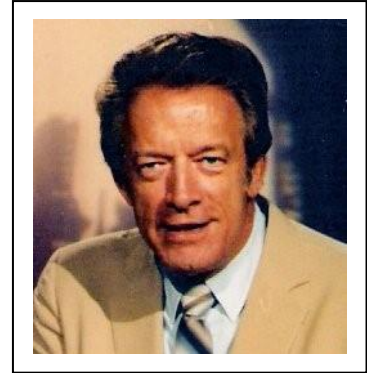


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The Gods of the Mind

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The means by which one person is able to rule many others is a fascinating subject of study. Invariably, the explanation of such control is that it is a matter of the mind. Any ruler, no matter how numerous his weapons or great his wealth, must finally rule by other means. He must rule by persuasion, the ultimate weapon through which influence on a culture is produced and sustained. The truly powerful leader must influence the minds of men.



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To do this, he must produce in the minds of others something more, something stronger, something more compelling than what we normally call an idea. This “thing” he must produce within the minds of others actually exists, but in the form of a mental construct. It is an image the influencer sets up in the minds of others, an image that can become an object of occupation, then of concentration, and then—dare we say it—of veneration. The influencer must produce in the minds of those he influences a kind of little god. This god of the mind is a “real thing” he plants in the mentality of unsuspecting people. This “real thing” may externally resemble Marx, Lenin, or Freud, but in reality it is a thing unto itself. It goes beyond the limitations of ordinary personality and takes on dimensions of near deity. Possibly that is why one of the strongest prohibitions in Scripture is the statement “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. When the God of the universe uttered those words, He was giving an *absolute* command that applied to all things in all places for all time, until the end of time and beyond.

Obedience to that command is the key to everything. No benefit in this or in any possible world comes apart from the diligent conformity to that eternal and changeless rule.

Conversely, disobedience to that inflexible order results in the irretrievable loss of everything—sanity, security, rationality, health, happiness, civility, civilization—for the rule God uttered has to do with ultimate good and the final basis of all things, with the foundation for all foundations, the measure of all measures.

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Every adverse fortune of life in history for men and nations has come from ignoring that command. The degree of ill present in that adverse fortune is in direct proportion to the degree an action has deviated from that command.

In fact, there is a sense in which the command “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” is not finally a command but rather a devastating, simple statement of diamond-hard reality. It is a total absolute, nonnegotiable in the slightest aspect. It is not altered by rhetoric, softened by tears, weakened by reflection, eroded by time, cowed by resentment, or defeated by successive waves of frantic assault by legions of froth-mouthed enemies.

That command is so obviously the essence of existence one marvels that it should ever be questioned by a mind that claims rationality or by a soul that quests for life. So essential is that command to rational life, the thought or the action that directs itself otherwise should be seen by all for what it is: a perverse dementia, a strange insanity.

But alas, strange insanities exist, present in our time as in virtually all times. History is filled with accounts of other gods. Individuals, then whole families, then entire nations, then teeming civilizations allowed, respected, and finally worshiped pagan deities. We read the record, which has always astonished us, of men and women by the millions who have worshiped someone or something else beside the true and living God.

Adding to our wonder, we learn that this worship has not been mere obeisance. No, indeed, it has taken the form of expensive, poverty-producing offerings placed upon the stone knees of dumb idols. Worse, this worship has taken the form of human sacrifice, infanticide, immolation, and suicide—all for gods of wood or stone that cannot speak. Worshipers have led their tiny children, their trembling wives, even their nations into the cauldron of sacrifice for other gods.

No one knows how much of the substance of life has been poured out before the graven images of time, upon the stained altars of gods who are *not* and of demons who *are*. Yes, successive generations of pitiful human beings have sunk with hardly a shriek or a tear into Sheol while still pursuing the hope of placating a crudely sculptured stone to which they have attached the name *god*. They have fantasized that they can be nurtured from stone breasts or reenlivened from the loins of a moldering statue. The mind reels in the attempt to understand the insanity of paganism.

But the gods of stone are not the whole story. Paganism has taken many forms. In Greece the mystery religions and the muses became objects of worship. Statues of deities were few, but the gods of the mind were many.

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From those gods of the mind came what we now call *philosophy*—the love of thinking, the affection for the concept of things. Philosophy, a respectable pursuit in its place, has become in our time the word for all seasons. We have a philosophy of life, a philosophy of the future—yes, even a philosophy of religion.

Now there has been added “his philosophy” and “her philosophy.” Philosophy has come to mean simply a set of ideas collected from one spot and another and formed into a composite that people call *a point of view*. This point of view has itself now become sacrosanct, so that one’s philosophy is revered as something to which we all “have a right.”

“She has a right to her views,” we are told. “His ideas are his own, and they work for him,” we are informed. And thus must end all discussion, of course.

So diverse have become the basic ideas about life that the notion has emerged that there is no final idea, no absolute truth. Our generation is beset with this notion of the absence of finality. “Who is to say who is right?” is the question of dismissal in many a conversation. What’s more, many who so aver can point to the fallen gods of our time as proof of the instability and non-finality of the best ideas of this world.

Indeed, many an ideology important yesterday seem idiotic in the present, to the point that people are embarrassed to have believed in them. The statue of Lenin hanging by the neck as if in execution before it finally fell into a Budapest square expresses the spirit of the age: “There are no absolutes.”

But, alas, to say that there are no absolutes is to say that there is no God. And if there are no absolutes, how can one confess an absolute in the negative? The mind cannot do so, for the statement is a self-contradiction. The mind reacts, stretching out tendrils like a vine in a crannied wall, seeking the next solidity to which it may attach itself. Those questing tendrils are reaching in many directions today. Some even profess to have found that set of principles on which they can ultimately rely.

To aid in our thinking about first and second principles, we must emphasize again the divine prohibition: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” That is the rule. There must be no other first principle other than God and His Law.

By the same standard, there must also be no other central motivation, no other final goal, no other pursuit or prize, no multiple destinations. We must be ruled by no other human or subhuman creature, alive or dead. But, alas, despite many protestations, the world of our time is put upon, influenced—yes, *ruled* by the philosophies of others. I suggest, in fact, that our generation is so conformed to the ideas that have come down to us largely

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from preceding decades, even the previous century and the formative years of this century, that it can be said that the modern mind is ruled by men who are now in the grave.

Men who rule the world from their graves still press their philosophies upon us. We will not presume to call them “other gods,” but we cannot help noting that the degree of reverence bestowed upon them is more than natural men deserve. They are called “world changers,” “seminal thinkers,” “sublime conceptualists,” “god intoxicated,” “creators,” “custodians of the future,” and the like. Some indeed have gone so far as to repudiate every predecessor, begetting a “new school of thought” —yes, even “a new humanity.” All seven initiated a way of thinking that has affected future generations profoundly. In a sense they fathered a new *Zeitgeist*. They reached into the minds, indeed the imaginations (which is sometimes more important), of tens and then millions of questing people in their own and future generations.

Their ideas, and successive corruptions of those ideas, have been taught in our schools, promoted in the media, and preached from our pulpits to the point that they are now largely unquestioned and unrefuted, having become the conventional wisdom. Having endured this far, their ideas may even be carried as foundational elements into the next millennium. Should that be the case, the next millennium may also, as has this one, refuse to bring forth the utopia most of the seven seminal thinkers have implied and some have promised. Concerning the future, time will tell. But time is already telling this generation that it must look higher than a row of tombstones for its inspiration, its knowledge, its direction from here on out.

Remembering the deadly persistence of the gods of the mind to work upon us, we may well note the call—yes, the command, which God gives to the world. The Scripture says, “He commands all men everywhere to repent.” The unfortunate English translation of *metanoia* serves to obscure its real meaning. *Metanoia* means “a change of mind.” Before a person can step into true reality, he must change his mind. This is commanded to all men everywhere.

We do not do violence to truth when we suggest that God is requiring a world to depose the gods of the mind and receive within that cleansed mind the true God, the Lord of glory. When we consider how the god of this world has blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them, we sense the importance of the mind to God—and to the devil. Satan works daily to prevent in any person an enlightened mind. By contrast, God promises that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Within the mind of man is

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resident his great capability, which is to give assent to the truth of God and to depose and send into exile the false gods that persistently work to confuse the mind.¹

INTRODUCTION

“There is a tide in the affairs of men.”

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Truer words were, in all probability, never spoken by Shakespeare or any other who looked at the turning pages of history and their influence upon our lives. The certainty is that men and nations have not infrequently been caught in the swirling tide of multiple events, which tide takes to itself a life of its own. In fact, there have been eras in the history of our beleaguered world in which multiple sets of tide-like influences have impacted upon a civilization and its culture at nearly the same time. It has therefore become popular for commentators to speak about such things as “a crossroads of history” and similar expressions that would suggest that we are at a confluence of historic tides.

Such a time and such a confluence has been the twentieth century. It is called by some “this fabulous century,” and such a denotation is not without reason. In a relatively short span of time within this century, the world has experienced many remarkable changes in the realms of science, technology, medicine, space, and a hundred other well-known ways of describing “modern times.” Strangely, this century has also seen more developments that would come under the column “distressing things” than any previous century: devastating wars and monstrous new weapons. The new biological, nuclear, and chemical means mankind has of exterminating itself are a wonder to all.

Awesome is at least the word for it. Better words might well be *provocative*, *challenging*, *dangerous*, and even *adventurous*. At least we must all agree that our generation lives in the midst of a swirling tide of events, dreams, promises, threats, and changing ideas of the present and the future. Certainly our century has been the most politically interesting, the bloodiest, the most revolutionary, and the most unpredictable of any century in history. This confluence of strange conditions presses this generation to ask and answer anew such questions as, Why am I here? What is the purpose of life? and especially, Why is life and reality the way it is?

The question, Why are things the way they are? has been asked by successive generations of curious men from the dawn of history until this very moment.

The question is not a superficial intellectual exercise. No, indeed, for what we view as determining the nature of life in this world and what our response is to that nature is the

¹ Breese, D. (1990). *Seven men who rule the world from the grave* (pp. 9–14). Moody Publishers.

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cornerstone of our living. It is a truism that a person can be expected to put into practice tomorrow what he believes today. That is true of individuals, groups, nations, and entire cultures. Again and again it must be asserted that to believe in the wrong engine of history or the wrong purpose of living can lead to grievous errors, great tragedies, and devastating consequences. Conversely, to have a correct view of man, God, and history is the key to sanity and survival for individual men and for the entire culture.

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In this century our culture has experienced many dark and fateful events. The leaders of our time are bewildered when they are called upon to explain the reasons that our world is the way it is or to suggest a direction for the future. Many in positions of public trust confess that they are just trying to keep the lid on, and others have abandoned even that hope.

The contradictions of the present and of what we can see of the future are overwhelming to many. That is so because few persons today have taken the time to evaluate the issues and agree with the true and resist the false. Many believe that they are borne along by streams of intellectual and philosophical influence that are of their own choosing—but alas, they have not chosen at all. Rather, a high percentage of men and nations today are ruled by a few, select seminal thinkers who, though they are now in their graves, still have influence through their ideas, convictions, and obsessions. Much of modern education, commercial interaction, social planning, intellectual conviction, and even religion is still guided by the constructs formulated by those thinkers of an earlier generation.

Everyone agrees that there is something profoundly wrong with our world. In that wrong actions and wrong results spring from wrong premises, we would do well to consider the assumptions that govern our society. As we try to articulate those assumptions, we may find ourselves standing before grave markers silently asking, *Why did you think the way you did? Why did you say what you said to us?* We can find the answers to those questions in the pages written by the men before whose graves we stand and in the words they spoke to others. It is my hope that by remembering what was believed and preached by seven men who rule the world from the grave the reader will come to know himself better and be better able to understand his generation.

I also hope that out of this understanding a vast, societal-wide change of mind may take place in which men are transformed by the renewing of their minds and the world is reoriented toward a better destiny than the fate toward which it now stumbles.

Yes, even at this late hour we may yet open the windows of our minds to a clearer, stronger voice, a voice emanating from a higher provenance than the graves of those who are now gone but whose influence still remains. We may well profit by hearing from the

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seven men who rule the world from their graves. If we do not, we may find ourselves occupying the eighth grave at Esdraelon, the grave of humanity itself.

I am aware of the reactions that will inevitably come from those who study these pages. The first reaction will certainly be in the form of a question: *Why did you not include Mr. So-and-so?* I assure my readers that I have a real interest in the views and careers of a hundred other characters in history who started influential movements and, more important, were the source of seminal ideas. Having taught philosophy in days gone by, I have studied with interest the ideas of many and have evaluated with appreciation the accomplishments of some and with loathing the activities of others. This having been said, I believe that the seven men discussed in this volume were the progenitors of the most influential movements of this century. Each man was himself influenced by others, but each forged some new concept that became tidal and global. Each man presented his views in so piercing, strident, fanatical, and forceful a way as to produce a social penetration. For each of them, *believing* a view was not enough. You had to act on it. And that they did, driving their ideas like spears into the social structure of their time. Those spears have not been removed to this day.

I am aware that I will be accused of reductionism in this discussion. I confess myself to be guilty as charged. Most of the men presented here have had multiple biographers, and some have had literally hundreds of texts written about them, their lives, their views, and their continuing influence. More than two hundred biographies have been written about Napoleon Bonaparte, the dictator who once ruled more of Europe than any other, and yet he is not one of the seven seminal thinkers discussed in this volume. That is because the men of whom we speak in this book ruled the world more permanently than did the fleeting human rocket that was Napoleon. The seven in this book ruled the world more permanently because they and their ideas became gods of the mind rather than masters of real estate. For them, the battle for the minds of men was the ultimate thing.

It is impossible to say in a chapter or two all that could be said about such thinkers, men of whom whole books have been the subject. I have instead dealt with the particular aspect of their thinking that penetrated the culture. Other considerations regarding their lives, their loves, and their travels, although not uninteresting, would call for further, later consideration. This book, however, will deal primarily with the way in which the seven have contended for our minds.²

² Breese, D. (1990). *Seven men who rule the world from the grave* (pp. 17–20). Moody Publishers.