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Eternal Day: The Christian Alternative to Secularism and Modern Psychology.
 Seth Farber. Salisbury, Massachusetts: Regina Orthodox Press, 1998, 228 pages,
 \$22.95 paper.

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I first became acquainted with the works and person of Seth Farber in 1993 when a student in my "abnormal" psychology class brought me an article about Farber published in the *Village Voice*. My student reasoned quite correctly that Farber was a kindred spirit to me because of his opposition to modern "clinical" psychiatric and psychological theorizing and practice. I was delighted to discover that Farber lived in New York City and was as eager as I was to establish contact with another professional who had also been profoundly influenced by the writings of Thomas Szasz (1974), R.D. Laing (1967), Theodore Sarbin and James Mancuso (1980), Peter Breggin (1991) and a growing number of others who saw the ever expanding lists of psychiatric terms for what they were: a degrading set of moral labels rather than true medical conditions or diagnoses. Like me, Seth had grown hoarse and frustrated trying to get his clinical colleagues to even consider that the names they called the people they were supposed to be helping, those individuals whose behaviors were socially deviant and whose motivations were hard to understand, were metaphorical diseases at best and morally damning, socially destructive words at worst. He was also discovering that psychiatric nomenclature and its attendant procedures operated as a religion rather than as a science and that the great majority of our colleagues refused to grasp the simple concept that something you have (a medical condition) is not the same as something you do (a moral or ethical issue). He could not arouse in others an awareness that their professional lives were increasingly becoming part of an industry concerned with social control rather than personal empowerment. Finally, like me, he found he was helpless in refuting the growing assumption among clinicians that these so-called illnesses were the result of genetic and biochemical abnormalities and that the "treatment" of choice was the destruction of normal brain tissue and physiology with the use of invasive surgery, electroshock induced convulsions, or more commonly, the prescribing of powerful neuroleptic drugs.

Farber had earlier published his arguments against the clinical field and the dangerous monstrosity it had become (Farber, 1993), and I was working on my own missive in this regard (Simon, 1994). I argued with Seth at that time that while his

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book was morally powerful and logically persuasive (I require its reading by my students in abnormal psychology to this day) he was not providing his readers, patients or professionals, with an alternative to the present system, no matter how politically repressive and corrupt its evolution had made it. In my own book I argued that the patterns of behavior called disordered were the result of the adaptive struggles of individuals and reflected the physiological, social, political and cognitive-developmental differences of these individuals and therefore should be seen in a positive light for what they were rather than as deficits or what they were not, namely something judged against the arbitrary and ever changing social standards of so-called normalcy. However, I too, could not offer my readers an alternative to the clinical field as it was now operating. I had to agree with that sage among Psychiatrists, Harry Stack Sullivan, that people would not give up their defenses unless offered something that they considered superior to those defenses. Which brings us to *Eternal Day*, the fascinating and provocative book under consideration. I did not know when I met Seth Farber that he was a deeply religious man and that he was already developing his ideas that our field could never help those to whom it purported to be dedicated. Farber believes that the people labeled by psychiatry as sick are in search of personal, and more importantly, spiritual meaning and that their search can never be successfully concluded unless they turn to God and religion and away from the secular theories and practices of most present day clinicians. We are the problem, he argues, and can never be the solution!

In *Eternal Day*, Farber argues that those individuals struggling to actualize their humanistic and spiritual potential while fighting intrusive, controlling, and destructive parents as well as a materialistic, authoritarian and indifferent society have really no place to turn. The asylum (used here in the truest sense of the word as a haven of genuine safety and acceptance) the so-called mentally ill seek exists neither in the institutions run by medicine or, more unfortunately in Farber's opinion, in the religious institutions that he believes should be the source of healing and comfort to souls in pain. It is one of Farber's goals in this book to exhort the churches of our society to examine two of the reasons why they cannot, and more often will not, help those seeking spiritual healing and inner peace. First, they have basically capitulated their moral authority in dealing with these troubled individuals by accepting the underlying physiological and psycho-social explanations for the hard to understand behaviors of those who end up being diagnosed. And second, Farber claims, most religions share with the psychoanalytic and psychiatric establishments a view that human beings are basically flawed, tragic, fallen, and corrupt and therefore in need of the kind of control exercised by the church during the middle ages during the Inquisition and now by psychiatry as it coerces people with prisons euphemistically called hospitals and assaults on their persons called treatments. By seeing individuals as flawed and in need of external control both the church and its modern secular counterpart are, in part, the source of the problem rather than the solution.

Farber provides a fascinating historical exposition of the development of the parallel ideas that run through both the church's and modern psychiatry's image of Humanity. He suggests that the doctrine of Humankind's inherent deficit began in earnest with the writings of the fourth century theologian, Augustine, were further developed in the theological arguments of Luther and Calvin, and finally found their way into the writings of the secular physician and father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. It is Farber's contention that the bedrock of moral philosophy in western society, both religious and secular, rests on a view of Humankind as fatally

and permanently flawed and deficient. He further posits that until those who would help people in need see them as inherently worthy of dignity, love and forgiveness the destructive activities of both religious and secular institutions will continue. More importantly, until the church reverses its doctrines it will not be able to take its rightful and morally correct place as the principle source of help for those in search of spiritual and moral guidance. The asylums required by those in a spiritual crisis to work through their ordeals will never be built and staffed by the churches which are the only institutions capable of doing so. Thus, has Seth Farber taken it upon himself to criticize the bulk of the psychiatric and psychological establishment of our society. So too, has he burdened himself with a sermon to the major religious institutions that also enfold us all.

Farber writes well and offers us his ideas with clear prose and an abundance of passion. His historical arguments are as well developed concerning religion as those that deal with the emergence and development of modern clinical psychiatry and the so-called mental health professions making his book deserve wide attention from experts on both the secular and religious sides of the aisle. This is a book to be read and savored for its insights into the nature of the struggles of those judged to be mentally disordered and defective and the historical, philosophical reasons for some of the pain they encounter when they turn for help to their churches and the medical personnel charged with aiding them. However, I feel compelled to offer a caveat to those who might turn to this valuable book who see themselves as grounded in the modes of science and the morals of secular humanism as I am. Were I not familiar with Seth Farber as a scientist, and if I did not admire his commitment to those who suffer under the yoke of the clinical psychological and psychiatric institutions with their reductionistic theories and often monstrous dehumanizing procedures, I'm not sure I would have read this book. Farber and I are committed to the principles of humanism, see our "patients" holistically, organismically, and in need of creativity and connection to something larger than themselves in order to have a reason to live. We both believe that human beings cannot ever live fulfilled lives simply by reducing tensions and escaping into meaningless entertainments and drug induced euphoria. However, Farber has taken the position that secular Humanism by itself cannot help people achieve meaningful, moral lives; that can only be achieved with faith in a God of plenitude representing absolute moral authority and goodness.

It is this insistence that secular humanism is inadequate to the task of helping troubled people that must be ignored if one is to enjoy and benefit from this book. My argument with Farber's contentions that only a belief in a beneficent God can permit a meaningful life and platform from which to help people in need of meaning and spiritual succor is not theological in nature. I have long given up the useless and painful process of arguing with others as to the existence or nonexistence of deities of any kind. I have also long rejected the Freudian notion that a belief in God(s) automatically qualifies one for a diagnosis of mental illness. I am, however, a postmodernist who believes that reality is as much constructed individually and socially as it exists independently of our cognitions. As such, I am very careful to choose which of those constructions are worthy of diagnosis. If I do judge a belief system unworthy or evil it would be based on its degree of destruction to human life, happiness, and wholeness and would include political systems such as Fascism and most forms of Communism. Simply believing in God in order to make one's life meaningful does not qualify for my moral condemnation, something automatically achieved with a so-called mental diagnosis. My disagreement with Farber on the issues of religion versus secularism has its bases elsewhere.

First, I approach my understanding of human behavior as a scientist and as such find the rules of science forbid any explanations of human behavior or meaning making as due to any supernatural forces of any kind. As a scientist (one does not have to write books from the vantage point of science) I am forced to take the position that God(s) exist as a function of human beliefs and not the other way around. Second, while I agree with Farber that maintaining a humanistic stance is not easy for secularists, *his book proves that maintaining a humanistic stance is just as difficult for those committed to a faith in a supreme deity*. I reject the notion that life can only be moral, humane and spiritually meaningful unless one subscribes to a religion with the same vigor that I refuse to diagnose theists as being mentally sick for their faith! In fact, it would appear that much of the evil in the world is committed in the name of God(s) and morality. Evil occurs when secular political and scientific institutions act as if they were religions and join with their actual religious counterparts to convince those they are supposed to serve that they are deeply flawed and cannot be saved without the help and permission of those in authority. His book demonstrates to me that whenever one group of human beings play God(s) in the lives of others who in turn act as if they were things such as puppets and machines and less than human, horrors abound. I celebrate Farber's deep faith in God but I celebrate my own as a secular humanist and scientist. On this note I recommend to anyone of any faith this very fine book.

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