

Dear Aunt Ruth and Uncle Gordon,

Sorry how it's been so long since I've written. Thank you for sending the money and also, I really appreciate you sending along your new book, Uncle Gordon. I must admit, because of school and other activities I haven't had much time to explore it, but I did begin reading it while at home over Thanksgiving and found the discussion of Dogmatism and Rationalism rather interesting. In all honesty, with only a minimal background in philosophy (only one course) I had found some of your ^{other} texts too difficult to really follow (partly because of all the references - assuming ^{previous} knowledge of the subject involved), but this is not as much the case with Three Types of Religious Philosophy. Over Christmas I plan to spend some time with it.

I'm gradually discovering through my school experiences that I'm more of a "doer" than a "thinker." What I enjoy about working with music and with film is the fact that you ^{are} working with "actualities" or "realizations" of ideas, rather than just theories.

I prefer to learn by experience, rather than by studying. I have just recently become the Public Affairs Director of WCBN Radio, our student-run campus FM station, and I've created a new radio series entitled "Saturday Date," a weekly program of student music, poetry, radio drama, and experiments in sound. I hope to expand the creative programming as well as the other Public Affairs features. The radio station is a lot of fun, but it is basically extra-curricular.

I'm concentrating heavily on the "film" part of my "Radio, TV & Film" major right now.

I've been taking film production courses (15 mm) and next semester I will do a film assistant and so paid to work with the equipment. (Lucky for me, because the "Advanced Cinematography" course I will be taking was about \$200.00 in film and lab expenses.

So, I think I'm leaving ^{with} technical experience

"producing" and making ^{it} out, and the people ^{as opposed to just} concerning information. Hopefully, I can find work in the MEDIA after I graduate.

In life, too, I think I prefer to find what I believe through experience (as well as through philosophical arguments - but not relying solely on them). At one time, (during high school) I had what I believed was an intense personal relationship with Christ, rationalizing all turns of events as "His Will" and trying to find meaning in everything. After awhile, this life fell apart - it was based too heavily on emotion, and it was too dependant on the "psyching up" of other people.

I discovered too many absurdities in my environment, both immediate and as a whole. There was no plan to all this, and ~~all~~ to people's lives - at least no plan that ^{was} recognizable. I began believing that you have no responsibility for what you, as a human being, cannot ~~grasp~~ ^{grasp}. I then

I think the question is: "Is 'God' the best explanation of anything that I can tangibly understand?" (the universe, life, etc.).

Admittedly, I have been exposed only to a decidedly atheistic philosophy department here at U of M, but their arguments appeared very

mentioned and very convincing. For the first time
in all my life, philosophical ideas & arguments seemed
to make sense.

This is why I am very interested in reading
and understanding more of your work. ^{With God's} I am at
to myself to open up to all that is available.

II This is not at all because I couldn't face
up to an "atheistic" deism. I should think it very
natural that we live, simply ~~and~~ ^{as} we are.

and after a period of time, we simply
can't exist. I can accept that - if that is it.

Besides the justification of all that represents life, the
"Problem of Evil" as it was presented in my philosophy
course seems to be finally determined to the God
concept. Well, enough.

I don't prefer to be a student of philosophy,
but perhaps sometimes, (I hope so) I will be able
to come down and talk to you, or send Graham,
and ask you more questions - this is how I prefer
to discuss your ideas, anyway.

Just going back to my situation in Ann Arbor for a moment. I am very settled in a different apartment now (it's part of a house) along with 2 roommates that are working out fine. I have a 12 month lease though, so I may stay in Ann Arbor this summer if I can find work.

I hope this Christmas season is a good one for you - and I hope that you both stay well through the long winter.

Thank you again for sending along the book and the money in remembrance of my 21st.

Love,
Dave

February 15 1974

Dear Dave,

Aunt Ruth and I were immensely pleased to get your letter about Christmas time. Five pages, no less. Wonderful. That was about the time we had fifteen inches of snow here; and less than a week later, another ten inches. This upset us, for I wanted to go to Chicago for a meeting, and we had tottake Zephi, our Dachshund, to your cousin Betsy's in Carbondale, Ill, before I could go to St. Louis to lecture for two weeks. Well, we missed out on Chicago, but we made the rest. On the way to Betsy's we could only drive at 40 mph, not because of gas shortages, but because of the packed snow on the roads. Well, this helps to explain why I have not answered your letter sooner.

We are happy that you are doing so well in music. In advising students I have always said that a student should go into a line of endeavor that he really likes. We all need money to live, but to me it would be torture to spend a life doing what you do not like, even for a good salary.

You say you are more a doer than a thinker. Well, I can understand that you may not like to study and write books, you may not like cancer research and microbiology. All right: music is fine; I enjoy it. One of my brilliant students, a girl who came to college with only two years of high school, and made A's in all classes but mine (for I am an ogre), practiced her viölin eight hours a day (or maybe only six - no wonder she got only a B in Logic); she then ~~started~~ started to become a neuro-surgeon, and is now in McGill in Montreal, with a side job in an orchestra.

But even in music one must be not only a doer, he must also be a thinker. Is not music based on theory? I wager Beethoven did a good bit of thinking. You speak about learning by experience. Expreience is a very poor teacher. If you wish to understand scales and harmony, it is foolish to spend your time experimenting. You only repeat the trials and errors of earlier people. Books tell you about their mistakes. No one would think of making advances in cancer before learning what has already been done. Why start from scratch, when you can get a hundred years "experiende" in a fewweeks of reading?

But there is something more important. Experience, even Beethovens, never provides you with norms of judgment. Of course, if you never heard music, experienced it, you would have nothing to judge. But you can hear music, and if you have no idea of what is good, you are left to your own uneducated reactions. The formulation of aesthetic norms is an immensely difficult undertaking. There are easier things and better examples of what I mean.

Without, however, leaving your field, may I speak of your constructing radio programs? You mentioned "Scattered Arts." You also spoke of "creative programming." Now, is it not obvious that to do these things you must have some idea of what a program should be? Experience will tell us what programs are being broadcast. You can compose a list of all the programs of a hundred stations for a week. But the mere observation of all these data goes no distance at all in deciding which are better than others. To judge quality and purpose requires more than mere experience. You must have norms. Norms are statements of what should be; experience gives us only what is. And from is there is no logical route to ought.

This, of course, is where philosophy comes in. Somehow or other a thinker will try to establish norms. He must construct an argument. His critics ask, Is it a good or a poor argument. And his critics must have their norms for judging him. Observation is of no help in all this.

If all this is so with respect to music and radio, think how much more applicable it is to politics. We can list large numbers of actual political actions taken by the parliaments of various nations; we can sometimes perhaps ^{ask} whether these actions fulfilled their intended purposes; but experience can never tell whether those legislative acts and their results were good. Our country, with its Christian background, used to think that murder, torture, and kidnapping were bad. But did you notice that when Hearst's daughter was kidnapped, and a ransom of food to the poor was demanded, the older poor in California said they would not accept it, but the younger said they would take it. Apparently the younger generation contains a greater proportion of people who approve of kidnapping, hijacking, and the violence that occurs in many parts of the world. The terrorists think that terror is good. Others think that terror is bad. To decide, one needs norms. These are statements of what ought to be done; they are not lists of what has been done.

Now, you say that you can see no clear plan in the world or life. You say you had "an intense personal relationship with Christ." This is experience, and to tell the truth, I do not think much of it. You admit that it was largely emotion, and dependent on the "psyching up" by other people. But your state of mind then fell apart, as you yourself say, and you found too many absurdities in your environment (I am repeating some of your words), so that you could see no plan in life, and you could not think a person responsible for what he does.

The reason, I believe, is that you depended on experience. And it seems to me that experience by itself is just as chaotic as you say. What I think you should have depended on is revelation.

The Bible reveals that all people are born sinners. They all want to do evil, and everybody succeeds to various degrees. People are by nature, by birth, enemies of God. Naturally a world

of such people produces apparent chaos. Mere looking at the world discloses no plan of history, or guide of life. But revelation does.

As for the plan of history, the revelation says that God chose Abraham for a certain purpose; and Moses -- the Exodus and its details were a contest between God and the religion of Egypt. But most important, Christ came, died, and was resurrected from the grave. These events are explained in the revelation. ~~Everybody~~ ^{They need explanation.} dies. I shall soon die. Strange as it seems to me, who ~~remember~~ ^{should} remember my high school days so well, I am an old man, and cannot live much longer. Well, Pontius P^late died too; and so did the Pharisees. But Christ died in order to pay the penalty for the sins of those who ^{should} taken him as Lord and Savior. This is the significance, and it is discovered, not in experience, but in revelation. That Christ rose from the dead assures us that his death accomplished what he ~~intended~~ intended.

^{the level} Further, on a world wide historical level, the Bible predicts that the Jews shall return to Palestine. For two thousand years that seemed impossible. What other people has preserved its ~~name~~ identity for so long and though scattered returned to their ancient land? The significance is in revelation, even if experience tells us that the Jews are in fact in Jerusalem.

~~But~~ Then on a personal level, much smaller in scope than world history, the revelation gives us the norms for life. Terror, kidnapping are wrong because God condemns them. The Ten Commandments, and the many derivative precepts, are the ~~norms~~ ^{norms} by which we ought to judge music, morals, politics, and ourselves.

None of this comes to us by "doing rather than thinking," or by experience, and certainly not by emotion. It comes in an ^{in intelligible} revelation, ~~that we can understand, or somewhat understand.~~ It comes by believing that God has established these norms and not some others.

^{living} Atheism can establish no norms whatever. Examine their arguments and see for yourself. Atheism has nothing to offer me, who cannot last too long now. What do atheists promise for after death? ~~They~~ They promise no more for this life either. Bertrand Russell based his life on "unyielding despair." But he had no reason for ~~continuing his life~~ at all. It may be compacting the matter too much to suit some people, but I think I can say that the choice ~~is~~ ^{and} between Christianity ~~or~~ purposeless, absurd, chaotic despair.

Cordially, your uncle,

Gordon

a revelation
it can be

properly reduce the
matter to a