

When Ideology Replaces God: A Tragedy of Meaning and a Nervous System at War



Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.

The Human Need for Meaning and Safety

The death of Renee Good is a tragedy. A real human being is gone. Children lost their mother. A partner lost someone she loved. Nothing written here diminishes that loss, and nothing I believe erases the gravity of it.

This reflection is not written in anger. It is written in sorrow and conviction. It is not about sexuality, not about condemning a gay woman, and not about denying dignity, worth, or humanity. It is about meaning, and it is about safety.

Human beings cannot live without meaning. We are meaning making creatures at the deepest psychological, neurological, and spiritual levels. We must know who we are, where we belong, and what makes us righteous. When God is removed as the foundation for that meaning, the hunger does not disappear. It intensifies. And intensified hunger always looks for something to attach to.

Viktor Frankl and the Collapse of Meaning

This truth was articulated with haunting clarity by Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist who observed humanity at its psychological breaking point. In *Man's Search for*

Meaning, Frankl argued that the primary human drive is not pleasure or power but meaning. When meaning collapses, people do not become neutral. They become vulnerable. They grasp for substitutes. They will attach themselves to causes, identities, and ideologies that promise purpose, even if those substitutes ultimately destroy them.

When Ideology Becomes a Substitute for God

When people move away from God's design, not just morally but ontologically as the grounding of identity, they are not left free. They are left floating. In that floating state, ideology becomes magnetic. It offers clarity, belonging, and moral certainty. It offers a way to feel safe in a chaotic world. But here is the truth we rarely say plainly. Ideology cannot give safety.

Political Ponerology and Pathocracy

Polish psychologist Andrzej Łobaczewski, who lived under Soviet totalitarianism, devoted his life to studying what happens when psychological pathology merges with ideology and power. He called this field Political Ponerology, the study of evil operating through political and social systems. Łobaczewski observed that when societies lose shared moral grounding, pathological worldviews can spread under the cover of moral language. Ideological systems develop an ideological mask through which reality itself becomes distorted. Good is redefined. Evil is reframed. Obedience to the system becomes the highest virtue.

Eventually this produces what Łobaczewski termed pathocracy, a state in which morally disordered ideas gain influence and demand compliance. In modern expressions, this often merges with plutocratic power structures, where institutions, corporations, education systems, and cultural elites normalize and enforce the ideology. This is not ancient history. It is happening now.

Neo-Marxism and the Frankfurt School Legacy

The philosophical roots of this phenomenon trace back to neo-Marxism and the Frankfurt School, particularly thinkers like Herbert Marcuse, writing as early as the nineteen thirties and later shaping the New Left in the nineteen sixties. Marcuse argued that traditional Western structures such as family, religion, and morality were inherently oppressive and that radical disruption was not only justified but necessary. Truth became subordinate to liberation. Norms became instruments of oppression. Moral transgression became a revolutionary virtue. Within this framework, the radical left was granted moral permission to deceive, disrupt, and coerce in the name of a supposedly higher good.

That logic never disappeared. It evolved. Critics like Michael Rectenwald, in works such as *The Great Reset*, have documented how these ideas now permeate institutions including education, corporations, media, and activism. The result is a culture where ideological conformity is demanded and dissent is moralized as evil. This is ponerology at scale.

Radicalization and Activist Ecosystems

According to political commentator and professor Dr. Steve Turley, publicly available digital records and activism patterns indicate that Renee Good was actively engaged with causes aligned

with Antifa and Black Lives Matter. Turley also reports that her radicalization was reinforced within activist ecosystems, including charter school adjacent parent groups focused on disruption tactics. These reports are contested by some and accepted by others. Regardless, they raise a critical question. What happens to the human nervous system when meaning, identity, and righteousness are fused to perpetual opposition?

NeuroFaith, Activation, and the Loss of Coherence

From a NeuroFaith perspective, safety is not found in rage, moral outrage, or constant threat perception. Safety is found in regulation, coherence, and embodied connection. Chronic ideological anger activates the HPA axis. Cortisol and adrenaline flood the body. The nervous system locks into fight or flight. The brain loses integration. The heart loses coherence. Perception narrows. Complexity collapses. This is not moral condemnation. It is neuroscience.

When activation remains high, the brain moves toward chaos. Discernment degrades. Reality becomes symbolic rather than concrete. People act sincerely, but without clarity. In those states, people can make fatal decisions while believing they are doing good. Rage feels purposeful, but it is physiologically dysregulating. It destroys perception. It destroys health. It destroys safety.

Grace as the Path to Regulation and Restoration

Christianity offers something radically different, both neurologically and spiritually. Grace regulates. Love integrates. Surrender restores coherence. When righteousness is received rather than performed, the nervous system can settle. When identity is grounded in God rather than opposition, the heart can return to coherence. When redemption is not something you must earn through struggle, the brain regains nuance, empathy, and restraint. The cross ends the endless striving to prove moral superiority. It ends the need to manufacture enemies. It ends the lie that confrontation, whether symbolic or physical, can save the soul.

A Call Beyond Polarization

I grieve for Renee Good, not because I believe she was beyond grace, but because she was searching for meaning and safety in systems that could only escalate her nervous system and cloud her perception. I grieve for her children, whose loss cannot be explained by ideology. I grieve for a culture intoxicated with outrage and convinced that polarization is the same thing as moral clarity. And I grieve because I believe this did not have to end this way.

This is not a call to the left alone, nor is it a pass for the right. While much of our current cultural activation has been fueled by ideological frameworks and institutional reinforcement, the right has its own blind spots. Fear, tribalism, reactionary identity, and a failure to embody grace can also pull us out of regulation, connection, and truth.

We will not heal this moment by polarizing further. We will not regulate our collective nervous system through rage, mockery, or moral superiority. We will not find safety by dehumanizing one another or reducing complex human beings to symbols in a culture war.

Love is the way forward. Safety is the way forward. Connection is the way forward.

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Love, rightly understood, is not sentimental or permissive. It is grounding. It restores coherence to the heart, the brain, and the soul. Love covers a multitude of sins not because it excuses wrongdoing, but because it addresses the deeper fractures beneath our problems.

If we are going to survive this cultural moment, we must learn again how to stay human with one another. We must learn how to remain regulated in the presence of disagreement. We must learn how to tell the truth without abandoning love. That is not weakness. That is maturity.

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” — 1 Peter 4:8