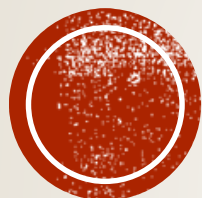


THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION 101: THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT IN PSYCHOTHERAPY



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HOW DO WE ASSESS OUR CLIENT'S SITUATION OR PRESENTING PROBLEM?

- Physiological
- Psychological
- Behavioral
- Sociological
- Spiritual



THE FULL PICTURE



***“IT IS NOT TO DENY THE
PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL,
BIOLOGICAL, AND OTHER VIEWPOINTS
ON UNDERSTANDING HUMAN
NATURE. RATHER IT IS TO ASSERT
THAT THE THEOLOGICAL LISTENING
PERSPECTIVE AND A THEOLOGICAL
INTERPRETATION OF... ‘THE LIVING
HUMAN DOCUMENT’ IS VALID IN
BOTH THE UNDERSTANDING OF AND
THE COUNSELING OF PERSONS.”***

Merle Jordan,
“Taking on the
Gods”, p. 27





RELIGION & THEOLOGY

- Theological questions are the existential questions of meaning, purpose, sin, salvation and God that are part of the experience of being human
- Religion is a set of beliefs and practices that prescribes a way of answering and understanding the theological questions.





PERSONAL AUTHENTICITY

Our ability to find contentment and to live fulfilling lives is related to our ability to fully integrate our beliefs with our outlook, actions and choices.





OPERATIONAL VS. PROFESSED THEOLOGY

“Operational Theology refers to the implicit religious story by which one is living, including unconscious material.”

Merle Jordan
Taking on the Gods





CONSTRUCT THEOLOGY

- Our personal theology creates a framework by which we seek to understand subsequent life experience.
- When we encounter experiences that exceed our traditional understanding we must find a way to make new meaning.





CERTITUDE VS. SELF-ASSURANCE

KILLEN & DEBEERS

- **Certitude**

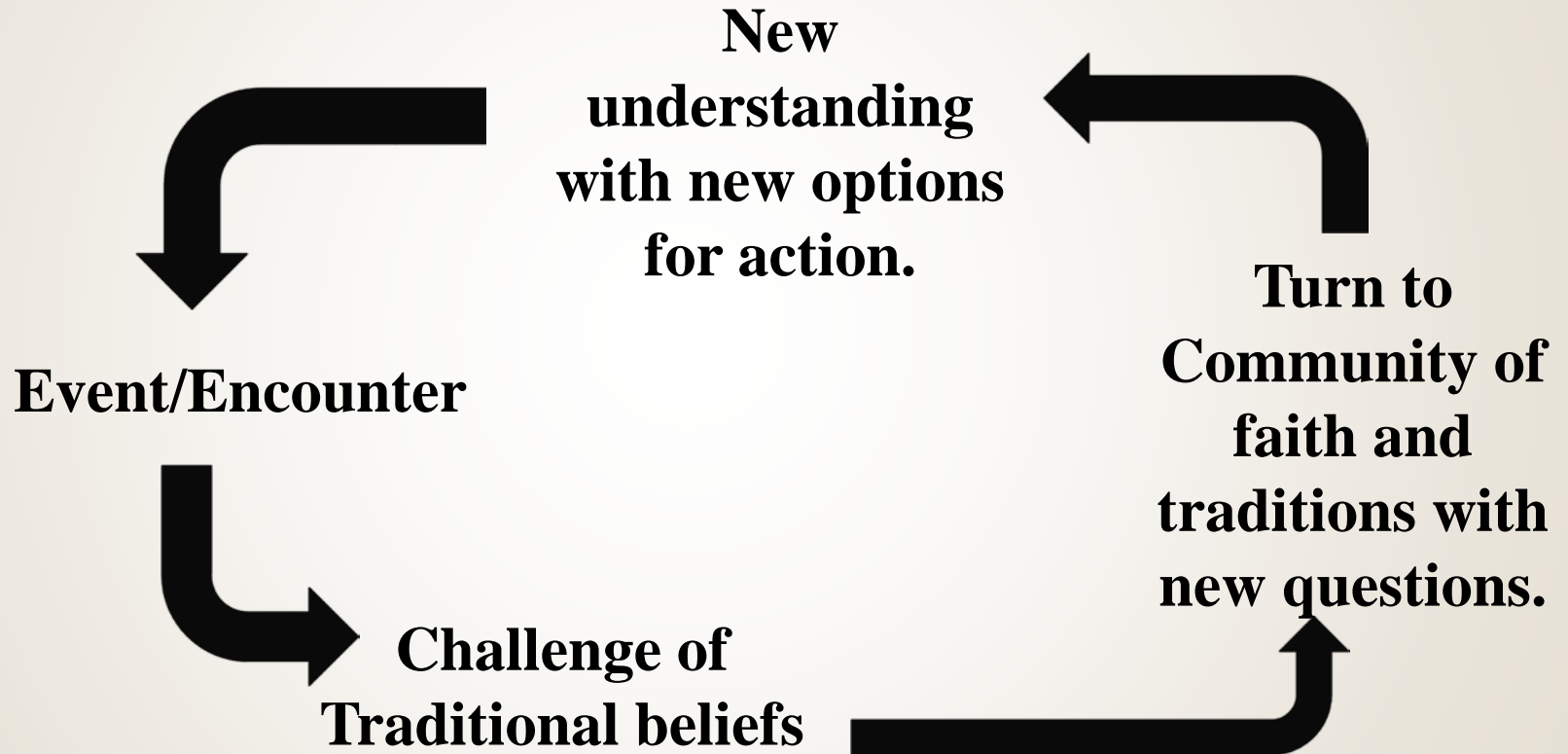
Fall back to traditional teachings or positions of faith and try to find a way to explain the situation

- **Self-Assurance**

Puts emphasis on the experience over that of tradition and requires a shift in beliefs.



THE HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE





AWARENESS OF THE HOLY

- **Who or what is sacred?**
- **What is revered?**
- **Does the person ever experience awe or bliss?**
- **What is the object of ultimate concern?**





FAITH

- What is the professed faith?
- How does that faith affect outlook and action?
- Does that faith open up the world for the person or draw narrow boundaries that limit perspective and outlook?





PROVIDENCE

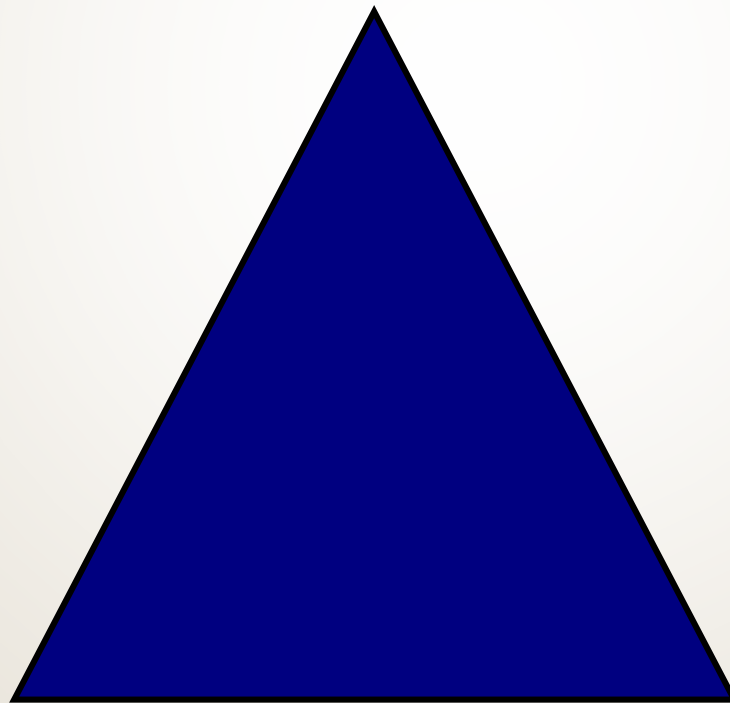
- Where is God or is there a god?
- Can God be trusted?
- Why? Or Why me?
- Does the person experience the need for God or do they feel self-sufficient?
- Does God have a plan?
- Is the universe benevolent or cruel?



WAYS OF MAKING MEANING: THE PROVIDENCE TRIANGLE

God is Loving

God is
Omnipotent

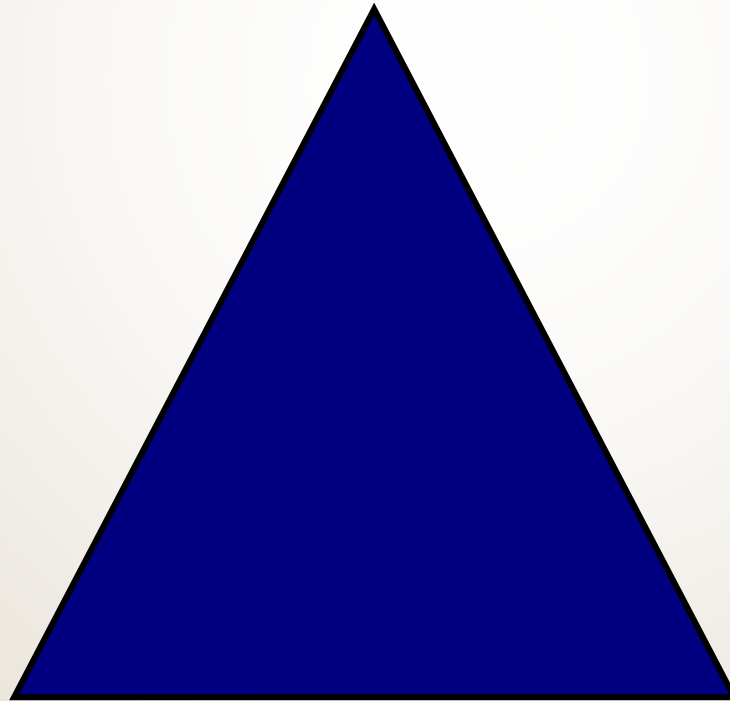


Evil is Real



THE PROVIDENCE TRIANGLE:

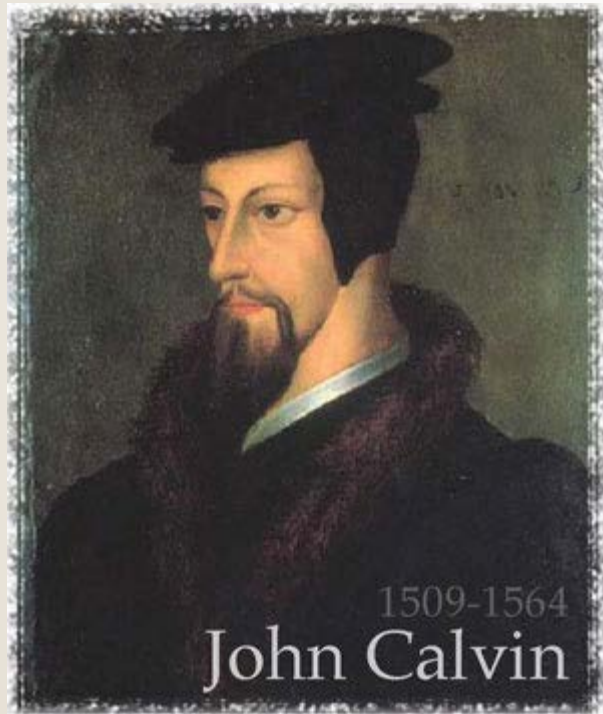
God is Loving



God is
Omnipotent


**Evil is
Real**





“...for nothing is more preposterous than to measure the incomprehensible judgment of God by our contracted minds.”





“Our need is never for an explanation that legitimizes [the claims of evil in the world]. Our need is for the clear understanding of God’s omnipresence that dispels the claims of evil, as light dissipates the terrors of the dark”

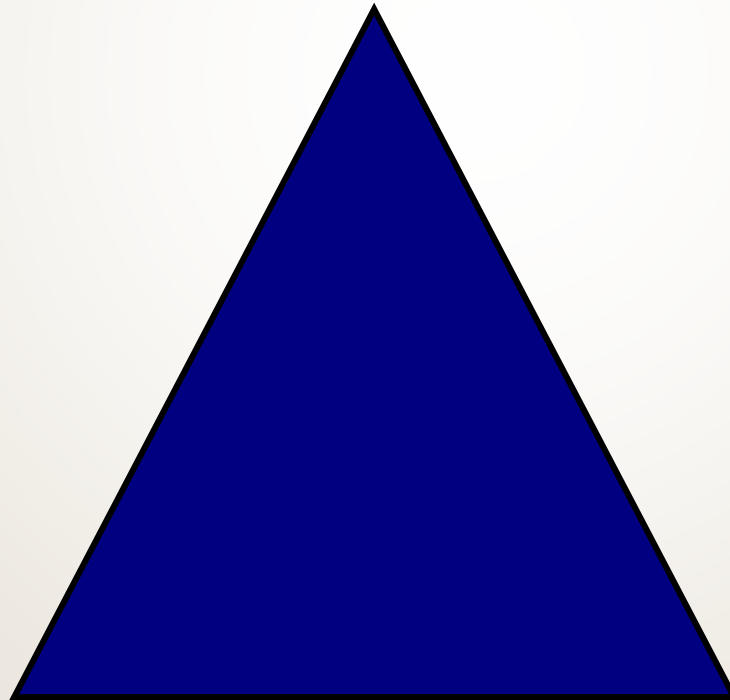
*~Exerpt from
“Questions &
Answers on
Christian Science”*



THE PROVIDENCE TRIANGLE:

**God is
Loving**

God is
Omnipotent



Evil is Real



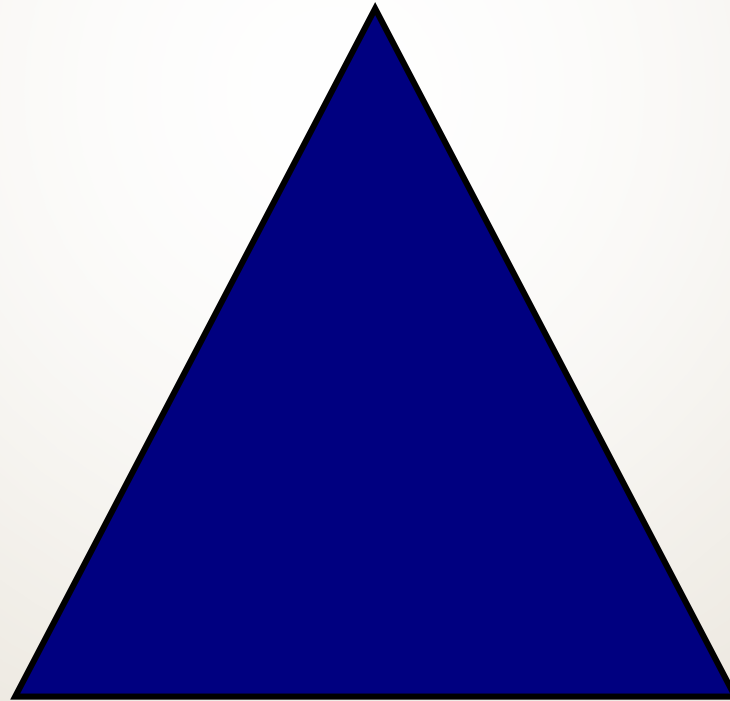
"The Deist needs none of those tricks and shows called miracles to confirm his faith, for what can be a greater miracle than the creation itself, and his own existence?" Thomas Paine



THE PROVIDENCE TRIANGLE:

God is Loving

God is
Omnipotent



Evil is Real



OPEN THEOLOGY

“God knows the past and present...and knows the future as partly definite”



John Sanders





GRACE & GRATITUDE

- Relates to both giving and receiving.
- Related to guilt & shame
- Involves humility



A NOTE ON “SIN”

- ἁμαρτία
- More than a list of prohibitions.
- Better understood as that which inhibits spiritual growth and connection to God, self, and others
- Psychotherapy as a process of overcoming “sin” and leading to greater depth and meaning in life



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REPENTANCE

- Willingness to take responsibility for one's own actions
- Intention & action of going to a place of greater well-being
- Involves true remorse
- Requires courage





COMMUNION

- Connection with a community
- Community support & resources
- If not connected, by choice or rejection?





VOCATION

- Not necessarily about profession
- Related to sense of calling, meaning, purpose





ENTERING THE SPIRITUAL STORY

- Spiritual Genogram
- Listen for overt religious/spiritual words or ideas
- Engage a process of theological reflection
- Ask about spiritual practices
- Listen for personal or family rituals
- Don't assume common understanding.





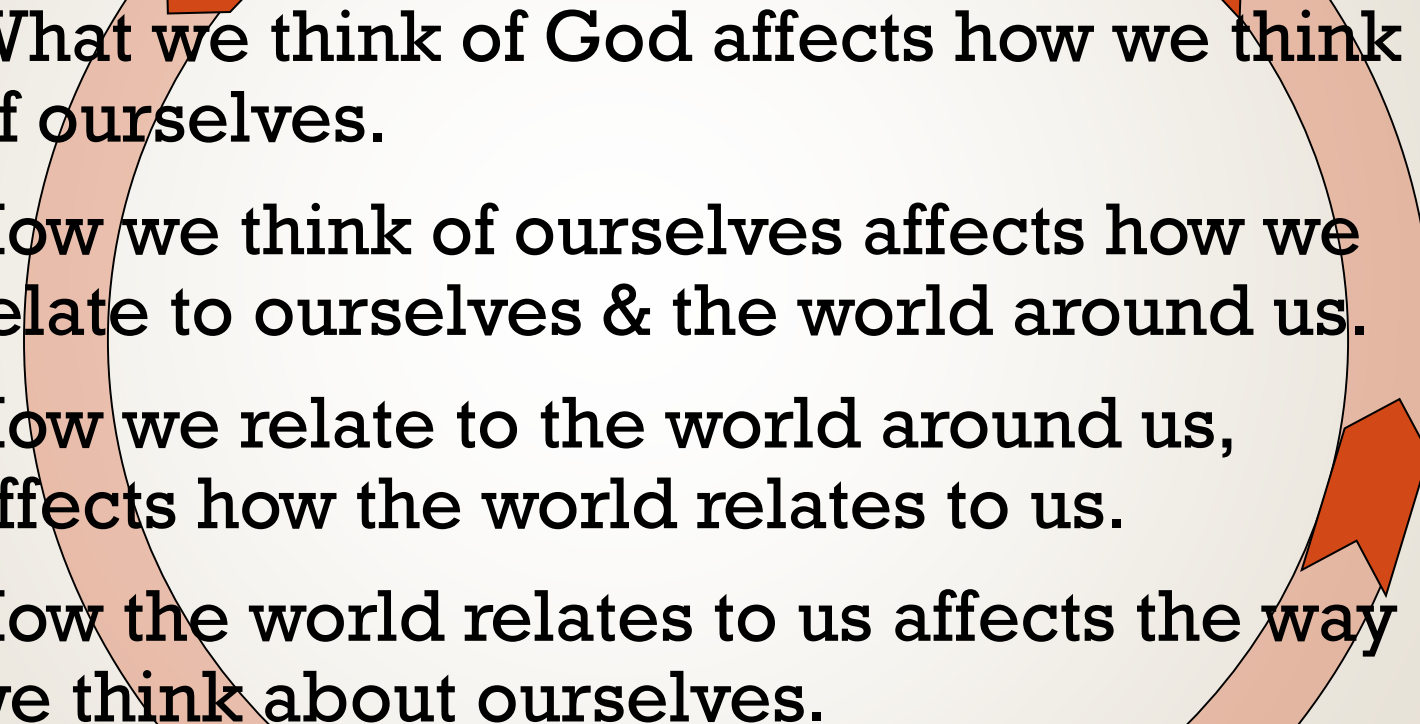
THE DO'S & DON'TS

- Accept Your client where they are.
- Listen with a theological ear.
- Explore with humility.
- Seek to embody the best of your faith tradition, not teach it.
- Avoid seeking to make the client look like you, spiritually speaking.





MAKING MEANING

- 
- What we think of God affects how we think of ourselves.
 - How we think of ourselves affects how we relate to ourselves & the world around us.
 - How we relate to the world around us, affects how the world relates to us.
 - How the world relates to us affects the way we think about ourselves.



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