

Excerpt from *Why Become a Christian? A Spiritual Memoir*  
by William A. Gray, PhD

Chapter 12  
The Humanistic Road to Nowhere

This chapter describes human-proposed concepts I embraced as a humanistic psychologist and attempted to Self-develop from 1968-1978 as desired qualities or characteristics using my **Being, Behaving, Becoming Model**. If you were not attracted to the Human Potential Movement, you might skip this chapter – unless you have friends or family who are attracted.

What I describe below is what I presented to groups of Christian students during weekend retreats. These students had prayed for my conversion and wanted to know what happened. Knowing there would be lots of questions, I took my Bible and the books I described in other chapters – to quote from them as needed to indicate their influence on me and on my conversion from humanism to Become a Born Again Christian.

I audiotaped these presentations over several years, but didn't know why I did this at that time because I never referred to them until I started writing this book. I just made recordings and then stored the cassettes in a safe place. Looking back now, I can see that God wanted these presentations taped, so I could transcribe them and use this to help me get started on writing my Spiritual Memoir. Without these transcribed tapes, I could not have recalled exactly what I presented. I would have had to do all of that systematic, time-consuming preparation again – and might have gotten bogged down doing this, so that I stopped writing.

This chapter is unusually long because it describes the *Self-desired* qualities and characteristics I arduously tried to Self-develop over ten years in order to Be, Behave and Become all that the Human Potential Movement promised, but could not. I use a **Describe/Critique format** for each quality or characteristic associated with each Being, Behaving and Becoming dimension:

First, I **describe** each quality or characteristic based on my understanding gained from personal experience and from my readings.

Next, I **critique** each quality or characteristic by sharing **Lessons Learned** from failed experience and **Spiritual Insights** provided by God and from His Word preserved in the Bible.

**Humanism Exalts Self Development**

Humanism exalts **Self** in many ways – which is why I've capitalized Self – such as asserting that Self (me, myself, and I) is more important than anything else, and encouraging humans to take full responsibility for their own Self-development to reach Self-fulfillment of one's human potential. Humanists believe that if each person buys into these beliefs and associated practices, they will become better persons, who will create a better personal life and better society. Let's examine these beliefs, which are really humanistic assumptions.

Mark Cosgrove's book, *Psychology Gone Awry: An Analysis of Psychological World Views* (1979), provides this overview of the Three Forces in Psychology: "The *humanistic* psychologist rejected the *behaviorist's* view that man is a mere behaving machine and the *psychoanalytic* view that personality is ruled by unconscious forces." Humanistic psychologists study the whole person, emphasizing the basic goodness, worth and potential of man and his

internal experiences and humanity (not just animal qualities). This was very appealing to me back then.

Cosgrove describes key tenets of Humanistic Psychology: All reality is seen as impersonal, mechanical, and evolved without any need for a supernatural agency (God) to explain all that exists (this is the worldview called Naturalism). The whole person (human experience, needs and feelings, and behaviors) is important. Humans should solve problems using a mind that is creative and can exercise free choice to make needed changes. Man is viewed as being born innately good, with unlimited potential for change and Self-growth in positive directions. The foundational belief is “man is the measure of all things.”

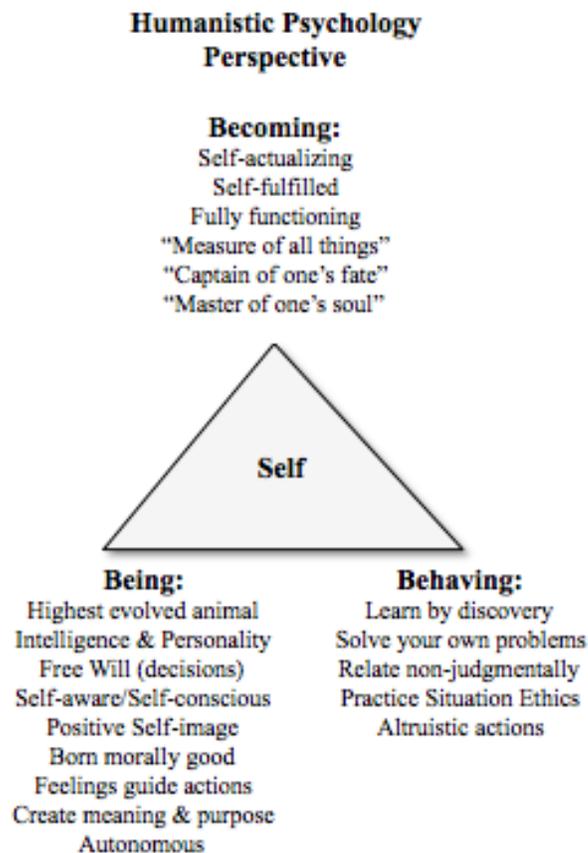
These concepts were foundational to the Human Potential Movement that I, and countless millions of others, embraced in the futile pursuit of Self-fulfillment. It took me ten years to finally realize that, no matter how diligently I tried, I could not attain what was promised – and not because I lacked understanding or effort, as happened with others according to one humanist: “In spite of the fact that apparently all have this potential, only a tiny percentage is now achieving it. This is, in part, because people are blind to their potential; they neither know what is possible nor understand the rewards of self-actualization.” (From *Third Force* by Frank Goble.)

I did not have any of the excuses Goble gives, because I systematically used *my Being, Behaving, Becoming Model* while trying to Self-develop *human-desired* qualities or characteristics listed under each BBB dimension. I must emphasize these points before proceeding:

1. Because this BBB Model is *mine*, I take responsibility for what I include and discuss, and for any omissions or shortcomings in it.

2. I’ve italicized *human-desired* qualities and characteristics to emphasize the Self-oriented desire to Self-develop them in order to Self-fulfill my human potential. [Note the emphasis on Self.]

3. I was unable to align any *human-desired* quality or characteristic in the Being dimension with its correlate in the Behaving or Becoming dimensions. None of the humanistic psychologists I admired and studied, and cite in this section, was able to make these B-B-B alignments. In fact, everyone emphasized one dimension (sometimes two dimensions), and those particular qualities or characteristics within that dimension that were of personal interest.



4. I make no attempt in my writing now to align B-B-B qualities or characteristics that I could not align in actual practice over a 10-year period. I simply list those *I desired* to Self-develop.

5. *My* list is not complete. Other humanists will likely have different lists. However, I think my list contains many qualities or characteristics that most humanists *desire* to Self-develop.

6. I'm going to describe only the main qualities or characteristics I sought to Self-develop.

### **“Being” from a Humanistic Perspective (two excerpts below)**

Because humanistic psychology emphasizes Being, this discussion will be longer than discussions of Behaving or Becoming. Why so much emphasis on Being? The “Father of Humanistic Psychology,” Abraham Maslow, emphasized *Being-values* in his influential book, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1962). Maslow’s list of 15 Self-actualizing characteristics contains 13 *Being-values*.

#### **Humans are the highest evolved animals**

Humanists believe all animate life forms, including human beings, evolved from less complex life forms because of “random chance” and the mechanism of “natural selection” (survival of the fittest). Humanists totally reject Supernatural God being the Creator of everything out of nothing, and embrace the worldview of Naturalism. As atheists, they believe humans are the highest of all the evolved animals – “man is the measure of all things” – with distinctive human capability, especially reasoning and free will. This famous saying – attributed to Protagoras (480-411 BC) – is the basis for humanists believing the concepts I discuss in this chapter are true and can be Self-developed as qualities or characteristics that will provide Self-fulfillment.

**Lessons Learned:** I was never an atheist who believed that all of Creation “just happened by random chance” and complex human beings evolved from one-cell organisms because of

natural selection. This Naturalistic explanation requires everything to come into existence from nothing, without any adequate explanation of where or why the components of everything originated (the source of matter, energy, light, etc.), and who was the originator (Prime Mover or First Cause or Intelligent Designer or Creator or Agent). Previously, I critiqued these atheistic / naturalistic / humanistic concepts, so I won’t do this again to avoid redundancy.

Here is why Stroebel rejected Darwin’s theory of macro-evolution (page 276): “Looking at the doctrine of Darwinism, which undergirded my atheism for so many years, it didn’t take me long to conclude that it was simply too far-fetched to be credible. I realized that if I were to em-

As previously discussed, former atheist Lee Stroebel reports his interviews with leading scientists, mathematicians and philosophers in *The Case for a Creator* (2004; more than 300 pages). Each person provides irrefutable evidence that points to the Supernatural God of the Bible as the Creator of everything out of nothing; many describe how this evidence led to their becoming Christians. Those scientists, who are investigating the smallest life forms (e.g., DNA) and the largest inanimate matter (e.g., the Cosmos), comprise the biggest groups abandoning Naturalism as an untenable worldview and embracing Theism. If you view Stroebel’s interviews on YouTube, you will see why such conversions are taking place at an increasing rate.

brace Darwinism and its underlying premise of naturalism, I would have to believe that:

- \* Nothing produces everything
- \* Non-life produces life
- \* Randomness produces fine-tuning [of what is evolved]
- \* Chaos produces information [like contained in DNA]
- \* Unconsciousness produces consciousness
- \* Non-reason produces reason

Based on this, I was forced to conclude that Darwinism would require a blind leap of faith that I was not willing to make. Simply put, the central pillars of evolutionary theory quickly rotted away when exposed to scrutiny.”

**Spiritual Insights:** The Old Testament proclaims God’s superiority in many Scriptures, such as: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9 NASB) The New Testament also asserts the superiority of God: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”<sup>1</sup> Even though the Bible explicitly rejects “man is the measure of all things,” God created human beings to have a special relationship with Him and to occupy a key role in His Creation, as proclaimed in Psalm 8. To find out *What is Man?* listen to this song by Jonny Cash on [YouTube](#).

### Humans exercise *Free Will*

According to humanists, Free Will is inherently human and extremely important (thus I capitalize it). For, Free Will enables human beings to Self-determine what they will believe and will do, instead of being conditioned to engage in particular behaviors as the behaviorists contend. (I chose to stop attending a graduate course where the professor gave high grades if students accepted his belief that operant conditioning is the only theory of learning and motivation. My Free Will resulted in my earning an “F.” I could have earned an “A” by attending class and embracing operant conditioning, but I did not want to “prove” that operant conditioning works.)

Most humanists contend that man must use Free Will to make Self-directing choices. In a 1956 debate with humanist Carl Rogers, behaviorist B. F. Skinner argues against Free Will: “What evidence is there that a client ever becomes truly *self*-directing? What evidence is there that he ever makes a truly *inner* choice of ideal or goal? ... Is the self-chosen goal independent of his early ethical and religious training? Of the folk wisdom of his group? Of the opinions and attitudes of others who are important to him? Surely not.” (From Paul Vitz’s book.)

So, where does Free Will originate? Humanists claim it is inherent in evolved human beings (but cannot explain how it evolved). In contrast, the Bible says Adam and Eve were created with the God-endowed *capability to choose*. This was most significantly demonstrated when they chose to disobey God by eating forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. It is convenient to say that they expressed free will to disobey God. This *original sin* (disobeying God) led to a sinful nature being passed on to future generations.

This sinful nature is seen throughout the Old Testament when God’s Chosen People repeatedly used their free will to disobey His Ten Commandments – especially the first four Commandments, which explicitly forbid worshiping or serving other gods or making idols to

them (Exodus 20:1-6).

Humanists advocate using Free Will to pursue Self-fulfillment to become Self-actualizing. Free Will enables human potential to be maximized: “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul” (from William Ernest Henley’s famous poem *Invictus*).

In a recent movie called *Invictus*, Morgan Freeman portrays Nelson Mandela. This movie is named after Henley’s poem to imply that this poem is what gave Mandela strength to endure being imprisoned for 27 years for protesting apartheid in South Africa. The movie vividly shows the poem’s supposed influence. However, this poem is not what enabled Mandela to forgive his captors so completely that he could inspire forgiveness and reconciliation throughout South Africa and unite the Blacks and Whites into one nation. In fact, Mandela was inspired by God, as he states in his inaugural Presidential address: “We were born to make mani-

It is only because Mandela first Became reconciled to God by accepting Jesus Christ, that he was then able to align Being (his convictions) with Behaving (uniting his nation) in a God-inspired way. No man-made poem can do this, not even Henley’s *Invictus*, even though it proclaims: “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.”

fest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us. It’s in everyone. And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same.”

Mandela was not outspoken about his Christian faith. However, in his autobiography (*Long Walk to Freedom*) he emphasizes that he has always been and always will be a Christian and that his actions (Behaving) and conviction (Being) enabled him to Become reconciled with those who had imprisoned him, and to unite his nation. As

a Christian, I am inspired by God’s intervention in Nelson Mandela’s *story*, for this is really *His Story* for reconciling Mandela and the people of South Africa.

**Lessons Learned:** Exercising Free Will (i.e., Self-will) I chose to study and then become a professor of humanistic psychology, seeking to Self-develop my human potential. I wanted to Be-Behave-Become the master of my fate and the captain of my soul – but could not. Free Will was not enough.

**Spiritual Insights:** The Holy Spirit empowers doing God’s Will instead of exercising Self-will. The most important example in *His Story* for all mankind occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Jesus took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.’ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’”<sup>2</sup>

Three times Jesus prayed to avoid fulfilling the Father’s Will, but despite overwhelming sorrow Jesus completed it by dying on the Cross and saying “It is finished.” Because Jesus’ died as the Perfect Lamb of God and rose again, some 2 billion of the world’s 6.3 billion population claim to be Christians. I thank Jesus each time I listen to Darlene Zschech sing *Worthy is the Lamb* on YouTube.

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### “Behaving” from a Humanistic Perspective (one excerpt below)

Below are key humanistic concepts included in the **Behaving** dimension of *my Being, Be-*

**having, Becoming Model**, followed by a critique comprised of Lessons Learned and Spiritual Insights.

### **Human behavior is guided by practicing *Situation Ethics***

Humanists believe that all rules governing human behavior should be man-made – created by human reason – without any absolute standards of what is right or wrong. However, humanists have never agreed on which rules should be obeyed by mankind, and why. Instead, they advocate doing-your-own-thing autonomously (Humanistic License), as long as you are ethically caring and don't harm others.

My introduction to this occurred at the University of Texas in 1969 when Joseph Fletcher gave a series of lectures on his book, *Situation Ethics* (1966). Many students wanted to practice this, including me. Fletcher had been an Anglican theologian before writing his very influential book, so there seemed to be a Christian emphasis on love in his Six Propositions below:

- 1) "Love is always good." So, the loving thing to do is the right thing to do, always.
- 2) "Love is the only norm." So, love is the law, and overrides all other moral laws.
- 3) "Love and justice are the same." So, the greatest loving action is that which provides the most good for the most people.
- 4) "Love is not liking." It is akin to the Greek concept of agape (love your neighbor as yourself). But, Fletcher did not emphasize this.
- 5) "Love justifies its means." Loving actions are "right" no matter why they are performed.
- 6) "Love's decisions are made situationally, not prescriptively." There are no absolutes – ever!

These propositions were very appealing back then and still are to many people, but there are flaws that need discussing. Flaws I never considered because of my Self-centered focus.

First, different people have different subjective meanings for *love*. Some parents might spank (not beat) their children with loving intent after misbehavior to motivate "good" behavior. Other loving parents might believe any kind of spanking is a form of child abuse, which does not produce "good" behaviors for their children or anyone else.

Second, Situation Ethics sanctions almost any decision or action because these are always relative to a particular situation, never absolute. For example, two Canadian immigrants from India believed in "honor killings" to protect their family name and honor. So, they killed their three daughters for overtly displaying Western values (clothing, dating). They believed this was the right thing to do in this situation. The jury in a Canadian Court disagreed and sentenced them to life in prison.

Third, what one does now (the ethically right thing to do) can have bad consequences later. Germany was forced to pay reparations for starting World War I, which led to hyperinflation in Germany (it took a wheel barrow full of money to buy a loaf of bread). Adolf Hitler rose to power largely because of this situation, by publicly promising to restore Germany to prominence and feed its starving people. To do this, Hitler had his Nazis force the Jews and others to work in concentration camps.

Situation Ethics is based on the humanistic belief that "man is the measure of all things," which in turn makes Situation Ethics possible. Such circular thinking and beliefs reject God's standards of right and wrong, resulting in increased divorce instead of keeping one's marriage covenant, and increased abortions instead of valuing the earliest visage of human life as being created in God's likeness and therefore not to be murdered in the womb.
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Initially, the starving German people mostly supported whatever Hitler did because restoring the German economy and nation seemed to be the situationally right thing to do. They could not imagine Hitler would eventually mass murder some 17-20 million people whom he deemed to be “undesirables” or causing World War II in Europe. This is an example of Situation Ethics at its worst.

Fourth, Situation Ethics requires each person to make his or her own decisions about what action is right or wrong in each situation (the “boss principal”). Many individuals lack the capability to “think through” the consequences of every decision and behavior so the best result occurs. When enough individual legislators voted to allow no-fault divorce based on Self-centered irreconcilable differences, did a best result occur? This decision increased the USA divorce rate from about 20% of marriages to about 40-50% today, with the result that poverty has increased dramatically for those divorced mothers who get custody for the children. When enough individual legislators around the world decided to sanction abortion for a woman who had been raped, did a best result occur? Today, abortions have become another form of birth control, resulting in 1.3 billion abortions worldwide (more than one billion in the USA). And rising each second, according to the Abortion Counter (<http://www.numberofabortions.com/>).

**Lessons Learned:** Situation Ethics thrives in a culture that seeks Self-fulfillment, and expands this humanistic culture like a symbiotic relationship that won’t cease until these questions are answered truthfully: Has Situation Ethics replaced the God of the Bible or His absolute standards of right and wrong (good and evil)? If so, are the consequences better or worse because of this? Can any humanistic think tank provide better agreed-upon standards that will produce better results for the most people, most of the time, over many centuries? I cannot think of any example of this, but can easily cite many examples of the evil that has resulted from rejecting God and His moral standards.

**Spiritual Insights:** God rejected Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden for eating forbidden fruit because He did not want them to autonomously know what is good or evil. He wants humans to know and obey His commands; he is totally opposed to human-decided situation ethics. Christians are Christ’s *Name-bearers*, and honor His name by aligning Being-and-Behaving so our thinking and actions are more Christ-like. Christians can fall prey to situation ethics by divorcing their spouses or aborting unborn babies because of Self-centeredness in these situations. This does not demonstrate a good witness or role model for others. Instead of practicing Situation Ethics, Christian’s are to honor God by honoring their marriage vows: “To have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part.” And, to respect human beings as individually valued because we are created in the “image of God.”