhaps make a first step toward answering this question with an analogy drawn from our own experience of ourselves. We all know what it is to be angry. And some of us know what it is to be very angry. Surely the worst forms of violence we know of are tied to extreme cases of anger. And extreme anger's source is when our own dignity and self-respect is menaced by the contempt by another who disdainfully regards our very existence. In extreme cases of being treated contemptuously the regard of the other towards us which

approaches a “moral annihilation” might trigger something more than mere anger and rather occasion rage. When approaching such a state we may recall that the anger we remember did not have a clear end in sight. Yet it had a vector pointing to unfinished business. Because here we are trying to sketch a sort of anger that perhaps many of us have never had, we are hoping to evoke it as at least a possibility. Indeed, in some of us plagued by fits of impatience, it can be a very small matter, like a lock refusing to open or stubbing one’s toe, that triggers our at least momentary fury. We appeal to the reader’s recollection of being very angry, but then ask the reader to imagine going further and entering a new territory of being consumed by rage, and even “bloody murder.” Somewhere along with the line one has the choice of “going there” or not, but once it is palpable it is extremely difficult to “cool down.” At this stage of near no-return, it resembles, e.g., advanced stages of jealousy, envy, or sexual arousal.

Upon crossing this threshold of no-return, one enters into what J-P Sartre,[12] calls the “universe of violence.” Here we enter into the Luciferian dimension in ourselves where there is a magical and crypto-theological transformation both of the world and the person in question, who now is transformed into an agent of uncontrollable violence. In such a state of being, the past and future cease to exist; recalling past regrets or future consequences is irrelevant. One experiences oneself at this very moment affirming one’s freedom absolutely and unconditionally. Sartre uses here theological language adroitly: One becomes an anti-god de-creating the world and becomes actively disposed to disregard the necessities and forms of the world. In just that “moment,” which does not seem homogeneous with ordinary time, the enraged person is incapable of acknowledging any higher authority or duty. In this universe of violence, the agent would de-create, ignore, the pre-existing structures, norms, and essential meanings of his surroundings, and reduce all of being to an obstacle to his will here and now. Thereby the person is disposed to say: I will have all of being just as I, and I alone, would have it now. I am at the origin of the nothing of the world. [13] Indeed there is a remarkable symmetry with the Lucifer of the Bible and Tradition who prefers a world determined exclusively by his own will now. Not only does he not recognize any higher authority but is disposed to act as if all authority resides in his immediate free willing and wanting. This I suggest we call *the Luciferian moment*.

But now let us consider something no less remarkable. There is a mirroring of this world of the threshold of violence for the individual agent in a well-known social-political institution of special interest to peace studies. This institution is invested with a godly absolute power that exists in the midst of our social-political life. Together we (e.g., US citizens) freely sustain, and perhaps revere it, without giving it much thought. The reason its extraordinariness, i.e., the hateful monumental rage that would seem to be its necessary condition, is not remarked is that now it is domesticated and normalized and, as it were, put in cold storage, and deprived, for the moment at least, of its apocalyptic guises and cosmic rage. Furthermore, its actualization is nearly impossible to imagine not only by reason of its seventy-years old familiarity, patriotism, civic apathy but also because of its incommensurability with any appropriate contexts for our flaccid powers of imagination.

What I have in mind is how nation-states are armed with nuclear weapons and how their “peace-keeping” economy and foreign policy places into cold-storage the necessary furor, and instead disguises it as “foreign policy” and “department of defense.” That is i.e., the apocalyptic monumental fury undergoes the metamorphosis of a society’s normal institutionalization. It now exists as a disposition or readiness to rage. Of course, this domestication by the government is founded on the cooperation and implicit readiness of all the individual tax-paying citizens, at any moment, to reactivate the wanton Luciferian rage and will to de-create the world. Indeed, this familiar readiness is a diffuse sense of “we can” which is harbored by all citizens of nation-states with nuclear weapons arsenals. It is analogous to each’s first-personal sense that “*I can*, i.e., I can get very irrationally angry.” This remarkable state of affairs in human history was captured in a startling exclamation uttered almost eighty years ago by one of the inventors of the atomic bomb. Immediately after witnessing the first test-explosion of the bomb at Los Alamos, J. Robert Oppenheimer was so dismayed that he said: “Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds,” thereby drawing upon a text from the sacred scriptures of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

This institutionalization of the “threshold of violence” in many nation-states is founded in the individual acts of the governed who pay taxes for a “safeguard” and measure of “protection/deterrence.” This civic complicity itself is an egregious “crime against humanity”



because it expresses at least a passive willingness to bring about the destruction of humanity and the earth itself to protect national interests.[14] The general acceptance of this willingness to “omnicide” perhaps suggests not merely passivity and apathy, but also perhaps that the Luciferian state of mind exercises a pull of attraction for the larger society, and even a way of assuring one’s individual and collective trans-human status, just as when one is drawn into a rage, one feels a tantalizing pleasure sucking one up into the Luciferian moment. It suggests the curious ambivalence of omnicide characteristic of “Luciferian pride”: It at once elevates oneself beyond all others and Godself, and yet the “sadness of finitude” persists because at a deeper level one knows one is finite, not omnipotent, and this moment of prideful rage is destructive too of all one holds dear.

In naming this capacity the “Luciferian existential” an answer to the question about the “transcendental conditions” for its possibility is given. Is not Luciferism a deep defining ontological structure to how humans exist in the world? For existential phenomenology, e.g., the human being ex-sists transcendently within the ultimate horizon of Being or the Encompassing. This transcendental condition informs and shapes all situations. But there is also the capacity to not show up to and for ourselves.

What Jaspers has called “limit situations,” like being treated contemptuously (“moral annihilation”), failure to communicate, death, and chance, especially illuminate aspects about ourselves in the world with others. These transcendental considerations make possible the often-dramatic transformation, e.g., from the peace of mind transitioning to numbing anxiety. Similarly, “Luciferian” agency here is understood (within the Abrahamic tradition) to be tied to a self- and world-awareness of the most excellent form of creaturely spiritual-personal self-consciousness encompassing all created spirits, i.e., humans and angels. All spirits embodied and “pure spirits,” are constituted not only by being bearers of the light of all being, but also by the power capable of wanting to destroy the world.

## **5. Luciferism and the Greatest Crimes Against Humanity**

To further advance this claim it is fitting that we briefly review the magnitude of the power of nuclear weapons and the ensuing enormity of the crimes they perpetrate; and inseparable from this is the enormity

of the crimes tied to preparing for nuclear war (This has its parallel in ignoring climate change). We are using the theological figure of Lucifer to illuminate the *prima facie* oddness of the behavior of the human community in the face of the current suicidal-omnicidal self-inflicted tendencies. Perhaps we have to change these bland terms, i.e., “nuclear armaments” and “climate change,” and affix to them words that point not to impersonal third-personal events, i.e., happenings apart from our agency, but integrating them into our first-personal awareness of ourselves as agents in the world. For this to be done we must also see them truly, i.e., as involving us in crimes beyond imagination in terms of their destructiveness. Typically, “crimes against humanity” refer to what is codified, e.g., in the International Criminal Court, as the most egregious violations of human dignity, as in acts of massacres, mass rape, genocide, torture, etc. Typically, they are a matter of state policy and, directed against civilians. They need not be crimes during war or by individual soldiers furthering state policy.

In the case of both nuclear war and climate change, especially in representative-democratic societies, the agents carrying out the policies are not merely the ruling powers of the nation-state or its military forces, but rather the responsibility must be placed on the shoulders of many if not most of the citizenry. Just as all or most of us could do better in terms of diminishing our polluting of our environments and thus lessening our contribution to the approaching catastrophes brought on by climate change, so all or most of us routinely and rather casually support the seemingly permanent institution of nuclear armaments and even nuclear war as an essential component of our foreign policy – even if, on a rare moment of serious reflection, we personally find it disturbing or even morally unacceptable. In representative democracies, this implicit support is in paying taxes, but also in apathy, i.e., not protesting, not supporting disarmament candidates. That is, the criminal policies are supported by almost everyone and, when the topic surfaces, greeted with indifference, if not a yawn. (Again, because of space, not because of a view of its being of less importance, we are omitting a discussion of climate change.) In what follows the perspective offered is primarily that of the writer who is a US citizen, and the data has to do primarily with US nuclear weaponry and citizen involvement.

Historically US citizens have paid between 45 and 90 percent of their taxes for military purposes. Right now, some say it is 24 percent. In any case in the US, there is much more at stake than citizens' paying taxes: Peace researchers have singled out twenty-six companies with powerful lobbies who are making enormous profits off the nuclear weapons industry. In other words, behind nuclear war policy, there is also the pressure of the powerful self-interest of numerous very large corporations and their shareholders.

Even though it has become a dogma, it is false and morally objectionable to believe that to achieve peace one must prepare for war. Similarly, there is widespread adherence to the claim that nuclear weapons are necessary not for an offensive attack but because they "deter" an attack and ward off hostile attempts at blackmailing. But it is perhaps best to conceive deterrence not as a military term but as a psychological term. We perhaps may see it most properly as aspiring to create a sense of fear thereby hoping to convince someone that they don't actually want to do what they appear to want to do. That is, the state with the nuclear weapons, upon perceiving possibly hostile or unacceptable behavior in another nation-state indicates inappropriate terms that such a course of action, if entertained, would have unimaginably horrible consequences.[15]

Although there seems to be an abstract recognition of the horror of nuclear war, yet it is also clear, in spite of the exhortations to "multilateral" negotiations toward disarmament, that there is presently no real commitment to multilateral disarmament. Instead, the governments behave with the same conviction regarding the necessity of "nukes" that prevailed during the Cold War. At the same time, there is ongoing innovation and testing, and even troubling developments of "tactical" and "strategic" nuclear weapons. Such "normalization" could, of course, be the slippery slope to all-out nuclear war. Of course, once again, this seeming "normalization" and curiously stubborn belief that "nuclear weaponry is here to stay" is not primarily a matter of zealous quasi-religious patriotism: There is furthermore in play the powerful influence and preoccupation with corporate and shareholder profit, what Eisenhower adroitly named the military-industrial-congressional complex.

War is prepared for and waged in spite of the fact that the religions of the world are steeped in the commandment "Do Not Kill." And in many South Asian, Southeast Asian, and East Asian traditions, there is

to be found at least some advocacy of principled non-violence. Only recently (perhaps the last sixty years) has non-violence been appreciated by the Catholic Church as a legitimate moral stand – and at least equal to the “just defense/war theory.” In 2014 Pope Francis acknowledged that during the Cold War the doctrine of “deterrence” made sense to some leaders of the Catholic Church. But now he holds this position is not only no longer valid, but rather he declared it is “time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition.”[16] In the *Qu’ran* we have important guidelines for, and clarifications of, rules of engagement in a war which might be interpreted as incompatible with nuclear war: “Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors.” The limits are made clear: Do not kill the innocent, typically women, children, the old, or the infirm; “do not cut down fruit-bearing trees; do not destroy any town ... fight against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! God loveth not aggressors,” and “if the enemies incline toward peace, do you also incline towards peace.” [17]

When one considers the horrors of nuclear war the much-praised glory, and romantic attractions of being a warrior would seem to be dissipated as utterly irrelevant. Rather our minds seem to become either indignant at the madness or they go numb because of the unimaginable horror, or both of these at once. But what has happened in the West, especially in the US, is that the wave of Oppenheimerian shock and horror, if there ever was such, has flattened to normalization through something like the “tradition” of the Defense Department and habit.

Especially treacherous perhaps is the disposition to affirm rather thoughtlessly that “deterrence works.” Most of us assent to this while, at the same time, this normalization and conviction that war preparation is rationally necessary, facilitate our repression of the images of the inevitable aftermath, as with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It hides or ignores that “nuclear policy of *peace through deterrence*” approaches the status of becoming a historical oxymoron for the following reasons: “Peace through deterrence” produces a proliferation of nuclear weapon nation-states and weapons; it affects an ongoing arms build-up and “modernization,” and de facto it does not deter endless “conventional” wars from happening.[18]

But we must keep reminding ourselves of the MADness of the enormity of the existing arsenals of the U.S. alone, and here I disregard especially those of Russia and those of five or so other countries. That is, we may recall that the U.S. has at least sixty-eight submarines carrying ballistic and cruise missiles, and Trident missiles which are nuclear weapons. Some of these Trident missiles, while at sea, can hit any target anywhere in the world. (At least one U.S. Trident submarine patrols the seas at all times.) The U.S. Trident missiles are variously reported as carrying four, six, eight, or even more 475-kiloton nuclear warheads. Each sub carries up to eight nuclear missiles on board and each of these bombs is around eight times as destructive as the bomb which flattened Hiroshima in 1945. Recall that this bomb killed over 140,000 civilians. A single 100 Kiloton nuclear warhead can produce temperatures of tens of millions of degrees Centigrade and a shock wave sufficient to flatten skyscrapers, together with everything else that may be standing or alive, within 500 meters of the blast. "At a distance of 4 km from the exploding 100 Kiloton warhead the heat is still intense enough to set newspapers on fire." Russia and the U.S. together have more than 1,500 warheads ready to launch every minute of the day, every day of the year. The totality of nations has 15,000 nuclear weapons. The all-out war between the U.S. and Russia would probably mean the extinction of almost all the earth, and surely the human species.[19]

Here we neglect the important topics of firestorms, heat blasts, and radiation, and the toxicity radioactive isotopes such as Strontium 90, Iodine-131, and Caesium all of which linger for weeks but, as with Strontium 90, it lasts for nearly thirty years, which means the bombed areas become for a generation or so cancer-producing toxic deserts, as we know from Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Chernobyl.[20]

(An additional remark here on climate issues: The alarm regarding climate change and food production practices is ubiquitous. On Dec. 5, 2014, *Scientific American* published an article arguing that only 60 years of farming are left if the soil degeneration continues through agri-business farming practices (e.g., regular tilling and application of fertilizers and insecticides). A UN official was cited as saying: In as much as three inches of topsoil takes 1000 years to form, if current rates of soil degradation continue all of the world's topsoil could be gone within sixty years.) [21]

Perhaps the most important, rational, and authoritative voice for both nuclear armaments and climate change has been that of the “Bulletin of Atomic Scientists,” who have proclaimed this year, 2021, that we are but 90 seconds away from Doomsday on their “Doomsday Clock.” This latter is a pedagogical device created and published by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists first in 1947 during the Cold War where the tensions were high and the clock was set at seventeen minutes to zero/Doomsday. Its purpose is to make as vivid as possible how close we are to the destruction of all that we cherish and how little time we have to change our ways to undo the approaching imminent horrible danger. We get a sense of the current danger, in contrast to 1947 in the Cold War when it was placed at seventeen minutes. Right now, some 70 years later, it is set at a minute and one-half. The Atomic Scientists have included in their recent calculations our casual attitude toward the Covid 19 pandemic as well as the wanton ignoring of climate change. But apart from the possibility of another pandemic, but inclusive of “unchecked climate change,” the global nuclear weapons modernizations, and outsized nuclear weapons arsenals – all these together “pose extraordinary and undeniable threats to the continued existence of humanity”. The Bulletin goes on to say that we are nearer than ever before to doomsday, and so near that we are running out of time before our casual mindless approach to our self-inflicted apocalyptic catastrophes will show itself to be suicidal and omnicidal.[22]

## **6. Symmetry between Not-Facing Death and Not-Facing One’s Crimes Against Humanity**

Here we want to add another speculative phenomenological-theological effort to integrate the theme of Luciferism into our everyday behavior, i.e., conceiving it as an “existential,” especially in regard to ignoring, repressing, or dodging the catastrophes we are preparing for ourselves. Our basic thesis in this section is that our crimes against humanity in regard to supporting nuclear war and ignoring climate change are facilitated by the essential elusiveness of death. That is, the mystery of the meaning of death, as well as the essential elusiveness of grasping one’s own death, facilitate our disposition to dodge the catastrophes that are in store for us. Thus, we want to propose that there is a parallel here between this avoidance of the consequences of our everyday political complacency and the way

we hide from our interpretation of our present daily experiences the meaning of death, given that it is an ineluctable constitutive ingredient in the futural-protentional horizon of our daily lives. Surely, we must include in our reflection on life, war, peace, and Luciferism the mysterious theme of death.

St. Paul summarizes the Abrahamic tradition: “When Adam sinned, death entered the world.” (*Romans* 5:12; see *Qu’ran* 2:17; 3:17-19; and *Genesis* 3). The pre-Fall (pre-lapsarian) consciousnesses of Adam and Eve did not know of death, even if they knew that they need not have been. After the Fall, the world was changed, and they were more acutely aware of the fleetingness of time in as much as the finite time of their lives was irretrievably passing and death was inexorably approaching ever more closely. As a pure spirit who is essentially mortal, we may wonder whether there was the same sense of passing time; but at least we may speculate that Lucifer’s sense of time would include at least an empathic or vicarious sense of the passing time of humans in so far as he is aware of human consciousness and what it is aware of.

Given the essentially spiritual and essentially immortal essence of the angelic beings or “pure (not-embodied) spirits,” medieval thinkers as Aquinas speculated that such spirits do not know death and know themselves to be essentially immortal; in which case the consciousness of an angelic being is always integral (it is not capable of temporal dissolution) and the passing (temporal) experiences it has if there be such, are not lost in the distance of the past; but rather they would seem to have an ever presentness. This is perhaps conceivable in Husserlian terms: The pure spirit has all of its retentions in a way in which they have a palpable relevance (there is no: “too long ago to recall” or increasing vagueness), while yet still remaining retentions that can readily become memories. There would be a parallel with the pure spirit’s intellectual grasp of its being in regard to all of creation where the unknownness of the future, if there be such, is minimized by, according to medieval thinkers like Aquinas, its inherent apriori grasp of the essences of all of creation. All this might be taken to mean that Lucifer before and after his rebellion would not be aware of the enormity of his sin and would ever not know of God’s unchanging love and forgiveness of him. That might mean; however, the horror of his deed would be magnified by his profound knowledge of God’s infinite unwavering love and also by the knowledge that any suicide

or self-annihilation was impossible: If Lucifer’s desire were that he did not any longer exist, God would have to lovingly choose that Lucifer not be, and that love itself would be an additional occasion for shame. All of this, given the exalted powers of Lucifer’s intellect, Lucifer would presumably have had to know before his “I will not serve,” and all of this he would have had to conceal from himself, by entering into something like what we are calling a “Luciferian moment.”

In any case, the awareness of human life with its incessant encounter of welcome and unwelcome contingencies and awareness of the passing of what is now into no longer, and as such retrievable only in memory, is a constant reminder of the frailty and contingency of one’s own life and its approaching death. Furthermore, one’s awareness of life is not an awareness merely of fleeting different moments but because this awareness is always at the same time a self-awareness of a spirit, of an “I,” this awareness of the flow of states of awareness itself does not flow. The consciousness of passing time is not itself, as consciousness-of, present as passing in time, but the consciousness of passing time is also an awareness of our awareness of this passing as not-passing. There is a shimmer of what is trans-temporal constitutive of our consciousness. Furthermore, consciousness as a consciousness of oneself and one’s life in the world is always a consciousness of what is, what is actual. And yet what is actual is an awareness of Being. Even though we are taken up in life with ephemeral beings, the actuality and beingness within which we encounter the ephemeral is not present to us as ephemeral unless we “nullify” it, which, of course, we cannot do, by making it be a thing like everything else that we perceive and that participates in its being.[23] Connected to this is that although we have not experienced either our birth or death, we doubtlessly believe in our having come to be and of our ceasing to be alive in the world upon our dying. Therefore, the event of death is indeed perhaps the most dreadful “thing” of all because *if* it means our not being, then it is the end of our relationship with all we love and cherish. Yet it is not ever an experienced something.

Yet it is worth pausing over the consideration that we cannot make present our not having been in an actual conscious awareness – nor is it possible to make present our ceasing to be or our not being. (Presencing one’s death by imagining one’s being a corpse at one’s funeral is one’s present being consciously imagining one’s funeral,



i.e., not a presencing of one's non-existing. To make present is to be.) The fear of death is the dread of non-being, indeed, from a philosophical-phenomenological perspective, it is the dread of nonsense, *Un-Sinn und Wider-Sinn*. One's death is one of the most certain and uniquely important things one knows and yet "it," i.e., our awareness of it, is able to remain abstract, conceptual, third-personal and its place within one's present life, endlessly postponed and denied because it is not able to be given in perceptual evidence: "I know I will die, but I don't believe it" captures the issue.[24].

But is such a dodging of death not also in play in our dealing with nuclear armaments and climate change? As our awareness of time is nestled in an awareness of what is trans-temporal the present awareness of the flow of experience and of what is experienced, and in this sense consciousness, has an implicit awareness of what is beyond time and in some sense "eternal," so our awareness of our death is tied to an awareness that it is not phenomenologically presentable, i.e., we cannot make present the presence of death. Thus, when someone claims that only humans, and not animals, are conscious of death) that cannot mean that the human is conscious of his or her no longer being. Rather such a claim, properly understood, means that awareness of "death" seems to be the sort of thing that can be a feature only of a human being. But it also means, at least phenomenologically, that death, if indeed an experience, cannot mean an experience of one's annihilation or non-being.

Even the ancient materialist Epicurus saw this when he claimed: Why fear death: if it is I am not, and if I am it is not. But for Epicurus death means precisely our non-being and of course if we are not, we cannot experience the greatest horror. But for the phenomenologist, it cannot mean one's annihilation, because we cannot make present our non-being, and thus one is not in a position to speak of one's non-being. (Of course, in the third person, we may say "He died without knowing what hit/killed him, or without knowing that he was being killed." But that is what precisely is not known in the first-person perspective.)

Thus, we know with strong empirical inferential evidence we will die (as we know similarly that we were born), but what do we know when we know that we will die? In general, for the Abrahamic traditions, death does not mean absolute annihilation. It means rather we make a transition from our sinful bodily life to another life.

Phenomenologically this is supported by both the presence of a shimmer of the “eternal” in our consciousness of time as well as our inability as phenomenologists to make present our death. It is supported also by the consideration that that for which we presently live is sprinkled with non-ephemeral values (like justice) and even trans-temporal entities (e.g., logical truths, the Pythagorean Theorem). And today, as well as in the times of our predecessors, people have struggled for and participated in these values and truths that are not ephemeral, knowing that they were “eternal” and that they did not pass with the passing of worldly events or the deaths of the humans who discovered them.

But surely, we experience not only the dread of the mystery of death but also its ugliness, especially when it is preceded by crippling illnesses or when death prematurely cuts short the blossoming of the life of a beautiful young person. Nevertheless, it is a defining feature of human life. And in spite of the shimmer of the eternal we all can experience first-personally our fading, decline, slipping away, i.e., our “dying.” But, again, this does not mean experiencing our being dead. We would have to be alive to have this experience. Of course, from the second-and third-person point of view, i.e., my death, is known undeniably by others in an obvious sense that the others experience that the one dying is “here with us” or “there for us,” up to a moment and then she is no longer with us or “there.” She is absent, gone, irretrievably from this life, even though she, like us, was not able to be with us presencing her death. Is this not an argument for her annihilation?

Not for the Abrahamic traditions: not only does life involve a kind of awareness of the eternal in the experiencing of the temporal, not only is it impossible to know, i.e., make present, one’s no longer existing, but one’s “passing,” as everything else that is ephemeral, rests in the agency of the infinitely good all-wise creator for whom nothing passes or lost in oblivion. In this sense, nothing is ever absolutely “gone.” Therefore, on the basis of the conviction that death is not annihilation, religious traditions foster an important spiritual practice of the preparation for the “act of dying” by which we consent humbly to transitioning from our embodied state to the “hereafter. “As obscure as that reference to “hereafter” is, because it is by definition not something one experiences in regard to oneself first-personally in life and in passing time – even though nearly all of us experience in the second-and third-person the

sorrow of losing a loved one. (I refrain here from a discussion of so-called “near-death experiences” because these are experiences of a living experiencer [e.g., a dreamer] who describes what she experienced when she experienced [or dreamed] she died.)

Let us return to the issue of the awareness of our responsibility for an “omnicide” through nuclear war or ignoring climate change, i.e., for crimes against humanity and all creation that we share in so far as we are complicit is either repressed or a call to moral-political action. In the Abrahamic tradition, there is the belief that these crimes, both as ever-present in the mind of God as well as formative acts in our constitution of ourselves, are not simply “over and done with.” For the Abrahamic tradition even though there are varying views on personal immortality especially among Jews, there seems to be a consensus that we do not absolutely perish nor are we annihilated with death. As perhaps for Lucifer, there are core beliefs in some of the Abrahamic traditions that hold that the magnitude of our ingratitude, thoughtlessness, arrogance, etc. will be brought home to all of us upon our death (Christians call it “the Last Judgment”; Muslims name it “Yawm al-Qiyāmah”). In being conscious of God’s infinite goodness and kindness, our own frailties, not only the sins we have committed but the good deeds we have failed to do, come into their true light. And in many strands of the Abrahamic traditions, one’s personal failings are seen in the light of the corporate unity of humanity.

Here one may speak (ironically) of the “blessing” of the secularist-materialist-neo-Epicurean state of mind. [25] For modern secularism, death is bodily dissolution. Death is the perishing of a living organism, homologous to what happens to plants and insects. And in so far as we imagine persons to be more than the biochemistry that comprises them, we must think of them as being annihilated in death – except of course they remain in the memories of friends and loved ones.

Those nuclear armaments supporters who are radically secularist in the sense proposed above, like those who deny climate change for, e.g., egotistical economic reasons, would seem to have no theoretical qualms about transforming creation into a radiation desert and a realm of mindless oblivion in so far as this oblivious desert represents what scientific reductionist naturalism regards as the metaphysical foundation of all being: reality is nothing but the whirl of sub-atomic particles, or the cascading of random chance molecular events on all the planets.[26]

This is partly echoed in the old refrain of US and European cold warriors: “Better Dead than Red” (many of whom were zealous Christian anti-atheists). Of course, the spirit of this can be noble: Death is not the worst of things, and defending the innocent is a noble reason for risking one’s life. But the MADness of nuclear armaments and the consequences of our actively causing climate change, seem to enter a new register. How can we justify means to ends if there are no ends or means left? Can the means justify the ends? Do not the means and ends of, e.g., a nuclear holocaust, amount to their being no real end worth having because all human life and perhaps most of non-human life are destroyed. Do the ends of the life based on continued dependence on fossil fuels and on the soil-destroying practices of agribusiness farming justify creating of an impossible life on earth?

But we humans in the Abrahamic traditions all die but what if death is not extinction but a transition to a realm of Eternal Truth where the truth of our crimes is “brought home” to us? The demise of such beliefs in a secular culture would seem to foster the complacency and obtuseness to the potential horror of our contribution to “doomsday.” Yet, perhaps paradoxically, it is the blessing of the “atomic scientists” who through their wisdom and courage take up the mantle of prophets today and become the most important source of light and hope, much more so than the US religious leaders, whose silence and invisibility on these matters are sadly conspicuous.

### **7. How is Moral Casualness and the Pursuit of Comfortable Bourgeois Existence a Form of Luciferism?**

I confess in advance to not knowing the answer to this question, but it seems an important enough question to attempt an answer. We have taken the unthinkable crime of Lucifer’s blasphemous rebellion against God, along with the ensuing horrendous scarcely imaginable consequences for all human and natural history that the religious traditions have affixed to this deed, as comparable to the omnicide of nuclear war and/or climate change brought on by our own moral torpor and irresponsibility. We have said that at least what we and Lucifer have in common is that we both are capable of entering into the blinding Luciferian state of rage where we become anti-God gods. But for Lucifer to do his horrendous deeds, he, (in some traditions) the greatest and most beautiful of creatures, had to become stupid.

Whereas we may be afflicted with the sadness of our finitude, Lucifer was tormented by it to the point where he stripped himself of his exalted status and undertook the impossible, which is stupid: In order to be the anti-God god, he had to go against the most fundamental constitutive principle of his being, the reflection of which he was and without which he could not be. That is, he had to rid himself of his necessary and sufficient condition. He had to eliminate his state of being the wisest and most beautiful creature of God through God's continuing grace by somehow destroying God and replacing God with himself.

We ourselves become Luciferian in terms of committing the greatest crimes against humanity, and thereby destroying ourselves, what we most cherish, as well as what we need to live and survive. But we do this not by entering into a blinding Luciferian moment of rage. Our nuclear armaments have not been made or launched in moments of rage, and even Oppenheimer's "we have become destroyers of worlds" is not a moment of rage but conceivably the opposite: it shudders at the prospect that this perhaps well-meant defensible project of intelligent and hard-working scientists to develop a deterrence to any war of aggression, has opened the doors to Hell and the possible end of the world. The US government might become angry and nearly raging with hate for its enemies, but the US's wars are fought not in a state of rage but with more or less professional sometimes detached conduct of professional soldiery. In any case, any past anger or lingering animosity in the present time is dissolved into the institutionalization and routinization of nuclear launch sites, radar systems, their maintenance, the constant modification in terms of power and efficiency, all in accord with principles of physics and mechanical engineering, within the parameters set by the political administrators and, most important, by the consent of the governed to support this now seventy-year-old (Luciferian) system.

Here we have transformed Luciferianism into routine bureaucratic institutions, capitalist interests, patriotism, politics, etc. The glaring moral issue is utterly marginalized if not censured and condemned. The citizens' role, (perhaps the most important because, in a democracy, of their necessary complicity), is the necessary condition in terms of the costs of the whole structure. Clearly, the citizens are not possessed by a blinding Luciferian rage but the humdrumness of habits, a sense of routine patriotism, and the suppression of the

irritation of the inconvenience should one get out of line and declare the madness and horror of the matter, i.e., if one should call it for what it is, a form of Luciferism.

Right now (7/15, 2021), the moral sluggishness persists as we witness that the US still refuses 1) to agree to the option of not using nuclear weapons first; 2) to end the sole, unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack; 3) to take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; 4) to cancel the plan to replace its entire arsenal with enhanced weapons; and 5) to actively pursue a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.[27]

In spite of sporadic but inspiring and laudable exceptions to the rule such as ICAN, we must acknowledge, that as with many of the great horrors in history, e.g., the Third Reich’s murder of five million Jews, the chief agents were not only the Nazis but also the great numbers of complicit masses that went along with the attempted genocide. But the heinousness of the agency of the Third Reich, for the majority of citizens, was rendered banal, i.e., stale or hackneyed, because one’s complicity was wrapped up in allegiance to slogans of saving the race, being patriotic, and obeying the authorities.

Increasingly it appears to be a remarkable commonplace truth that humanity and our habitat, planet earth, are not intrinsically important and that the end justifies the means, e.g., the US may destroy the world to protect especially its corporate interests. This form of rendering horrendous evil banal is possible, at least in part, because the governed and empowering masses find ways of hiding from themselves their complicity in the unthinkable evil. As we have proposed this is an imitation of Lucifer by way of not being the images and likeness of God and the lights of the world. As a matter of fact, very few exercise these exalted tremendous powers, and thereby very few risks being thrown in jail or executed. Such apathy is due, in great part, because our leaders and many of us are lured by the sirens of power and domination; but we also cling to the conveniences and comforts of everydayness and normality (so-called “creature comforts” even though the era is deeply secularist), pay our war taxes, and don’t rock the boat. As Lucifer had to hide from himself the horror and stupidity of his desire to be God, so we citizens seem to find ways of hiding from ourselves the horror of the crimes against humanity we are presently preparing to perpetrate. We do this by

somehow disowning our minds and wills in favor of business, as usual, internalizing the reinforcing blinding slogans wrapped in religion and patriotism, but which are always the way of convenience, power, and comfort, not the way of being bearers of light and witnesses to the truth.

### **8. Conclusion: Wherein Lies Our Stupidity?**

Perhaps in conceiving or imagining Luciferism in the light of Lucifer's eminent status as the most intelligent of beings, and in the light of our being also reflections of God through our intellects, we have taken a wrong turn in addressing the puzzling indifference to our crimes against humanity. Even though when we think of ourselves, we necessarily think of our being conscious, and being conscious is always a being-consciousness. And even though as a transcendental phenomenologist one reduces or "brackets" the initial "natural attitude" of our being absorbed in what is actually present to us in our beginnings as wakeful minds, nevertheless we are never without this initial awareness of being and all of our reflected-on objects are modes of this original being. But this antecedent consciousness by definition is not predominantly an intellectual and/or reflective consciousness, just as the I, as the source-point of this manifestation of being is not exclusively or even primarily an act in which the I itself and as such is experienced. Indeed, the case might be made that the act of consciousness wherein the I is prominently lived (but is not an object of experience, *erlebt sondern nicht wahrgenommen*) is always (also) a will-act.

In this regard, we may note the obvious consideration that our life goes in the direction of our interests which go in advance of our reflection. Feelings, desires, and emotions go in advance of intellectual reflection in our living in the world. Very few people are professional philosophers, e.g, students of our transcendental agency of manifestation – and we can be grateful for that, for if there were only professional philosophers then there would be fewer day-care workers, nurses, surgeons, doctors, musicians, mechanics, engineers, plumbers, cooks, etc. Indeed, in the most important matters, we depend on the perspicacity of our emotional perceptions to go in advance. Consider how appreciating the difference between things and persons requires that we intuitively realize here before us in meeting

this, e.g., the inmate is an absolute value, indeed there is an inviolable dignity, given in the very presencing of another person: this is not a matter of logical inference or a deduction from other believed propositions or a result of analysis as of a perception, as in finally seeing what is before us to be an automobile’s instrument panel rather than a television screen. Similarly, in religious matters where the value of “the holy” is perceived, we have a unique value-perception of an absolute value sphere and this does not derive from deductions or inferences or analyses; rather the analyses and deductions typically presuppose the presenced value-sphere as their necessary condition. For example, we hold that the divine is pre-eminently being in itself, transcendent, incommensurate with anything else, etc. But this articulation is founded on a prior experience of the holy, rather than by our coming up with the attributes of the holy God subsequent to an analysis of, e.g., substance, omnipotence, infinity, etc. As Max Scheler put it religious experience is characterized by radical originality and non-derivative character different from all other realms of experience and intellectual analyses.[28] The least that can be said is that although all our emotional displays presuppose some sort of object, surely often enough what captures our attention and determines our priorities, what we focus on, is determined by our “heart” or a latent willingness going in advance. Again, this is in evidence in our knowledge of other persons. A morally decent stranger’s recognition of other builds on the empathic-valuative presence of someone having “inalienable ontological dignity”; but how much deeper is the empathy and understanding of the Other in the presencing by one who is the parent, lover, or friend of the one who is present. And contrast both of these with the presencing by the slave master of the slave. Aristotle distinguished between the slave who was booty in a war and the “natural” slave whom he claimed does not have its body and is in need of the Master for it to live. (A chilling example of how even the greatest thinkers are victims of their cultural biases which, from a more enlightened perspective appear as stupidities.) All of these different presencing involve an intuitive empathic emotive knowing and this goes in advance of any other objective, reflective knowing.

In our everydayness the pre-reflective, affective evaluative volitional consciousness goes in advance of our intellectual reflective knowing, even though this impetus is informed by past reflective intellectual acts, i.e., it is not blind. We are led initially by affections,



desires, and emotions which shape what we call our “interests.” Even though we are “spirits” we are embodied (not “pure”) spirits and the light of our minds is not merely the light of the reduced transcendental I’s presence, nor is it merely an intellectual light, but the light is enhanced, and sometimes dimmed by the ongoing active and passive syntheses that are “mine” by my achieving and undergoing them. The passive syntheses are not I-acts but like the I-acts (e.g., judging, choosing, deciding, etc.) are mine by virtue of my undergoing them through undergoing the original temporal flow. The active syntheses clearly derive from “me,” i.e., derive from what I refer to with “I.” But this primal I undergoes ineluctably to the primal temporal flow which founds the passive associations and syntheses of our ongoing experience. Here we have syntheses of what I experience and what gets synthesized is not merely mine, not merely egoic, or having to do with “me.” Rather it is a synthesis of, e.g., my lived bodiliness by which I am in touch with my physical surroundings; but this itself also enables my being with, within, and for others. My so being in the world is thus also an ongoing synthesis of all that we encompass not only under “subjective spirit” in relation to other subjective spirits (Others who refer to themselves with “I” and whom I refer to with the other second- and third-person personal pronouns) but also “objective spirit,” society, government, artworks, news media, advertising, educators, etc. The place of this ongoing synthesis may be called the “heart”; Husserl used the German term *das Gemüt*. It is this which pre-reflectively orients us in our being in the world, through the hierarchy of our heart’s vectors, interests, and preferences – all of which, upon reflective scrutiny may change. Again: The synthesis includes all Others who refer to themselves with “I” and whom I know as “you,” “she,” and “he”; those with whom we love as well as our neighbors, but also the strangers. It includes also all the ways one’s society and culture is perceived and perceived to be interacting with me.

It is here foremost that perhaps we can account for the foolishness which derails us from our proper goals and ends. What shapes ourselves and our hearts in terms of content differ widely in widely diverse societies. For example, the Amish and Mennonites are surrounded by a different culture than the rest of us and surround themselves differently within this culture. Most of us in the US are surrounded by, informed by, some of the things we have discussed, like “the military-industrial complex,” our perceptions of the mystery

of death, the nation state’s institutions in terms of atomic weapons, a theory of deterrence, our love of our middle-class lives and its comforts and conveniences, etc. In this essay, we have proposed that we, like Lucifer, may take turns that blind us in an epochal way from true wisdom. To this extent we are hiding from our true selves and on the path to cosmic and metaphysical suicide. We have found this to be a form of “stupidity” in Lucifer’s case, but so it is in ours. In this concluding reflection, we draw inspiration from a discussion of “stupidity” by St. Thomas Aquinas.[29] Let us look more closely at what he explicitly said.

Although not a “phenomenologist” Aquinas grasped that the first step of any conceptual analysis of some phenomenon’s essence is, to clarify the word ready at hand, if it is possible and available, which presences the phenomenon. We thus clarify the essence of the phenomenon by first clarifying the word’s meaning. “Stupidity” can in popular speech refer to one’s lacking normal intelligence and/or inflexibility, being slow-witted. One might, e.g., “be stupid” at math or logic; one might “be stupid” at remembering names when one hears the names of those in a foreign language and culture; one might “be stupid” at hearing sounds or re-calling and singing melodies back in tune; one might “be stupid” with distinguishing colors, i.e., be color blind; one might “be stupid” in business transactions and, e.g., think X is a “good deal” but because of one being a naïve “academic” one is easily misled or taken in. Or, one may be dealing with someone who has evidently a mental deficiency from birth or due to a brain injury. In this case “the idiot” may be said to be “stupid.” These are all contexts in which at least in English and in the European languages “stupid” (or its equivalent) is applied.

Yet, Aquinas reminds us that at the same time we typically recognize another sense of “stupid” and here we have in mind the presence of a form of responsibility which would seem to be missing in all or most of the examples just mentioned. In all the above cases, one might be excused because of non-culpable ignorance or because of a learned or inherent deficiency in one’s mode of perception and perceptual judgment. Yet the use of “stupid” to characterize these cases often enough is unfortunately reprehensible because it reveals the speaker’s own disapproval and this may well be a sign of this person’s impatience, prejudice, or being unjust.

In almost all of the examples given, we are not dealing with instances of personal responsibility. The sense in which “stupid” or “foolish” is used here is always connected with an evaluation, i.e., with a disapproval. But we properly disapprove when there are evident grounds for the disapproval. In this regard, we assign personal responsibility to “stupid,” i.e., when the person’s behavior seems clear to be reprehensible, especially in regard to something important. That is, we are convinced that the behavior of the person reveals that her own priorities themselves are questionable. Not only are they, for the observer, objectively out of order, but it is hard for the observer not to believe that in some way perhaps very vague way the agent knows that she is betraying her own fundamental allegiances.

But what about the knowledge of what is most worth having in regard to what is of most importance (what used to be called “wisdom”), as in Lucifer’s case in regard to his Creator, and in regard to the fundamental principles of human life and destiny. This is the generally repressed issue in modern secularized Western culture, especially in the US, of the question of what is truly the knowing most worth having and what is the knowing having to do with the life most worth living. Again, this is the issue of what in earlier times was called “wisdom.” In the U.S., especially in almost all U.S. universities, this question appears to be a matter settled in advance. And as a result, the universities decide in the structuring of the university in favor of the underlying presumed consensus regarding the supreme values of the principles of capitalism and reductionist naturalism. Thus, the universities achieve status and outside (corporate and governmental) funding by emphasizing the STEM courses (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). In universities’ mission statements, they typically decide what “wisdom” is by at least implying, if not expressly stating, that the knowledge most worth having and the life most worth living is found in the prevailing ethos and it is this which universities should support. This means students are basically trained to participate and compete in the country’s foundational values of capitalism, technocracy, and super-powerism. This decision by the “academy” is not a decision based on a philosophical, axiological, aesthetic or theological reflection on basic principles. Rather the administrators are reflecting what they feel and believe to be the guiding “interests” of the culture.

Thus the “heart” goes in advance here too. The basic legacy of the ancient beginning forms of the university, with its center in the humanities and liberal arts, i.e., the sharing in the great conversations of humanity about what is the knowledge most worth having and what human agency is the most beautiful, edifying and essential, is forgotten or ignored. The university is divorced from philosophy as the search for “wisdom” and the broad sense of wisdom as humankind’s search for what is most important through the conversations of humankind is not a central university mission; rather such quests are tolerated and relegated to marginal, often underfunded, departments that are remnants of a now past culture.

This widespread collective ethos of Western culture would seem to be moving toward a sense of stupidity, the distinguishing property of which is its immediate tie to “wisdom” by way of obfuscating it. Aquinas, who follows his mentor here, Aristotle, thinks of it as the knowledge most worth having. Wisdom, as the most important knowledge, may be restricted to the focal areas of interest and concern, i.e., to what principles are for a finite region of experience. For the ancients one was wise in something if one knew the principles and/or causes of whatever it is with which one is are dealing; today often enough it might be a sputtering automobile or a washing machine. Or one can be “wise” in the very important area of food production, i.e., know what is essential about healthy soil and plant biology. Or one may, we say now, be an expert, e.g., know about the realm of viruses, present, and past. Or one may know about human mental health and illness in terms of the standard diagnoses and therapies. The departments of a modern university may be understood as providing access to the “wisdom” of the various regions of being, and foremost how to acquire the skills to do the necessary work that hopefully brings proper compensation. [30] But only philosophy asks about “being as being” and what is essential and what are the universal basic principles and causes.

But there is a problem here. “Being as being” can itself become utterly divorced from wisdom by becoming a merely intellectual exercise in conceptual clarification; indeed, it may become itself a competition among professionals where the winner humiliates his or her opponents. But wisdom, as the pursuit of the most fundamental ultimate truths is inseparable from the pursuit and living of what is the true ultimate good of human life. Ancient Greek philosophers called

it *eidaimonia* (a godly presence) which came to be translated with words like *beatitudo*, *felicitas*, or “happiness.” Here we have to do with something quite different than the advanced learning and inquiry of academics. (Aquinas famously said that an uneducated person who knew only survival skills (*rudes*, usually translated as “peasant”) could very well possess higher wisdom than the most learned scholar by reason of an effective knowing of the heart through faith. We will return to this matter soon.)

For Aquinas, the pursuit of wisdom belongs to philosophy’s essence. *Philo-sophy* derives from *philein sophia*, i.e., the desire, love, and pursuit of the knowledge most worth having. And although we are not all called to be professional philosophers, no one can be indifferent to wisdom in regard to knowing the broader sense of what she knows in knowing, e.g., biology; a fortiori no one can be indifferent to wanting to know what is essential to one’s living well, and one’s destiny. Only a “fool” or a “stupid person” would say I am indifferent to what is good or most important for me. Indeed, it is hard to imagine one honestly saying, “I don’t care what happiness is or means, and I don’t care about the meaning of life and being.” And in so far as we live together and are bound up with one another in terms of living a good life, it would seem obvious that it is “stupid” to live only for oneself and to destroy what is good for oneself and for one’s neighbor.

Here we do not have to do with technical or professional understanding, e.g., of biology, psychology, or the environment. Nor are we sorting out the ultimate truths having to do with “being as being.” Rather here we have to do with the way our interests, our hearts, go in advance, e.g., in appreciating a person as a person (having an inviolable dignity). Husserl had something like this in mind when he spoke of “universal ethical love” as a condition for one’s own well-being as well as one’s neighbors. Indeed, today, because the crises we face are worldwide and know no borders, increasingly “neighbor” is understood as without borders because, e.g., the health of each is tied up with the health of the entire planet. Here we have to do not primarily with an advanced intellectual conceptually rich grasp into human life and its pre-conditions and its destiny; rather, there is another more intuitive, moral, empathic, and effective kind of knowing that goes in advance of reflective intellectual analysis and judgment.

The context of Aquinas’s reflection on “wisdom” and “stupidity is theological. For him (in contrast to Aristotle) this means that wisdom’s full proper sense is what is revealed by God, and apprehended only through faith as the knowledge most worth having and knowledge of the life most worth living. But obviously, we need not assent to such Christian doctrines, and still want to acknowledge the importance of “wisdom” for everyone – even though today, because of the reigning ethos and what we are calling deep secularism (reductionist naturalism) [31] the theme of true wisdom tends to be mostly absent from the wider culture and even the university.

The Latin word, *stultitia*, like the English word “stupidity” (or “folly”; cf. the noun “fool”) covers the whole range of merely mistaken judgments such as we noted above. But Aquinas thinks there is a kind of stupidity that has less to do with an intellectual misunderstanding or deficiency, but more with the distortion of the “spiritual sense” (*sensus spiritualis*) which goes in advance and is presupposed by intellectual reflection. Thus, this sense of stupidity is not exclusively a matter of intellectual grasp of matters of moral and metaphysical-theological-religious importance but is tied more to the how the heart and will relate to what is most important and what is of the highest value.

The key thesis here is that being wakefully conscious is necessarily tied to “the Absolute.” This theme is admirably orchestrated by Maurice Blondel and many Neo-Thomist thinkers indebted tied to his thought. Blondelianism and “transcendental Thomism” owe much to St. Augustine, whose thought finds much inspiration in the Abrahamic tradition, perhaps especially in *The Psalms*. Blondel et al. have successfully shown, I believe, that the slightest seemingly insignificant form of wakefulness, e.g., a slight sensation, the slightest understanding, when properly understood through philosophical reflection, implies a fundamental affirmation of a transcendence beyond the empirical order. And thus, it is a supreme contradiction to act, behave or think in a way that denies the divine because the underlying meaning of the agency or thinking thereby destroys itself. In short, although we are led by our hearts, this does not exclude the nisus of the intellect toward the First Truth and of the will toward unconditioned good as the spontaneous and underlying latent will heading in advance toward what is absolutely true and good. Indeed, if this view can be established, and I think Blondel has done this, we

can and must say that “one would have to stop willing and thinking to have the right to deny God without contradicting oneself. One would have to abandon speech.”[32]

Wisdom, as what matters most for thought and action, at the same time is the discovery and love of the being which has been given us, along with the universe in which we are inserted and participate, and all that this includes, especially the ones we know and love already, but, of course, also all those whom we are yet meet. Wisdom, therefore, is a discovery of oneself and others as ones who say “I” and thereby are ones to whom all of being appears. It is the discovery of oneself at the center or foyer of the light of being, participating in divine light whence the world comes to be and appears. This discovery of what I means is indeed a discovery of self-hood and thus is a form of isolation but it is also the condition for the possibility of all communication and communion. Upon this discovery, one realizes how precious one’s existence is and how precious is the responsibility of being the self which one is called to be. With this discovery, we now can activate the capacity to listen to the guidance of the spiritual sense which attunes us to the whole of being implicitly present to us in each being that is present to us. We hereby consent to our being as one wherein our awareness is always a presencing of the infinite in the finite.

As Louis Lavelle put it, this is a capacity to possess oneself, not dominate over oneself. It is the habit of an extremely delicate sensitivity, again, an attunement to the spiritual sense, whereby the wise person is enabled to experience in each being an echo of the infinite, teaching her something or requiring something of her. But, and here Lavelle reverberates Aquinas, “at the opposite end of the scale, the blind of the heart remains ever alone, and the fool always acts too soon or too late.” Thus, the virtue of wisdom vigilantly combats and purifies incessantly what militates against wisdom, e.g., impatience and imprudence, and whatever inserts one’s own will and desire before the all of the being; and it causes one to blunt one’s natural *nisus* toward fundamental priorities, i.e., the ever-latent tendency to what is true and what is good for oneself and, as much as possible, for all of being. But it teaches also that no one has a greater task in sustaining this spiritual sense and being pure of heart than the one who is immersed in material riches, comfort and honors, or preoccupied with such.[33]

Thus “stupidity” is the dulling of this *nisus* of the heart which naturally gravitates toward wisdom, towards infinite goodness and truth. This sense of “stupidity” here is a way of talking about what conceals wisdom by blunting the natural impetus towards it. Here Aquinas points out that “stupidity” (*stultitia*) is tied etymologically to *stupor* and the Latin words he uses to clarify this are *hebetor* and *obtusus*. Here (the modern English word) “obtuse” springs forth for the English reader. For Aquinas, the relevant sense of “stupidity” is tied to a state of the *nisus* of the spirit being blunted (*hebeo*, *hebetor*) and dulled and it is a dulling of the spiritual sense’s basic *nisus* and is something for which the person is more or less responsible. Thus, Aquinas steers to an understanding of “stupidity” to the blunting of the natural *nisus* toward “wisdom.” And both are linked here to a kind of primacy of the heart and will be going in advance of intellect.[34]

A supporting consideration in this analysis is Aquinas’s recognition that the etymological root for *sapientia* (Latin for “wisdom”) may well derive from *sapor* (savor) and *sapere* (to taste). And wisdom manifests itself in how the living of life involves a refined discretion based on *pre*-reflective judgments and forms of distinguishing, which are the result not of a protracted reflective analysis and explicit judgment, which would be typical of the philosopher or scientist. Rather this *nisus*, and its dulling, occur *pre*-reflectively and implicitly in human conscious merely by being awake. (This is tied to the Aristotelian view, appropriated by Aquinas, that the virtuous person automatically, with a kind of intuitive immediacy, knows a nasty, wicked, improper vitiating vicious situation.) The wise person senses the relevance of ultimate matters in concrete situations in a way analogous to the discriminating connoisseur of foods and drinks immediately tastes excellence (and lack of it) in the food and drinks. We will come back to this analogy.

(This theme is an undercurrent in Aquinas’s theory of the act of faith. For Aquinas, our minds are constituted by a sense of “First Truth” as the transcendental condition for knowing anything as true. The person who believes is instinctually drawn, with the interior help of God’s Spirit, to assent to narratives and propositions *as* originating in the First Truth. They are lived as of divine origin. A philosophical argument may be also a motive, e.g., a proof for the existence of God, but decisive is the instinctual recognition that in this situation the First Truth is manifesting.)



Thus, Aquinas gets at the essence of the stupidity in relation to questions at the forefront of this paper by way of saying stupidity is harmful and sinful because it, by dulling the heart and blunting the spiritual sense and it, therefore, is contrary and opposed to wisdom. The path to wisdom is obfuscated and darkened because the heart's natural perspicacity is rendered obtuse to its proper natural nisus to truth, goodness, and happiness. Thus, what is the arch-foe of wisdom i.e., what interferes and incapacitates the inherent gravitation to what is of foremost importance in terms of knowing and doing, is stupidity/folly. In this case, Aquinas holds that our quasi-instinctual spiritual sense's ability to judge matters of ultimate importance or what comprises wisdom ("what regards the highest cause, which is the last end and the sovereign good") is blunted.[35]

Of course, there may be seemingly a similar dullness in the mentally demented or deranged. But this dullness is different from the one holding sway when one's mindset (or the pre-disposition of the intentional direction of one's consciousness) is under the strong influence, e.g., of a culture with a deeply secularist (natural reductionist) culture, or one immersed in the enticements of pleasure, fame, and power. In these latter cases one is incapable of perceiving what is most important, foremost ultimate and/or divine matters and even basic ethical priorities, as, e.g., the inviolable dignity of every human being. But although the responsibility for this dullness is disseminated throughout the society and culture, nevertheless one freely participates in so far as one repeatedly, if not incessantly, goes against the natural nisus of the heart.

Again, Aquinas, taking advantage of the etymological link of *sapientia* and *sapere/sapor*, compares this dulling of the spiritual sense to how a person whose taste is infected with, e.g., a disease, cannot taste sweet things. In short, the stupidity in question refers to when the "spiritual" sense or knowledge of the heart (of course always informed and critiqued by intellect, understanding, and will in active and passive syntheses) succumbs to the spiritual virus that is thriving in one's cultural environment. To follow out the analogy, one is absorbed in the blunting, stupefying force of, e.g., an addiction, an attachment to power, fame, pleasure, status, etc., and one loses one's "taste" for what are the most important matters. And, again, such stupidity is reprehensible because, at some more or less implicit level

one is aware it harms most grievously oneself, one’s loved ones, one’s neighbors, and is against God’s will.

Clearly, for Aquinas, we can account for Lucifer’s stupidity in terms of a form of self-love or pride or power that consumed him. (For Aquinas, some sense of pride is at the heart of all our sins.[36]) As we have seen, in the case of *our* stupidity, i.e., that of the peoples and nations of the world, complicit in the crimes against humanity in the consequences of our behavior in changing the climate and preparing for nuclear war, the causes are complex. But it is rather easy to imagine that a society whose culture is bereft of an education tied to the quest of wisdom and rather aimed at a prudent and “smart,” “prosperous,” and “successful” citizenry made up of technocrats, warriors, racists, and capitalists can only reap what it sows. This is to say that such socialization would shape spiritual sensibilities which would be, to a very large extent, dulled to the necessary truths and forms of agency that will stop the seemingly inexorable march toward omnicide. There are prophetic voices that signal the danger of the “objective spirit” or “wisdom of this world” in the Abrahamic traditions, in the US, e.g., some religious orders and communities of Anabaptists. But they are typically dismissed by the larger world as out-of-touch, narrow-minded, and pre-modern.

This writer has overstayed his welcome with this audience. However, at the risk of sounding oracular, he concludes by proposing that the acceptance and guidance of five scarcely acknowledged but widely familiar shared truths would serve to bring to a halt our stupidity by helping to create the spiritual sense and ethos which will stop the MADness. They are rooted in the basic beliefs of the Abrahamic traditions, but in many others as well. 1) The human being is endowed with an inviolable dignity. 2) The earth’s well-being depends on the wise stewardship of humans; it is not to be treated disrespectfully but its well-being is the necessary condition of all life. 3) The blessings of natural and behavioral science become a curse when science’s typical and occasionally necessary practical orientation towards positivism and reductionism turns into metaphysics and human existence and consciousness are reduced to mere natural processes, means to ends, and resources for human agency and entrepreneurship; i.e., where “spirit” or “person” is no longer essential realities made present in acts of respect and as ends in themselves, but now are reified and legitimately made means to

ends.[37] 4) Human beings are capable of the self-sacrificial love which exalts, saves, nourishes everyone but also the earth if they are graced by beliefs in transcendent ideals like the absolute Good, Beauty, and Love. Aquinas posits these as the divine source and end of human life, but other, e.g., a humanist version of transcendence, perhaps to the embarrassment of many religious believers, can and factually does, motivate to exemplary self-sacrificial love. 5) A world made up of a community of communities surrounded by a robust notion of the common good and pervaded by a universal ethical love *eo ipso* undermines all the evils that presently threaten humans and the planet.

## Notes

- [1] In prior essays, I develop the topic of “Luciferism” in regard to the theme of anger and violence as well as “transcendental pride.” See: “From Moral Condemnation to Luciferism: Aspects of a Phenomenology of Violence,” *Eidos: A Journal for Philosophy of Culture*, Vol. 1, Nr. 1 (2017), 36-60; “Transcendental Pride and Luciferism,” in *Continental Philosophical Review* (2020), ed. Michael Staudigl, Vol. 53, No. 3, 331-353.
- [2] James G. Hart, *Who One Is: A Meontology of the “I,”* Book 1: A Transcendental Phenomenology (Springer: Dordrecht, 2009), see Index “dignity.”
- [3] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Vol. Three (New York: Benziger, 1948), q. 162, a. 1 (corpus).
- [4] See for the historical and conceptual development of all this, especially how the Abrahamic traditions emphasize the exalted status of the human being by rendering the human in some respects superior to the “archangels” (and Jinns of Islam) and as the glory of all creation, see the excellent online essay by Samuel Vollenweider, “*Herrlichkeit und Sturz des Lichtengels. Eine Gegengeschichte zu Demut und Erhoehung von Jesus Christus.*” This was originally published in Joerg Frey and Gabrielle Oberhaensli, *Das Boese* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 2012), 203-226.
- [5] See Michele Federico Sciacca, *Atto ed Essere* (Milan: Marzorati, 1960), here especially Ch. 1, section 6, pp. 70-73; this work has been translated into German and French. For more elaborate discussions of the fragility and being-out-of-balance see *L’Uomo, Questo “Squilibrateo”* (Milan: Marzorati, 1958).
- [6] When Being is spelled with a capital “B” we intend to signal that it is implicitly and mediately a reference not only to the absoluteness of the idea of being but to this extension as mediately referring to God as well as all of being.
- [7] Sciacca, *Atto ed Essere*, op. cit., 72-73.
- [8] *Idem*, 94-95.
- [9] I am here dependent on especially Vol. I of his *Finitude et Culpabilite, L’homme Faillible*; I have used the English translation *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles Kelbley (Chicago: Henry Regnery: Gateway, 1965), especially the Conclusion, 202-224.

- [10] See Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie* (Berlin, Goettingen, Heidelberg: Springer, 1948), Book 3, beginning of section on *Transzendenz*, 678-679. It seems that Sciacca, Rosmini, and Blondel believe philosophy can reach a positive affirmation of the divine absolute transcendence. I am uncertain, but I think Ricoeur would require religious faith, as would Jaspers.
- [11] Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, *op. cit.*, 220-221.
- [12] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), *passim*, but see the index “violence; also see fn. 1 above, “From Moral Condemnation to Luciferism” for a more detailed discussion of Sartre and the relevant passages for “Luciferism.”
- [13] Sartre, *op cit.*, p. 282.
- [14] Here we touch on the issue of collective responsibility/irresponsibility in a “representative democracy.” I deal with some of the issues in *The Person and the Common Life* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992), especially Chapters III-V. In terms of my thesis of general citizens’ complicity even in the imperfect form of democracy of the US, I urge the reader to attend to the work of retired Colonel Andrew Bacevich, Director, and Founder of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft ([quincyinstitute.org](http://quincyinstitute.org)). On [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), 7/1/21 Bacevich redirected a query blaming the Iraq war and its war crimes exclusively, on, e.g., Donald Rumsfeld (who had just died), to considering our mutual collective responsibility made possible the policies implemented by Rumsfeld. He also offered a brief analysis of the recent dogmatic “demonization of Iran.”
- [15] I have been dependent in this section on the excellent book by Timmon Molne Wallis, *Disarming the Nuclear Argument: The Truth About nuclear weapons* (Edinburgh: Luath Press Ltd., 2017). For the present discussion on deterrence, see pp. 41 and 49.
- [16] See Wallis, 162.
- [17] See Wallis, 162; on p. 209, at endnotes 9, 11, 12, we have references to the *Qu’ran*: 2:190; 2:190; and 8:61. Wallis’s endnote 10 cites “from the Sunni tradition instructions which Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the first Caliph, gave to his armies. See [<http://www.juancole.com/2013/04/Islamic-forbids-terrorism.html>].”
- [18] See Wallis, Ch. 3.
- [19] See Wallis, Ch. 1.

- [20] See Wallis, Ch. 2.
- [21] For this and connected issues, see the Netflix movie, “Kiss the Ground.”
- [22] See Wallis, p. 122 for the quote from the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.
- [23] This is a basic theme of Heidegger, but for here I have in mind of how it may be integrated into the issue of “immortality.” For this, see Michele Sciacca’s excellent book, *Morte ed Immortalità* (Milan: Marzorati, 1959).
- [24] See James G. Hart, *Who One Is, op. cit.*, Bk 1 pp. 3-5; see also Ch. 1-2; also, Bk 1, Ch. 7-8.
- [25] See James G. Hart, “Deep Secularism, Faith, and Spirit,” *International Journal of Philosophy* (2017), Vol. 4, 635-662.
- [26] John Maraldo has reminded me that there are numerous Christians awaiting Christ’s Second Coming or “the Rapture,” and who do not see in their calling to be Christians an obligation to be stewards of the earth, and embodiments of the message of peace, as in Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, who would seem to have the same equanimity with the reduction of the earth to a toxic wasteland, as long as the godless atheists or heathen were slain. I am indebted to John Maraldo’s close reading of this paper which has resulted in many fewer weaknesses than it otherwise would have had.
- [27] Yet we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge and celebrate the insufficiently appreciated labors of individuals in organizations like War Resister League, The Friends Service Committee (Quakers), NuclearBan.US, and ICAN (icanw.org). The latter won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize. ICAN exists presently to create citizen-activism to move the US government to take the first five steps, mentioned in the body of the text. These steps seem obvious precautions to avoid nuclear war. I personally am indebted to David Keppel and the local Quakers as well as the local Unitarian Church for discomfiting my apathy in these matters.
- [28] Max Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, trans. Bernard Noble (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), especially 163-174. This is a translation of *Vom Ewigen im Menschen* (Berne, A. Franke, 1954). This remains still the classic text of the philosophical phenomenology of religion.

- [29] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Vol. Three (New York: Benziger, 1948), “Of Folly which is Opposed to Wisdom,” II-II, q. 46. I am indebted here to the first three Chapters of Annie Kraus, *Vom Wesen und Ursprung der Dummheit* (Cologne and Olten: Jakob Hegner Verlag, 1961).
- [30] Cf. James G. Hart, “The Essential Look (*Eidos*) of the Humanities: A Husserlian Phenomenology of the University,” *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 70 (2008), 109-139.
- [31] See n. 25 above.
- [32] See Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company *passim* but especially here, 36-37. This is a translation from French by Alexander Dru, with footnotes translated by Mark Sebanc and Cassian Fulsom. O.S.B. It was originally published as *Sur les Chemins de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier, 1956). I am indebted to Prof. Steven Laycock’s remarks on his earlier reading of this next on the natural nisus toward wisdom, which as he reminded me is an ancient theme in Confucianism and Buddhism.
- [33] I have been helped by Louis Lavelle’s *Nachlass* text *Chemins de Sagesse*, ed. Bernard Grasset, preface by Jean-Louis Viellard-Baron (Paris: Hermann, 2013), *passim*, but especially p. 46-47; a translation of this is to be found in Louis Lavelle, *The Dilemma of Narcissus*, trans. William Gairdner (London/New York: Humanities Press, 1973, 173-174, *et passim*).
- [34] This is a central theme in the writings of Max Scheler. But more recently one may consult the fine work done in the writings of Anthony Steinbock.
- [35] Aquinas, *op cit.* II-II. q. 46, article 2.
- [36] Cf. above fn. 1 my “Transcendental Pride and Luciferism.”
- [37] See Hart, “Deep Secularism,” *op. cit.*; see n. 25 above.