

*The Alberta Safeguards Foundation, &
The Syracuse University Training Institute
for Human Service Planning, Leadership and Change Agency
are pleased to announce a 3 day workshop on...*

*The Philosophy of “Personalism” & its Most Relevant Implications
to Contemporary Life & Human Services*

Dates: Monday, October 1st through Wednesday October 3, 2018.

Each day begins at 8:15 am and goes until approximately 5:00 pm the first two days, and will conclude at approximately 4:30 p.m. on the last day.

Place: Sunnyside Retreat Centre, 202 Birchcliff Rd, Birchcliff, AB Canada (Sylvan Lake, AB)

Phone: (403) 748-2197. Website: www.sunnysidecamp.org Participants are urged to take accommodation at the retreat centre.

***People interested in attending are strongly urged to register early
as the workshop will be cancelled if there are not enough registrations***

Content: This workshop presents Dr. Wolfensberger’s interpretation and synthesis of philosophical and value traditions that have been called “personalism,” focusing especially on those from France in the late 19th - early 20th centuries and personalist thinking since then. Personalism, like other philosophies, has implications to a wide range of issues in life, and this workshop interprets the relevance of personalist ideas to a number of concerns of contemporary life, society, and human services.

There is a long history of personalist thinking, and many schools and formulations of personalism. They all tend to emphasize the importance of the human person, especially vis-à-vis structures and absolutisms. The personalism movement that started in the late 19th - early 20th centuries, and that is the particular focus of this event, responded to totalitarian ideologies such as communism and fascism, and to the depersonalizing oppression of industrialized economies. The insights and recommendations of personalists to those concerns of one hundred years ago are still very timely. More recently, developments such as media control of society; computer driven objectification, depersonalization, and centralization; the invasion of people’s minds and their privacy, as via surveillance; and the tyranny of political correctness, as in academia – all these are making personalist analysis and ideals very relevant once again.

Some versions of personalism are more religious than others; some step into the domain of psychology and personality theory. This workshop will mention both religious and psychological ideas, meanings, and implications of personalism, but even people who do not share the religion of some personalist philosophers -- even people who do not consider themselves at all religious -- can find much food for thought in personalism ideas.

However, the workshop does **not** get into heavy-duty or specialized philosophical territory, but stays on the level of ‘the intelligent layperson or non-specialist’. No previous versions of this workshop have been criticized as being beyond the grasp of the ordinary intelligent person.

The workshop will cover the history and nature of personalism, who were some of its more prominent thinkers and writers and what they had to say, and many of the teachings of personalism. The bulk of the workshop is devoted to the following common ‘themes’ that Dr. Wolfensberger identified in personalistic thinking:

1. Seeking to grasp the nature of entities (especially human nature), taking this nature into account, and working with it in any enterprise, rather than ignoring the nature of an entity, or trying to defeat it.

2. The primacy of the spiritual over the material.
3. The intrinsic value and dignity of humans collectively, and of each and every human being, including those who are very reduced or impaired.
4. The uniqueness of each individual human.
5. Human freedom.
6. The “relational” nature of human beings, and implications to sex, family, community and state.
7. The imperative for each person to assume personal moral responsibility in life, and to act morally within any structures to which one belongs, regardless of the sanctions this may draw -- if need be, acting in contradiction or disobedience to authorities that de-dignify the human or to try to destroy personal conscience. This assumption of personal responsibility also includes taking direct action to respond to the needs of others without waiting for action by organizations or government, or putting hopes in those, as well as recruiting others to embrace the same kinds of actions and stances. All this also implies helping needy, rejected, or devalued people directly, with one’s own bodily and mental resources and engagements.
8. What personalism calls ‘subsidiarity’, which means trying to address problems at the lowest feasible level of complexity, technology, organization, and hierarchy.

For each theme, there will be some elaboration of action implications, and some interpretation of what personalist thinking and analysis would imply, including to developments that the earlier personalists did not confront or anticipate -- for instance, modernistic attacks on the value of the person, and contesting the very humanness of some people.

As time permits, a few other personalism ideas/ideals will also be sketched, such as the implications of personalism to economics, and to the human relationship to the environment.

Format: The workshop is conducted in lecture style, with a sequential series of presentations that use overheads and slide illustrations as teaching aids. At the conclusion of each presentation, there will be ample time for comments, questions, and discussion on what has been covered so far. Also, participants will be offered a number of reflection questions for their own individual private meditation on the material that has been presented, and its implications for themselves.

Note: This workshop goes into depth on some topics that are briefly mentioned in two other Training Institute workshops: the 5-day workshop on Crafting a Coherent Stance on the Sanctity of Human Life, and the 7-day workshop on How to Function with Personal Moral Coherency. People who have been to either or both of those workshops will find this workshop a good follow-up, but people who have not been to either workshop can still attend this one and get a lot out of it.

Fees:

- \$600 for residents at the retreat center, which includes three nights of single accommodation; refreshments on all three days; breakfast, lunch, and supper the first two workshop days; breakfast and lunch on the last day. \$555 for shared accommodation.
- \$450 for commuters, which includes refreshments on all three days; lunch and supper the first two workshop days; lunch on the last day.

Payment: Payment can be made by cheque or e-transfer (by request). Cheques should be made out to *Alberta Safeguards Foundation*.

To Register: To register, please send your name, address, phone, email address, agency name and work title, and cheque to: **Alberta Safeguards Foundation, Attn: Carla Hamarsnes**
Suite 211 - 4014 Macleod Trail South, Calgary AB T2G 2R7
 Phone in registration (Carla Hamarsnes) and for information about e-transfer (403) 701-1385.
 Email information to absafeguards@gmail.com. REGISTRATION DEADLINE September 17, 2018