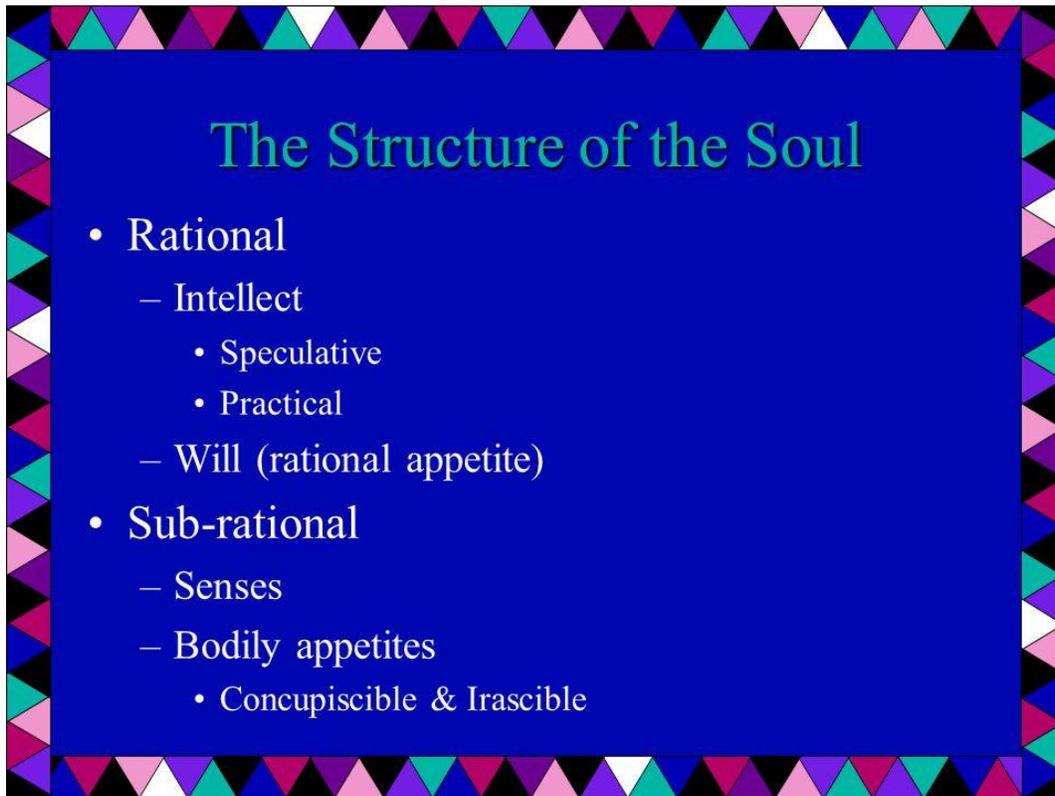


Daily Life with Christ. Love-21: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of love: Fragmented love-2 (higher and lower sexual appetites).



(Online copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/032218.pdf>; for background and complete series, see <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

George: So, if we have intellectual appetites and sense appetites . . . if we have both higher spiritual/rational orientation to God (and transcendent values like justice, proper love, goodness), and lower sense or sub-rational orientation to physical sense appetites (food, sex, things that are pleasing to our flesh/sense level), how can the lower be brought up to the higher? It seems like, given your definition, namely, that they are “sub-rational,” and the fact that they are oriented to physical things—like food and sex—that they could not by nature be brought up to the higher level. Seem slike man is doomed to fragmentation and self-alienation.

Stephen: So, you do agree with me that when a person’s lower nature is at odds with higher nature that the person is fragmented, right?

George: Sure.

Stephen: And you do agree with me that such a fragmented person could not be at peace with himself—given that he does things in his lower nature that goes against his higher nature—and that such a person is in some sense is alienated from himself . . . that he is not who he wants to be . . . he is divided against himself. . . and that person really could not properly love himself . . . he is a disappointment to himself. In sum, he must choose which part to identify with—yet it is impossible for anyone to only identify with his lower nature.

George: Yes, I can see that.

Stephen: Moreover, would you agree that such a person, who is not united in him, being alienated from himself, and suffers from some sense of shame and self-loathing, is going to be compromised in capacity for loving others or God? How could a person who is divided in himself be wholehearted with anyone if he is not wholehearted about himself? I would argue that apart from proper self-love, a person is unable to draw close to others or God.

George: I do not think it is healthy for any person to love himself. The Bible does not command us to love ourselves.

Stephen: It does not command us to love ourselves because we already do—it is natural. It is natural to seek our good, to seek our good is to love ourselves. The greatest command to love God and others is predicated on loving ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). The love of husbands for their wives is linked to love of self: Ephesians 5:28, *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.*²⁹ *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.* Aren't all of God's exhortations and warnings predicated on man do the right thing with regard to his own self-interest? This is true in regard to offering the gospel to an unbeliever (believe in Jesus and *you* will be saved), the apostate (repent or *you* will die), and the faithful Christian (persevere and *you* will receive eternal rewards).

George: I still think it is not a good thing to love yourself. We are not to make idols of ourselves. Seems like that is a huge problem today in that Christians love themselves so much they try to bribe God into blessing them. Besides, didn't Christ say: "deny yourself."

Stephen: Of course, there is proper love for self and improper love for self. Proper love is seeking one's proper good, which is always God and His plan. As far as Christ saying "deny yourself," even that denial of self is for self-interest. Note in Mark 8:35 *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."*³⁶ *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"*³⁷ *"Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* Is this not the appeal to our own greatest good? The good of our very own souls?!

George: I would like to get back to our discussion of higher and lower natures. If lower natures are simply flesh oriented desires, how can they be brought up to the higher level and thus be purified by transformation? If they are sub-rational desires, then rationality does not have anything to do with their appetites. In other words, no matter what my higher intellect orientation wants, my lower sub-rational sense desires seem to have appetites of their own. For example, I can know intellectually that eating a whole chocolate pie is not good on an intellectual level, but this does not affect my lower desires for the pleasure of eating the chocolate pie. It seems like sense desires are just that—it just about the physical attraction.

Stephen: Sub-rational does not mean that they cannot be affected by the higher intellect. Besides, the sense desires are always perceived by the intellect. There are two basic ways the lower and more base desires can be purified and brought up to the higher and purer level. One is by God in sanctification and the other is in that what we actualize—we and our desires become what we actualize in our lives: we and our desires become what we do.

George: Can you give me an example of how the intellect can influence or affect the sub-rational sense desires?

Stephen: Sure. Take your chocolate pie. What if you were about to eat the chocolate pie, but was just informed that it had mouse droppings in it? Would you not be repelled by it? Is that not an example of how the intellect affects the sense level? Even if it did not contain fecal matter, what if every time you took a bite of chocolate pie, you would throw up and get deathly ill for months? Don't you think your sub-rational appetite for chocolate pie would be changed?

George: Yes. But those are extreme examples.

Stephen: The point was extreme to clearly demonstrate the connection between the higher intellect level and the lower sense level. The same principle applies to all sense appetites—not just food appetites, but also sexual appetite.

George: How does the higher intellectual orientation affect certain sexual, physical temptations? Seems like one is either attracted or not attracted to someone else, and thus experiences temptations regardless of how the intellectual nature may disapprove.

Stephen: The sense desires are not autonomous—regardless of how attractive one might be, the intellect is involved in all evaluations. As a matter of fact, what we think is attractive on a physical level is always linked to perception of the person as healthy in some way. For example, a man could think that a certain thin woman is attractive, but if learns that she has worms, he will no longer find her attractive.

George: But attractive is still attractive and we are attracted to someone because they look good and this seems to lead to some sexual attraction—even if one never intends to engage in sex with the person because he/she is married and intends to remain faithful.

Stephen: Seems like you are saying that it is all about the physical.

George: Yes.

Stephen: What if your mother was beautiful? What if your sister was absolutely gorgeous? What about your daughter? Would you be sexually attracted to them just because of their looks?

George: Gross! Absolutely not!

Stephen: Why? Apparently, it is about the intellect after all, its values. It is undeniable that there are certain standards in your intellect that determine certain sub-rational desires. In principle, why couldn't revulsion at incest be true of any illicit sexual desire?