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**A PERISCOPE ON THE CHANGE EXPERIENCE IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
FROM THE TRIUNE PERSPECTIVE OF JUNG, TILLICH AND A.A.**

by

PATRICIA UA SIAGHAIL

A thesis
presented to the University of Ottawa
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Religious Studies



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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and authorize the University of Ottawa to lend this thesis to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Having completed undergraduate S.W.D., B.Sc., B.Th., and B.G.S., in Alberta, Patricia Ua Siaghail neé Thompson moved to graduate studies at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary of Wilfrid Laurier University and read for the M.A., in Religion and Culture 1974 and M.Div., in Counselling and Therapy 1975. Further graduate work was undertaken at the University of Louvain, Belgium in 1976 terminating with an M.Ed., in Didactics and an M.A. in Religious Studies. For some fourteen years Patricia taught in Waterloo County. She is presently Vice Principal of Assumption College, Brantford. An advocate and practitioner of life long learning, she has engaged in the doctorate in Education scholarship of O.I.S.E., Toronto, the Pastoral Therapy programme at St. Paul's University, Ottawa, Human Relations at the University of Waterloo and Curriculum at Nipissing University. Holder of an Ontario Teacher Certificate and an Alberta Professional Teachers Diploma, she is also a registered teacher and psychologist with the Irish contingent of the European Common Market.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my dear father Basil Thompson, whose many years of serenity and sobriety were a joy to behold. For him *eau de vie* had a special aroma, received and passed on.

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INTRODUCTION

The language of Alcoholics Anonymous is a simple language, 'a language of the heart' (referred to as such by founding father, Bill Wilson). Though the language is simple the impact is considered to be a profound experience, particularly by those alcoholics who have become serene and sober by undergoing what they perceive as its healing process. Founders Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith were both chronic alcoholics who had attempted conventional forms of treatment with disillusioning futility. From these futile attempts to overcome alcoholism, and a series of historical coincidences, A.A. in the persons of the founders, came to piece together a healing process using personal story (experience) as their reference point.

The hypothesis presented in this paper is that though the founders were influenced by both formal and informal theology and psychology, they embraced neither, giving birth to something new. Bill Wilson likened A.A. unto the missing catalyst of a new synthesis, the common meeting ground where psychology and religion might both reside.¹ The question then is of the nature of this synthesis which occurs within the A.A. experience of transformation to serenity and from a drinking to a non-drinking state.

What had the alcoholics found within the A.A. experience that allowed them to change?

What was it about A.A. that allowed the alcoholics to engage in the process of change that had not already been offered as an operant in theology and psychology?

¹ Bill Wilson, "The Society of Alcoholics Anonymous," American Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 106, Nov. 1949, p. 379.

Bill Wilson in a letter to C. G. Jung stated that A.A. could identify with Jung's thinking. Bill stated that both Jung and A.A. stood as it were 'in a no-man's-land' between science and religion.

Your words really carried authority, because you seemed to be neither wholly a theologian nor a pure scientist. Therefore, you seemed to stand with us in that no-man's-land that lies between the two — the very place that many of us had found ourselves.²

Jung had spoken of how a spiritual experience could be the basis of a change experience. That the alcoholic's change experience was based upon a spiritual experience A.A. would readily agree. Not only had the early members of A.A. heard of Jung's belief that a spiritual experience could heal a hopeless alcoholic but also the founders of A.A. were exposed to Jung's thinking in the reading of *Modern Man In Search of a Soul*.

In this dissertation, the A.A. experience of change from a psychological perspective is interpreted using the writings of C. G. Jung. Jung was a likely choice as he is considered by A.A. to be part of its formation, making A.A. what it is today.

The A.A. change experience will be interpreted theologically with the aid of the writings of Paul Tillich, whose name is associated with the Religion and Health Movement in the United States at about the same time as the inception of A.A. An additional reason for using Tillich to construct a theological interpretation of the A.A. experience would be that for Tillich, body, soul and spirit are not viewed as three parts of a person but rather he says that

² Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1984, p. 386.

they are "dimensions of man's being, always within each other, for man is a unity and not composed of parts."³

This the alcoholic readily apprehends in suffering through alcoholism — all parts of the alcoholic's being suffer from alcoholism and all parts according to A.A. must be healed in order for the alcoholic to arrive at serenity.

The 'concerted' approach taken in this dissertation attempts a better understanding of the A.A. experience of change, by constructing a psychological and a theological interpretation of Alcoholics Anonymous using the writings of Carl Gustav Jung and Paul Tillich. Jung addresses the human experience of *Imago Dei* and Paul Tillich in his theology does not dichotomize the human experience of God. A.A. writings articulate that, to assure the permanency of serenity, all aspects of a person's being must be healed.

It is noteworthy that though Alcoholics Anonymous is perceived to work by those who have attained sobriety through A.A. some (alcoholics or researchers) are at odds with facets or tenets of the spiritual programme. For example, Robert E. Tournier⁴ questions the function of despair, the prerequisite for recovery as perceived by the fellowship. Ellis⁵ says that A.A. may be doing more harm than good in its belief in a higher Power. Harry Tiebout⁶ who worked closely with Alcoholics Anonymous in its formation, questioned why the

³ Paul Tillich, "Faith and the Integration of the Personality," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. 8, No. 72, March 1957, p. 11.

⁴ Robert E. Tournier, "Alcoholics Anonymous as Treatment and as Ideology," Journal of Studies on Alcohol, Vol. 40, No. 3, 1979, p. 235.

⁵ A. Ellis, "Why Alcoholics Anonymous is Probably Doing More Harm Than Good," Employee Assistance Quarterly, Vol. 1, 1985, p. 95-97.

⁶ Harry M. Tiebout, "Intervention in Psychotherapy," American Journal of Psychoanalysis, Vol. XXII, No. 1, 1962.

alcoholic who suffers from a dependency problem had to acknowledge dependence upon a higher Power. Maturity and dependence seemed to them to be incompatible opposites. This dissertation then will look at Alcoholics Anonymous from the materials published by A.A. and those in close affiliation, with the forementioned ever in mind.

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the change experience referred to by A.A. as a spiritual experience and/or spiritual awakening. Viewed from a theological and a psychological perspective, this research will attempt to unravel the A.A. experience that Bill Wilson referred to as "a thing of great simplicity, yet at its core a profound mystery."⁷

The initial publication by A.A. is entitled *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This book encapsulates the A.A. experience outlining the founders' story pertaining to sobriety and serenity. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* was written to outline for alcoholics (though used frequently by other 'self help' groups — estimated at circa 200 in North America), rules for spiritual living and the guidelines for living a fuller life are outlined. *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age: A Brief History of A.A.* was first published in 1957. Scripted by Bill Wilson, it outlines the history of the A.A. movement. Included within the text are the three themes covered at the twentieth anniversary meeting of A.A. — Recovery — Unity — Service. It recalls early personalities involved within A.A. and where and when meetings took place. *As Bill Sees It* is an anthology containing excerpts of letters and A.A. literature, the two being discussion starters and guides to meditation. *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* is a more recent publication by A.A. World Service telling the story of Dr. Bob Smith, the

⁷ Bill Wilson, "Alcoholics Anonymous," New York State Journal of Medicine, Vol. 50, 1950, p. 1, 710.

co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is historical in nature in so far as it acknowledges those instrumental in the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in Akron, Ohio.

The most recent publication of Alcoholics Anonymous is *Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World*. This book, written some twenty years after the founder's death, is an important contribution to understanding, for the passage of time has doubtlessly impacted upon the perceptions of its writers. This important quality comes to the fore as one seeks to apprehend the change experience encountered within A.A. There are literally hundreds of papers and books written about Alcoholics Anonymous as evidenced by Julianne Phillips in an annotated bibliography, *Alcoholics Anonymous: 1935-1972*.

Other important works assist in laying the foundation for an understanding of the A.A. change experience. The research done by Elston J. Hill on *Buchman and Buchmanism* and Walter H. Clark's work on *The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance*, are two such. Both of these works give a historical perspective of the Oxford Group, a group with which A.A. was initially in close contact. For further insight into the impact the Oxford Group might have had on A.A. the research by Charles T. Knippel, *Samuel M. Shoemaker's Theological Influence on William G. Wilson's Twelve Step Spiritual Programme of Recovery*, is invaluable, for Samuel Shoemaker had close contact with Bill Wilson both before and after Wilson's founding of A.A.

Robert W. Renouf in *Freedom and Alcoholism*, Homer A. Hall in *The Role of Faith in the Process of Recovering from Alcoholism* and Robert H. Albers in *The Theological and Psychological Dynamics of Transformation in the Recovery from the Disease of Alcoholism*, address alcoholism from a theological and psychological perspective — invaluable material

when attempting to understand the change experience encapsulated within Alcoholics Anonymous. Renowned writers in this field are of course Ernest Kurtz and Howard J. Clinebell whose monumental works are as primers in pursuing this enthralling endeavour. Often cited works are *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous* and *Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic*.

After a brief outline of the history of Alcoholics Anonymous this dissertation presents a phenomenological interpretation of A.A. using the primary sources of this Fellowship. The change experience is presented as perceived by A.A. In Chapter III a parallel is drawn between the writings of C. G. Jung and those of Alcoholics Anonymous. A psychological interpretation of A.A. is constructed. In Chapter IV an analogous parallel is drawn between A.A. and the theology of Paul Tillich. Through this process a theological interpretation of A.A. is presented. Within the composition of theological and psychological interpretations, integration rather than dichotomy occurs, the result being that the parts become whole within the very experience of alcoholism.

Jung and Tillich as it were present a system with which to see a process that A.A. dared not articulate except in a very simplistic form. A.A. 'knew' what it had 'encapsulated' but feared losing serenity as 'doubting Thomases' by analysis. The process intuited by experience within A.A. may be periscoped with the aid of Jung and Tillich's systems. Though one may be privy to this process the mystery is not lost for the power of the change experience lies not with the alcoholic but rather within the alcoholic. Though the A.A. experience is not by definition necessarily religious, it can be interpreted so by exploring hermeneutically the parallels between the theological and the psychological.

Alcoholics Anonymous introduced what is essentially a religious therapy to drinkers from all strata of society. As a result, many psychiatrists began to re-

evaluate their attitude toward religion and the effect of religious experience in the therapeutic situation.⁸

By way of nota bene one editorial concern should be noted. Though inclusive language is used as much as possible within the text, it is excluded when its use proves to be too cumbersome. For the sake of the preservation of accuracy, if a direct quote from other sources is made, no alterations are made solely for inclusive language. Unfortunately sources are at variance in the personification of "Alcoholics Anonymous" stylistically using 'he/she', 'it', 'they', somewhat interchangeably.

⁸ Walter Huston Clark, The Psychology of Religion, New York: The MacMillan Co., 1958, p. 15.

CHAPTER 1

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT CALLED ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (A.A.)

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experiences, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.¹

The purpose and identity of A.A. has been well thought out and endorsed by its members. The simple, straightforward approach and language, with a simple and altruistic manner of living, offers order to lives that knew only chaos. Dr. Bob's famous final admonition to Alcoholics Anonymous was "let's not louse this thing up; let's keep it simple".² 'Keeping it simple' is the pulse of A.A. for it is in its simplicity that the mystery as to why 'it works' is encased.

A.A. was founded on June 10th, 1935, in Akron, Ohio,³ with a membership of two. It has grown to a membership of circa one million in over one hundred countries. It grew

¹ Bill Wilson, "Three Talks to Medical Societies," Flyleaf.

² Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980, p. 9.

³ Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980, p. 348.

because the fellowship carried a simple message — 'it works'. The individuals carrying the message were the living example that A.A. 'works'.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions⁴ of Alcoholics Anonymous are the guidelines followed to obtain and retain sobriety. Experience has demonstrated that these guidelines must be followed openly and honestly if non-abrasive sobriety is to become a viable option for the compulsive drinker.

The alcoholic views himself as narcissistic, immature and egocentric.⁵ The recognition that life has become unmanageable because of compulsive drinking must be acknowledged. Based upon this realization, and acceptance of powerlessness over alcohol, 'hitting bottom'⁶ is experienced. At this point the individual is required to surrender to 'a Power greater than Self', with the understanding that life has become uncontrollable because of drinking. The surrender experience induces 'a spiritual awakening' which in turn produces a dramatic change, altering the 'alcoholic personality'.⁷

Experience taught A.A. that sobriety is retained by helping other alcoholics acquire sobriety. The Twelfth Step of A.A. reinforces sobriety, for it is understood that in becoming other directed, sobriety is insured.

⁴ Cf. appendix.

⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976, p. 62.

⁶ The term used in A.A. to express an 'emotional dead end'.

⁷ Harry M. Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms of Alcoholics Anonymous," The American Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 100, 1944, p. 311.

- 12) Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practise these principles in all our affairs.⁸

The Concept of A.A.

Through A.A. came into being in 1935, there were concepts and individuals which would unintentionally lay the base for its formation.

Dr. Carl G. Jung, a former protégé of Sigmund Freud, saw value, meaning, and reality in religious faith. Many of his contemporaries disagreed. Freud's perception of religion was the more commonly accepted view; i.e., religion was seen as a comforting fantasy of man's immaturity that would be replaced in the illumination of modern knowledge. Maturity would alleviate man's reliance on religion.⁹

In 1931, a chronic alcoholic (Rowland) visited Jung in Zurich, Switzerland, with the hope of attaining sobriety. After consultation with Jung he was told that all medical and psychiatric possibilities had been exhausted; his was a hopeless case. The only alternative that Jung could offer was the faint possibility of a healing experience brought about by a conversion experience.¹⁰ Though there were documented cases of alcoholics who had obtained sobriety by such an experience, the instances were rare.¹¹

⁸ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 565.

⁹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 3.

¹⁰ It was not until 1961 in a correspondence between Bill Wilson (co-founder of A.A.) and Jung that the full impact of Jung's contribution to A.A. was recognized.

¹¹ Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World, New York:Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1988, p. 382.

This alcoholic underwent a conversion experience and attained sobriety. He joined the Oxford Group at the Calvary Episcopal Church in New York City under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Shoemaker.¹²

The Oxford Group had its most profound influence on A.A. in the person of Shoemaker. Frank Buchman,¹³ the founder of the Group, considered Shoemaker to be one of his most effective disciples,¹⁴ influencing the decision to locate the United States Oxford Group headquarters at Calvary Church, New York.¹⁵

It functioned under the four absolutes of honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love.¹⁶ Though the absolutes were followed, they did not originate with the Group. Henry Wright¹⁷ based his teaching on the understanding that their decision should be tested by "the absolute standards of Jesus;"¹⁸ i.e., purity, honesty, unselfishness and love, as paraphrased from the 'Sermon on the Mount'. Wright took the idea of the four absolutes from Robert E. Speer¹⁹ who in turn borrowed them from Henry Drummond.²⁰

¹² Walter Houston Clark, The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance, New York: Bookman Associates Inc., 1951, p. 54.

¹³ Buchman was born in 'Pennsylvania Dutch' country, baptized Lutheran-Reform and adopted the values of Lutheran pietism.

¹⁴ Walter Houston Clark, The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance, p. 54.

¹⁵ Walter Houston Clark, The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance, p. 54.

¹⁶ Walter Houston Clark, The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance, p. 28.

¹⁷ John E. Hill, Buchman and Buchmanism, Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1970, p. 54, 55, 56.

¹⁸ John E. Hill, Buchman and Buchmanism, p. 54, 55, 56.

¹⁹ John E. Hill, Buchman and Buchmanism, p. 54, 55, 56.

²⁰ John E. Hill, Buchman and Buchmanism, p. 54, 55, 56.

Buchman strove to develop a process where individuals' lives could be 'changed'. The five C's encompassed this process; i.e., confidence, confession, conviction, conversion and continuance.²¹

Confidence was the establishing of a relationship between a member of the Oxford Group and an individual wishing to be 'changed'.

Confession could be either public or private. One type of confession, known as 'sharing for witness', was the confession of faults publicly, even those long overcome by the 'changed' individual. It was hoped that this sharing would encourage prospective converts.

Conviction was the process whereby the individual became aware of his personal sinfulness.

Conversion was the change itself — that act of will, where one pronounced himself to God and promised to follow God's guidance.

To act as if there were a God was sufficient; a genuine belief in God frequently followed the assumption through this pragmatic process.²²

Continuance was the activity which strengthened and confirmed the conversion. The 'changed' individual looked to change others and to do good works.

Possibly the clearest statement of the Group's theology — and hence Buchman's own — is that given by a Canadian committee which impartially investigated the group some years ago. The central assumptions of the Oxford Group are given as six: (1) Men are sinners. (2) Men can be changed. (3) Confession is a prerequisite to change. (4) The changed soul has direct access to God. (5) The Age of Miracles has returned (through changed lives, miraculous coincidences, etc.). (6) Those who have been changed must change others.²³

²¹ Walter Houston Clark, The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance, p. 28.

²² Walter Houston Clark, The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance, p. 28.

²³ Walter Houston Clark, The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance, p. 108.

In perusing the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of A.A. one can see at a glance an affinity and indeed, some borrowed concepts from this particular group of evangelicals.

Drummond and Wright strongly influenced Buchman's thinking. Clark goes so far as to say that Henry Wright could be considered the spiritual father of the Oxford Group.²⁴ Through the Oxford Group, A.A., has been 'touched' by the history of American evangelicalism, one may posit that evangelicalism may have 'lifted' Benedictine monastic spirituality or Ignation spirituality concepts without proper credit for the sake of avoiding 'church' orientation.

A.A. learned from the Group that religion was a joy that could be permeated in fellowship. The Oxford Group had 'house parties'²⁵ and A.A. like meetings. A.A. like the Oxford Group expected people to participate in a church of their choice. The movement adopted no theological position other than to urge a Christian way of life. Both movements focus on a changed way of life through stages.

A.A. practices, directly and consciously derived from the Oxford Group also contained three items. The 'Five Procedures' were (1) to give in to God; (2) to listen to God's directions; (3) to check guidance; (4) restitution; and (5) sharing-telling one's sins, itself sub-divided in 'sharing for witness' or narration of how one's life had 'changed', and 'sharing for confession', to soothe guilt.²⁶

A.A. learned that those assisting others to change should never be paid. (A.A. would later come to realize that this very point would preserve its existence.) They learned the value in helping others change as a way of retaining change within themselves. The importance of

²⁴ Walter Houston Clark, The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance, p. 129.

²⁵ Gathering together in a home to share fellowship.

²⁶ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 49.

anonymity was learned from the problems experienced by the Oxford Group. Experience taught that for the alcoholic, absolutes must be avoided, and discretion must always be called upon in reference to public opinion. Discretion was not exactly a forte in the Buchmanian vocabulary.

The Varieties of Religious Experience by William James was well known to the Oxford Group and later adopted (and adapted) by Alcoholics Anonymous. Chapters nine and ten are of particular interest, for within these chapters numerous references are made about alcoholics who are profoundly changed because of a conversion experience.

Another important person in the 'grounding' of A.A. was Dr. W.D. Silkworth, a researcher on alcoholism at the Charles B. Towns Hospital, New York. His findings noted that some individuals were physically allergic to alcohol.²⁷ These individuals, were as it were, infected with the obsession to imbibe. He observed that within the phenomenon, an alcoholic needed only to ingest the slightest amount of alcohol to produce an uncontrollable compulsion to drink.

This articulated concept of alcoholism introduced an alternative view of the problem. Previous to his research, many merely thought of the alcoholic as weak-willed and immoral. The disease concept of alcoholism would offer solace to those afflicted with the problem, and would become another foundation-block for Alcoholics Anonymous.

In Jung's statements A.A. would be exposed to the dynamics of a spiritual/religious conversion experience. William James would further clarify this concept for A.A.; they would be taught that the 'roots' and 'routes' for this experience could vary and be numerous.

²⁷ William D. Silkworth, "A Highly Successful Approach to the Alcoholic Problem," Medical Record, New York, Vol. 154, 1941, p. 106.

It would be because of Silkworth's insights into the alcoholic personality that he would suggest to the founders of A.A. that they first approach the alcoholic with the hopelessness of the problem, rather than making reference to the conversion experience.

Bill (he told me), you've got the cart before the horse. You've got to deflate these people first. So give them the medical business, and give it to them hard. Pour it right into them about the obsession that condemns them to drink and the physical sensitivity or allergy of the body that condemns them to go mad or die if they keep drinking. Coming from another alcoholic, one alcoholic talking to another, maybe that will crack those tough egos deep down. Only then can you begin to try out your other medicine, the ethical principles you have picked up from the Oxford Groups.²⁸

This suggestion laid the base for a key idea in A.A. 'hitting bottom'. Some years later, Dr. Harry Tiebout,²⁹ a psychiatrist, would point out that 'hitting bottom' for the alcoholic, was the beginning of disintegrating 'the alcoholic personality'.³⁰

Silkworth also suggested that scientific terms should not be used when describing the problem to the individual. Rather, the alcoholic should use his own personal life history when referring to the desperate situation consequential to the disease. The founders were well acquainted with the 'sharing for witness' used within the Oxford Group. Silkworth had unknowingly dictated another perspective.

A.A. is aware that it has drawn upon the resources of medicine, psychiatry and religion.³¹ It is the uncanny integration of the concepts and the timing of events that would give birth to Alcoholics Anonymous. Silkworth's disease concept of alcoholism would

²⁸ Robert Thomsen, Bill W., Hamilton, London: Hamish, 1976, p. 233-234.

²⁹ Bill Wilson's therapist, Bill Wilson — co-founder of A.A.

³⁰ Harry M. Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms of Alcoholics Anonymous," p. 311.

³¹ Bill Wilson, "Basic Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous," New York State Journal of Medicine, Vol. 44, 1944, p. 1808.

remove the guilt alcoholics carried; they would no longer have to perceive themselves as immoral and weak-willed. The Oxford Group had taught the need for a 'higher Power' which for the alcoholic would have been incomplete without first following Silkworth's disintegration advice. The alcoholic had to experience the depth of his malady — he had to be razed to rock bottom.

It would be medical advice that would ignite the spiritual experience for the individual within A.A. based upon a more effective ordering of the steps as dictated by Silkworth's naturalistic research experience.

The Birth of A.A.

Although the gestation period of A.A. covers a rather lengthy span of time, the birthing itself was of some four years' duration.

Bill Wilson had been diagnosed by Silkworth as a hopeless alcoholic whose death was imminent. Shortly after receiving this diagnosis Bill came across an old drinking companion, Ebby, who to his surprise, was sober. Ebby told Bill that he had 'found religion' in the Oxford Group. Though he didn't believe everything they said, they had managed to 'sober him up'.

For Ebby this was enough.

Sharing with Bill,

1. Ebby admitted that he was powerless to manage his own life.
2. He became honest with himself as never before; made an 'examination of conscience.'
3. He made a rigorous confession of his personal defects and thus quit living alone with his problems.

4. He surveyed his distorted relations with other people, visiting them to make what amends he could.
5. He resolved to devote himself to helping others in need, without the usual demand for personal prestige or material gain.
6. By meditation, he sought God's direction for his life and the help to practise these principles of conduct at all times.³²

Upon reflection Bill noted that the seed of Alcoholics Anonymous was planted in his conversation with Ebby. "In the kinship of common suffering one alcoholic had been talking to another."³³

Bill had little respect for religion, but when Ebby talked about it in relation to the Oxford Group it somehow seemed different, thereby holding Bill's attention. The Group was described as non-denominational; they took stock of themselves, confessed their defects and made restitution for their wrong doings. They believed in a 'higher Power', but their concept of 'Him' was of their own making. Bill, in his reflections, wondered why this had made Ebby sober, and why he was left with the burden. This was the natural catalyst for him to see if a similar experience would have like effect on him.

Bill, recalling the struggle Ebby had produced in him throughout their numerous talks about how to get and stay sober, was none the less uneasy about the concept of 'surrender to a higher Power'. He saw himself as an intelligent and rational person from whom too much was being asked.

³² Bill Wilson, "Alcoholics Anonymous — Beginnings and Growth," in Three Talks to Medical Societies, p. 8.

³³ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 59.

Ebby and Shepp C. were now asking him to give up the one attribute of which he was most proud, the quality that set a man above the animals — his inquiring, rational mind. And they wanted him to give this up for an illusion.

Finally — and he knew he was pretty drunk by the time he reached this point — he had to look at the fact and admit it: what they were asking him to do represented weakness to him. How could a man so demean himself as to surrender the one thing in which he should have faith, his innate — inquiring mind?

He was willing to concede religious comfort might be all right for some — for the old, the hopeless, for those who had passed beyond loving, beyond any hope of really living, but, by Christ, he was different.

It might be the last arrogant gasp of alcoholic pride but, miserable and terrified as he was, he would not humble himself here. On this point he would go out swinging.³⁴

Eventually Bill ended up back at Towns Hospital under the care of Silkworth. He needed sobriety; a clear head would enable him to think things out. He had several contacts with Shoemaker at Calvary, though the essential formula for sobriety had been given to him by Ebby. The question was, what was he going to do with it? "Realize you are licked, admit it, and get willing to turn your life over to the care of God."³⁵

At the 'Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age' convention in 1955, two decades after his religious experience at the Towns Hospital, he would totally share with others his encounter with 'that Power greater than himself'.

My depression deepened unbearably and finally it seemed to me as though I were at the bottom of the pit. I still gagged badly on the notion of a Power greater than myself, but finally, just for the moment, the last vestige of my proud obstinacy was crushed. All at once I found myself crying out, "If there is a God, let Him show Himself! I am ready to do anything, anything!"

³⁴Robert Thomsen, Bill W., p. 213-214.

³⁵ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 19.

Suddenly the room lit up with a great white light. I was caught up into an ecstasy which there were no words to describe. It seemed to me, in the mind's eye, that I was on a mountain and that a wind not of air but of spirit was blowing. And then it burst upon me that I was a free man. Slowly the ecstasy subsided. I lay on the bed, but now for a time I was in another world, a new world of consciousness. All about me and through me there was a wonderful feeling of Presence, and I thought to myself, "So this is the God of the preachers!" A great peace stole over me and I thought, "No matter how wrong things seem to be, they are all right. Things are all right with God and His world."³⁶

Bill would later bring his experiences together to concretize the concepts for Alcoholics Anonymous. Out of the depth of hopelessness, salvation for the alcoholic would be made possible through the conversion experience. It would be this that A.A. would offer to the alcoholic, resulting in the option of sobriety, an alternative few alcoholics to this point had actualized.

As Bill examined his own makeup he recognized in himself and in other alcoholics their intolerance for absolutes. He felt this explained why he had had little time for organized religion. It would be because of this intolerance that A.A. would eventually separate from the Oxford Group.

Bill attended and participated in the Oxford Group meetings. As time progressed he began to meet with the Calvary alcoholics apart from the meetings as both he and they found it more conducive for conversation. Though he spent much time with the alcoholics, none attained sobriety.³⁷

After some months of sobriety Bill Wilson was given the possibility of working as a stock broker again on Wall Street. This opportunity took him to Akron, Ohio. In Akron

³⁶ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 63.

³⁷ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 26.

he found that the 'old desire' to drink returned so he assumed that he had retained his sobriety through contact with other alcoholics. Based on this, he contacted the local Oxford Group requesting the name of an alcoholic and was referred to Henrietta Seiberling to whom he poured out his situation. Henrietta was an involved member of the Oxford Group who coincidentally at that time was attempting to 'sober up' a Dr. Bob Smith.³⁸ She viewed Wilson's phone call as guidance, for she had had no success with this alcoholic, and was convinced the hand of God was portrayed in this chance encounter.

Wilson (Bill) was well equipped to meet Smith (Bob). He had outlined everything learned about alcoholism before the meeting. By this time he had started integrating his 'baggage', the methods of the Oxford Group; he had his story, his recent conversion experience and in addition he still had Silkworth's advice ringing clearly in his memory: "You've got to deflate these people first. So give them the medical business, and give it to them hard."³⁹

Upon meeting Smith, he greeted him with, "You must be awfully thirsty, Bob. Say, let's talk a little while first — it won't take long."⁴⁰ Wilson and Smith each shared their stories. Smith 'slipped' only once after meeting Wilson. June 10th, 1935, was the last time Smith drank. A.A. was formed.

Wilson had been able to transmit the essence of A.A. to Smith: "Show me your faith and by my works I will show you mine."⁴¹

³⁸ Dr. Bob Smith, the second member of A.A.

³⁹ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 28.

⁴⁰ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 28.

⁴¹ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 29.

There are four founding moments in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous according to E. Kurtz:

Dr. Carl Gustav Jung's 1931 conversation with Rowland H.; Ebby T's late November 1934 visit with Bill Wilson; Wilson's "spiritual experience" and discovery of William James (sic) in Towns Hospital in mid-December 1934; and the interaction between Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith through May and June 1935 which climaxed in the final and enshrined "founding moment" just recorded.⁴²

It would seem that a fifth should be added, and that is Silkworth's advice to deflate the alcoholic ego, as previous to this advice, Wilson had not been able to assist anyone in attaining sobriety. That he would have been successful in helping Smith without this particular insight is doubtful. Tiebout is of the opinion that there will be no sobriety until the alcoholic 'hits bottom'. While bottom varies from person to person, certainly the concept of 'ego deflating' remains a constant.

Waxing Traditions

In alcoholism the depth of helplessness and despair is experienced. In confrontation with total weakness (as A.A. terms it), a conversion experience emerges. It can do no other as the superlative in the negative sense (hitting bottom) has been reached and there presents but two ways out: death or change. Out of weakness a new self-image is manifested, both offered to another alcoholic. In A.A. it is that very phenomenological weakness which is the quelle of strength; reminiscent of the Christian motif that in giving up everything one receives and hundredfold.

⁴² Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 33.

Wilson and Smith looked for another chronic alcoholic to see if their method for sobering up alcoholics worked. That person, Bill D. responded well, becoming the third founding member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

A.A. continued to work closely with the Oxford Group though they were becoming noticeably a group unto themselves. Wilson has recorded that though close contact was kept in the early years, there was something different between the alcoholic and non-alcoholic members.⁴³

Yet, uncomfortable as it might be at moments, especially to Bill, the Oxford Group was the only conceptual home Wilson and Smith had. More, although Bill did not realize it at the time, it was a womb which had still one further positive contribution to make to the yet undeveloped program that would become Alcoholics Anonymous.⁴⁴

There was a growing tension in the Oxford Group as that Group wanted to save the world and Alcoholics Anonymous was only interested in alcoholics. In addition, the Group publicly lauded individuals whose lives had been changed, whereas alcoholics wanted anonymity.

The alcoholics had begun to learn that individuals should be led rather than pushed toward change, as the Oxford Group tended to do. Alcoholics simply could not move toward change quickly enough for the Group. "They simply did not want to get too good too soon."⁴⁵ The Oxford Group demanded absolutes: absolute purity, absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love. This was frequently more than the alcoholic could tolerate. "These ideas had to be fed with teaspoons rather than by buckets."⁴⁶

⁴³ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 39.

⁴⁴ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 40.

⁴⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 75.

⁴⁶ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 74.

A split too, was beginning to occur between the New York and the Akron Groups. While the New York Group was separating itself physically and conceptually from the Oxford Group, the Akron Group was developing an even stronger kinship with it. Within the Akron Group there was emphasis placed upon spirituality and surrender, while in the New York Group Wilson was pressured not to push religion.⁴⁷ Smith's group felt threatened at the prospect of leaving the Oxford Group, for they felt that in doing so they would be rejecting religion per se. The Akron Group still relied heavily on the four absolutes whereas the New York group had rejected them.

In 1937 during Shoemaker's absence the tension mounted between New York A.A. and the Oxford Group. The alcoholics articulated their disagreement about 'preaching' salvation and absolutes, wanting only to obtain and enjoy sobriety.⁴⁸ A schism occurred between the New York A.A. Group and the Calvary Oxford Group at this time.

It became noticeable that the Akron Group was growing much more quickly than the group in New York. The basic difference between the two was that in Akron, surrender was emphasized. The group became known as the "Take it or leave it program."⁴⁹ Smith's methods were very direct with the alcoholic; if they didn't surrender that meant they 'didn't get the program'.

Well, now I'm getting scared that they're not going to fix me, so I come up with: "Well, I Guess I do." Doc almost shouts: "There's no guessing about it — you do or you don't." So finally I say, "Well, yes I do believe in God." And Doc says, "Well, now then, that's fine young fellow; now we can get somewhere."

⁴⁷ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 237.

⁴⁸ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 47.

⁴⁹ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 54.

And then he says, "Get down out of that bed and get on your knees," Well, I remember that he's a rectal surgeon so I say, "For what?" and Doc says: "You're going to pray;" and I say, "Who's going to pray?" and he says, "You're going to pray."

Well! I tell him: "I don't know anything about praying"; and he says, "I don't suppose you do, but you get down there, and I'll pray, and you can repeat it after me — that'll do for this time."⁵⁰

While the need for surrender would never disappear from A.A. it would in time become more tactfully approached. This was brought about by the interaction of conceptual differences between Akron and New York.

A new tradition was realized with the publication of *Alcoholics Anonymous* in 1939.⁵¹ As both the Akron and New York groups collaborated in this work the umbilicus was finally severed though the now illegitimate parent was to remain near and dear to the now autonomous Alcoholics Anonymous.

The A.A. Tradition Expands

By 1937 A.A. groups from New York and Akron had multiplied and moved in the direction of Philadelphia and Washington. The foundation had developed into a fellowship of forty totally sober alcoholics. It was at this point in time that Wilson and Smith became acutely aware that they had been instrumental in birthing a movement of positive value to alcoholics. Other groups, the Washingtonians⁵² and the Emmanuel Movement⁵³ had

⁵⁰ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 240.

⁵¹ Alcoholics Anonymous is the first book written by the fellowship referred to by some as 'The Bible'.

⁵² Milton Maxwell, "The Washingtonian Movement," Quarterly Journal for Studies in Alcoholism, 11, 1950, p. 410.

enthusiastic beginnings but were remembered only because history made record of them. The challenge became not only to grow, but to endure.

Smith's group, after the Wednesday night meetings with the Oxford Group met alone for a period of time, thereby promoting the concept of the open and closed⁵⁴ meeting in Alcoholics Anonymous. It was these meetings that a group from Cleveland attended once a week. By 1939 the Group which made weekly visits had grown to twelve members. Within the group were a number of Catholics. They, on sharing with their parish priests what they were doing, were told that they were in violation of canon law and were forbidden further attendance. Clarence S., the head of the Cleveland group, understanding the canonical hangup, changed the name of the group to A.A.⁵⁵ from the Squadron of the Oxford Group. Even with this diplomatic response the Catholic Church pastors continued to be negative, eliciting from the Cleveland Group a decision that they would no longer travel to Akron but would 'go it alone' under the name of Alcoholics Anonymous.⁵⁶

The book *Alcoholics Anonymous* had been published, and so it was the Cleveland Group which became the 'experimental group' to observe if A.A. worked under the guidance of a book rather than a co-founder. Cleveland's form of A.A. became somewhat unique in that each six months saw an alternate leader of the group, as the philosophy of A.A. became more important than the personality cult. Ideas that were latent within A.A. became

⁵³ Howard J. Clinebell Jr., Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978, p. 104.

⁵⁴ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 77.

⁵⁵ It was not until the publication of the book Alcoholics Anonymous that all groups adopted the name A.A.

⁵⁶ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 78.

actualized in Cleveland. The concept of 'sponsorship'⁵⁷ took root there. Cleveland A.A. process became more clearly focused, forced as they were by circumstances to interpret 'the book' without the backdrop of an Oxford Group attachment.

John D. Rockefeller 'Contributes' to A.A.

As A.A. began to grow there was an increasing need for pecuniary aid. In addition, because of the time Wilson was spending in the developing of A.A. personal finances became a problem for him. Successes of the group were becoming known to professionals, and Wilson began to receive requests for the purchase of services. This dynamic brought A.A. to develop what they would later call 'group conscious';⁵⁸ i.e., that group survival surpassed individual remuneration.

A.A. decided to approach Rockefeller for financial aid. Upon meeting with Rockefeller and his committee, the Group was immediately recognized as being 'first century Christianity'.⁵⁹ 'Their stories' prompted Rockefeller to espouse an interest in helping but, though this interest was real, sincere concerns were voiced. Survival and expansion were, of course, necessary.

Won't money create a professional class? Wouldn't professional members spoil the man-to-man approach that is now successful? Wouldn't the management of a hospital chain, with all the property and money required be a fatal diversion?⁶⁰

⁵⁷ The act whereby a non-drinking alcoholic gives help to an alcoholic in need.

⁵⁸ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 64.

⁵⁹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 148.

⁶⁰ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 149.

Though Rockefeller granted \$5,000, he refused to give any larger sums of money. He strongly and perhaps rightly felt that money would spoil A.A.

John D. Rockefeller Jr. was guided then and there to save A.A. fellowship from itself and from unnecessary hazards of money, property, and professionalism. It was one of the turning points in A.A.'s history. His great wealth could have ruined us.⁶¹

Though A.A. in hindsight was grateful for the advice given by Rockefeller, they still needed finances. Out of this need grew the idea of forming 'The Alcoholic Foundation'.⁶² Tax deductible money could be donated and the Foundation would take responsibility for the use of the funding. The Foundation could not come into existence without the assurance that non-alcoholics would be in the majority by one (holier than thou — forgive the sin but not the sinner). This point of responsibility became a 'bone of contention' between Tiebout and Wilson.

The underlying argument between Tiebout and Wilson clearly concerned 'maturity' — its meaning, and the accuracy of any claim by Alcoholics Anonymous to it, in the past or in the present. The psychiatrist was asking: "How can a person, or a group of persons, who achieve first identity by proclaiming, 'I am an alcoholic' — i.e., 'I am obsessively-compulsively inclined to addictive dependency' — and whose greatest danger is the claim to 'self-sufficiency' ever claim maturity? Is not that very claim rather the best proof of immaturity — the denial of the reality of dependence?"⁶³

Wilson continually pushed the idea of responsibility and maturity. Therefore, it became imperative for A.A. to take complete responsibility for its own existence. In 1954 the 'Alcoholic Foundation' changed to the 'General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous'. Though the name changed, the ratio of alcoholic to non-alcoholic trustees did not. The theme

⁶¹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 150.

⁶² 'Alcoholic Foundation' established in May of 1938.

⁶³ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 130.

of the 1964 General Service Conference was 'Confidence and Responsibility', and in 1955, the twentieth anniversary of A.A. the conference theme declared 'The Coming of Age'. Out of this conference came the legacies of recovery, unity and service.⁶⁴

At the Thirtieth Anniversary Convention held in Toronto in 1965, the following declaration was made:

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.⁶⁵

It was not until 1966 that it was decided that A.A. members would be given quorum balance. The responsibility of A.A. and its future now lay in the hands of 'alcoholics'. Wilson's dream that alcoholics could be responsible and thus mature, came to pass.

The Book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, an Aid in the Articulation of Self Image

A.A. by 1937 had identified the healing process in the potency of "shared honesty, of mutual vulnerability openly acknowledged."⁶⁶ Healing grew out of the act of surrender. Surrender and 'getting the program' went hand in hand. Mutual vulnerability was demonstrated in the telling of one's personal experience. In the telling of one's story sobriety was not only offered to another but it insured the sobriety of the one telling the story.

Wilson began to articulate the program when he wrote the initial chapters to the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* in 1938. He began the book with his own story and a chapter entitled 'There is a Solution'. Through the Akron tradition of re-telling life stories (which grew out

⁶⁴ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 131.

⁶⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. X.

⁶⁶ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 61.

of the Oxford Group's tradition of 'sharing for witness') A.A. came to recognize the alcoholics' stories as their epipoint.

In the process of writing, Bill Wilson outlined what he had learned from the Oxford Group:

1. We admitted that we were licked, that we were powerless over alcohol.
2. We made a moral inventory of our defects or sins.
3. We confessed or shared our shortcomings with another person in confidence.
4. We made restitution to all those we had harmed by our drinking.
5. We tried to help other alcoholics, with no thought of reward in money or prestige.
6. We prayed to whatever God we thought there was for power to practice (sic) these precepts.⁶⁷

Having penned it so, he felt that it sounded too much like the Oxford Group, too preachy and too ecclesial. The language of the twelve steps secular religious terminology is striking!

Remember that we deal with alcohol — cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power — that One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

⁶⁷ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 160.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.⁶⁸

Wilson recalls that he felt that number twelve was rather symbolic — it made him think of the twelve apostles!

⁶⁸ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 60.

The fellowship of A.A. responded to the Twelve Steps in a number of ways. Some felt that there should be more direct mention of God; others thought the language should be more psychological in nature. There were many heated discussions over the Twelve Steps, but the last draft was left to Wilson's judgment.

The fellowship decided on a chapter on 'How it Works', backed up with statements from Silkworth and concluding with the alcoholic's stories. Stories would be the living example of what life could be for the alcoholic — of reinforcement of the fact that A.A. did truly work.

In January of 1939 the book went to the publishers. Wilson was concerned that the book might contain medical errors or would prove to be offensive to some religious faiths. He was well aware, for example, that the Catholics had little tolerance for the Oxford Group. If the book was in any way associated with the Oxford Group, a whole segment of the alcoholic population would be restricted from Alcoholics Anonymous. (One could postulate that A.A. was indeed premature — that the post Vatican II ecumenical mould, would have been a more interesting and a more congenial breeding soil and 'ground of being' for it.)

A.A. waited anxiously for the reports on the book to come back from the critics. A New Jersey psychiatrist, Dr. Howard, viewed the book as an attractive alternative to the many other trends that were so common in treating the alcoholic.⁶⁹ Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick⁷⁰ encouraged A.A. to release the book as it was. The Catholic New York Archdiocesan Committee received the book and responded favourably to it. Though the book was well received, a few minor changes were made.

⁶⁹ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 75.

⁷⁰ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 182.

In step Two we decided to describe God as a 'Power greater than ourselves.' In step Three and Eleven we inserted the words 'God as we understand Him'. And, as a lead-in sentence to all the steps we wrote these words: "Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a Program of Recovery". A.A.'s Twelve Steps were to be suggestions only.⁷¹

A.A.'s book was well received by the critics, but initially there were few books sold. There had been dreams as to what this book could do for alcoholics, but the dreams were quickly fading. Instead of the hurricanes expected, A.A. seemed to hit the 'horse latitudes'. Rockefeller sensed this and proposed a dinner meeting for A.A. and several hundred of his friends — New York's most prominent and wealthy. The dinner was held on February 9, 1940,⁷² at the Union Club in New York.

Arrangements were made to have an A.A. member sit at each table. No reporters were allowed to attend in case one of the alcoholics 'slipped'. A story that seems to be told and retold by A.A. to recapture the mood of the evening is the incident with Mr. R.

One gray-haired banker inquired, "Mr. R., what institution are you with?" Morgan grinned and replied, "Well, Sir, I am not with any institution at the moment. Nine months ago, however, I was a patient in Gray Stone Asylum". The interest at that table took a sharp upturn.⁷³

The speakers at the dinner were the theologian, Dr. Fosdick, and Dr. Foster Kennedy, a renowned neurologist. Dr. Smith spoke, on behalf of Alcoholics Anonymous. Though Mr. N. Rockefeller spoke, the content of his speech was not exactly what A.A. had expected.

Gentlemen, you can all see that this is a work of goodwill. Its power lies in the fact that one member carries the good message to the next, without any thought of financial income or reward. Therefore, it is our belief that

⁷¹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 167.

⁷² Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 182.

⁷³ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 183.

Alcoholics Anonymous should be self-supporting so far as money is concerned. It needs only our goodwill.⁷⁴

Out of the Rockefeller dinner meeting A.A. received world wide publicity, all of which was positive. The reports crowned A.A. with status and dignity. The dinner had 'put A.A. on the map'.

In 1941 the 'Saturday Evening Post' became interested in doing a large article on Alcoholics Anonymous. Jack Alexander,⁷⁵ a feature writer for 'The Post', was given the task of writing the story. Alexander was very moved by the A.A. program and the individuals within the program. His enthusiasm was reflected in the article and the responses it elicited. This article is regarded as a milestone in the history of A.A. After the article was run in 'The Post,' thousands of requests poured in to A.A. for help and for the A.A. book. Membership increased from 2,000 at the beginning of 1941 to 8,000 at the year's end. A.A. further concretized its sense of identity in the many responses to the requests for help. In 1946 the Twelve Traditions grew out of the vast store of knowledge acquired in formulating responses.

By 1941 New York had become the headquarters of Alcoholics Anonymous. Centralized there is the monetary support system of A.A. the publisher of the 'good news' of A.A. and the archives.

The Catholic Church and A.A.

Dr. Smith and Sister Ignatia of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine worked together at St. Thomas hospital in Akron. Alcoholics were seen as poor patients and individuals who

⁷⁴ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 184.

⁷⁵ Jack Alexander, The Jack Alexander Article... about A.A. (reprinted by Special Permission of The Saturday Evening Post) copyright 1941, The Curtis Publishing Co.

often did not pay their bills. They were not well received by hospitals and were most often left untreated.

Sister Ignatia and Smith had an agreement whereby they would bring alcoholic patients in through 'the back door', locating these individuals in the flower room — an area previously used for bodies awaiting removal to the mortuary. The nun became increasingly impressed with Smith's results and techniques. Though she was impressed, when the connection of the Oxford Group with A.A. was made, she felt 'conscience bound' to speak with her spiritual advisor, Father Vincent Hass.⁷⁶ He decided to see for himself what was entailed in A.A. so he attended a meeting at King's School in Akron. He is described in the following way.

A profoundly spiritual man who saw the whole world through a prism of deep faith, the young priest found less 'primitive Christianity' than 'a movement just like the early Franciscans'.⁷⁷

His endorsement of A.A. allowed Catholics more freedom to attend meetings.

Father Ed Dowling of the Society of Jesus in St. Louis became a supportive and active friend of A.A. through his contact with Wilson. He paralleled the Twelve Steps of A.A. with the exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, a basic spiritual discipline of the powerful, 33,000 member Papal Society.⁷⁸ The Jesuits publicly supported Alcoholics Anonymous.

A.A.'s fear of being rejected by the Catholic Church because of its roots being that of the Oxford Group slowly dissipated. As luck would have it, the A.A. name was always preceded by its 'good news'.

⁷⁶ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 80.

⁷⁷ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 80.

⁷⁸ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 37.

A.A. Moves Into Institutions

In 1939, New York's Rockland State Hospital, a mental institution, requested that A.A. work with some of their alcoholic cases.⁷⁹ A regular A.A. meeting was established at the hospital and some of the grimmest cases began to get well and stay sober. From this point physicians began to suggest A.A. as a treatment option.

A.A. pioneered the first prison group at San Quentin in 1942.⁸⁰ It made its mark because the figures recidivist statistic usually eighty percent, moved down to a constant twenty percent. Even the (authority) sceptics began to see value in Alcoholics Anonymous.

By 1945 A.A. was provided with a ward at the Knickerbocker Hospital in New York, under the care of Dr. Silkworth.⁸¹ One decade saw 10,000 alcoholics pass through the ward towards a life of sobriety.

In 1945 Dr. E.M. Jellinek, America's premier researcher into alcoholism, Dr. Howard W. Haggard, a medical authority on alcoholism, and Dr. Selden D. Bacon, a leading sociological investigator of alcohol-related problems announced the "Yale Plan for Alcohol Studies," "Yale Plan for the Treatment of Alcoholism," and the formulation of the "National Committee for Education on Alcoholism".⁸² The motivation that lay behind their studies were the findings of A.A.; i.e., that alcoholism is a sickness and not a moral delinquency, and

⁷⁹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 12.

⁸⁰ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 89.

⁸¹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 206.

⁸² Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 118.

when it is properly recognized, the previously considered 'hopeless alcoholic' can be rehabilitated.⁸³

The Democratic Fellowship Continues Its Message

In 1955 at the 'Coming of Age' convention, Bill Wilson withdrew from the formal leadership position in A.A. desiring to prove to himself that A.A. could live on as a true democratic fellowship. Wilson would live until 1971. (His co-founder, Bob Smith, died in 1950.) A.A. has survived without a co-founder. With over one million members, in over one hundred countries, time will complete the story of A.A.'s destiny.

Kurtz, in his definition of a history of A.A. says,

Alcoholics Anonymous will live, in other words, so long as it is 'Alcoholics Anonymous': "an utter simplicity which encases a complete mystery" that no one claims perfectly to understand.⁸⁴

⁸³ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 118.

⁸⁴ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 249.

CHAPTER II

PROMISES BROKEN: A REFLECTION ON A.A. EXPERIENCE

For the alcoholic, alcohol is seen as cunning, baffling and powerful;¹ a companion that promised harmony and wholeness,² a promise forsaken, which leaves its victims in the abyss of nothingness. The alcohol which promised solace, became an overbearing force which coveted its captives, offering an irresistible torment. For the alcoholic, alcohol has become a Power greater than self.

For the alcoholic, alcohol is not a symbol of the vertical dimension of life. It is the vertical dimension... Alcohol is not a symbol of his experience of a higher Power, it is his higher Power.³

The spirit within the bottle left the alcoholic alone to grope in the darkness.

It was in the bond of common suffering, one alcoholic talking to another, that Alcoholics Anonymous was born. It is from under a blanket of suffering that the alcoholic begins the process of healing and wholeness. Alcoholism does not discriminate in terms of the mental, physical or spiritual aspects of a being;⁴ its effects permeate the person's entire

¹ Alcoholics Anonymous, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976, p. 58.

² Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980, p. 54.

³ Howard J. Clinebell Jr., "Philosophical — Religious Factors in the Etiology and Treatment of Alcoholism." in Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, Vol. 24, 1963, p. 476.

⁴ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, Minnesota: Hazelden Educational Services, 1980, p. 199.

being. The alcoholic's whole being suffers the effects of alcoholism, and so it is, that the alcoholic cries out for a healing, a healing that will mend the whole body.

The alcohol that brings the alcoholic to defeat, in a paradoxical way, becomes the catalyst for an experience of harmony, to a life that had previously been disjointed. The proximity to alcohol changes for it is no longer ingested but rather symbolically present in the story of every alcoholic. Alcohol imbibed, disintegrated relationships and defaced the alcoholic's self-image, confronting the alcoholic with a choice for life or death. Alcohol as symbol, lays the basis for shared, trusting, warm relationships, because each alcoholic knows that without the other alcoholic's story, there is no guarantee of serenity. Alcoholics Anonymous understands that if the alcoholic forgets the power of alcohol he is in danger of drinking again. The alcoholic, to remain sober, must forever remember that for him, the vessel of *aqua viva* will always simultaneously reflect the lux and tenebrae;

...he would return to us convinced. He had hit bottom as truly as any of us had. Johnny Barleycorn himself had become our best advocate.⁵

The Phenomenon of Alcoholics Anonymous

Psychiatrist Harry Tiebout was one of the first to observe that within the phenomenon of Alcoholics Anonymous, a seemingly religious process or conversion experience was resulting in a restructuring of personality.⁶ He felt that this phenomenon within A.A. would never be

⁵ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1953, p. 24.

⁶ Harry M. Tiebout, "Psychological Factors Operating in Alcoholics Anonymous", in Current Therapies of Personality Disorders, ed. Bernard Gluck, M.D., New York: Green and Station, 1946, p. 155.

understood "until more insight is gained into the phenomenon of religion and spiritual growth."⁷

Years later Antoine Vergote wrote that

...true religious conversion always goes to the roots, to the very principle where his personality is organized...by deciding to adhere to a religion, man commits himself to a new covenant with God, mankind and the world.⁸

Within Alcoholics Anonymous they understand that the alcoholic is sick mentally, physically and morally; they are open to the type of change experience of which Vergote speaks. If their illness is all inclusive, so too must be their recovery. By way of a spiritual experience brought about by the practice of the Twelve Steps,⁹ the A.A. phenomenon is enacted; the alcoholic experiences self-transcendence, the journey to wellness. Grace had done for them what they could not do for themselves.

When a man or a woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of this is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being...In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he has hitherto denied himself.¹⁰

Alcoholics Anonymous does not understand the phenomenon of change from a drinking to a non-drinking state but knows the process. It does not understand the paradox that in weakness and defeat there is strength, but it knows the process because its members have experienced it.

⁷ Harry M. Tiebout, "Psychological Factors Operating in Alcoholics Anonymous," p. 155.

⁸ Antoine Vergote, The Religious Man, Dublin: Gill and Macmill Ltd., 1969, p. 105.

⁹ Cf. Appendix.

¹⁰ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 110.

It should be remembered that alcoholism is probably symptomatic of a frustrated need.¹¹ A.A. tends to address the need rather than to look for the causative source of the need. It is a tendency within traditional therapy to look for the causative source of the problem rather than addressing the need of the individual. Experience has taught (at least in the context of alcoholism) that causative treatment models merely give the chronic imbiber an excuse for problems.

It is in the weakness of one alcoholic meeting the weakness of another alcoholic that A.A. finds its strength. According to Bob, it is because of the alcoholic's limitation and weakness that there is something to give. It is weakness that an alcoholic offers to another alcoholic; in this gift the possibility of wholeness is promoted. It is in the recognition that one's life has become unmanageable and that one has lost control over the consumption of alcohol that strength blossoms. The alcoholic in weakness reaches out to a 'higher Power', and in his complete admission of weakness and submission to the Power he is freed from the bondage of compulsion. The parallel motif in Christian thinking suggests that in giving up everything one receives bountifully and flourishes.

A.A. knows that an individual must first 'hit bottom'¹² before an appropriate response (the beginning of the process) is made. It is in hitting bottom that the ego is deflated and knocks control out of the alcoholic, producing an imbalance. With this experience, the ego is deflated. With it comes the collapse of defences from which emerges the feeling of the inability to carry on as before. Recorded deep in the unconscious of the alcoholic is, "I can be stopped and have been."¹³ Hitting bottom for the alcoholic is not a figment of imagination; it is a physical and

¹¹ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 103.

¹² This term used within Alcoholics Anonymous — means that the alcoholic is in crisis and feels that a change must take place. For some it is a life or death choice.

¹³ Harry M. Tiebout, "Intervention in Psychotherapy," in American Journal of Psychoanalysis, Vol. XXII, 1962, p. 74-80.

emotional, existential reality. His relationships, psyche and physiology are in danger of disintegration. For the impact of hitting bottom to take effect, Step One must be taken.

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.¹⁴

The implied despair, because of the nature of the existential dilemma, is felt to be the catalyst of surrender for the alcoholic.¹⁵ 'Deflation at depth' is induced by way of identification with the sponsor alcoholic.¹⁶ Herein the drinking problem ceases to be regarded as sin and begins to be understood as sickness and, in doing so, alleviates guilt¹⁷ which in itself is an impetus towards the pathology. The outgrowth of hitting bottom is humility, and it is in humility that the possibility of surrender gives birth.

Life without ego is no new conception. Two thousand years ago, Christ preached the necessity of losing one's life in order to find it again.¹⁸

Surrender set in motion the possibility of conversion for the alcoholic. With surrender the fight to be master and controller is alleviated. It is replaced by internal peace and calm. Tiebout says surrender occurs when the unconscious forces of defiant individuality and grandiosity no longer function, the person is then able to be open and receptive to the environment. To Tiebout surrender reaction is conversion experience, but, selective surrender,¹⁹ The alcoholic

¹⁴ Cf. Appendix.

¹⁵ Harry M. Tiebout, "Alcoholics Anonymous — An Experiment of Nature," in Pastoral Psychology, Vol. 13, 1962, p. 49.

¹⁶ A seasoned member of Alcoholics Anonymous who is paired with a new member.

¹⁷ Bill Wilson, "Alcoholics Anonymous — Beginnings and Growth," in Three Talks to Medical Societies, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., p. 10.

¹⁸ Harry M. Tiebout, "The Ego Factors in Surrender in Alcoholism," in Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, Vol. XV, 1954, p. 610.

¹⁹ Harry M. Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender in the Treatment of the Alcoholic" in Pastoral Psychology, Vol. I, 1950, p. 37.

surrenders the cork but not the bottle; his conversion is more from the bottle than to life and therefore, at best, temporary.

According to Tiebout, the response to hitting bottom is 'conversion'.²⁰ Conversion produces within the alcoholic a felt option of sobriety. An attitude of 'humility' is accepted as the only effective way to both acquire and retain sobriety. If humility is forgotten, the alcoholic becomes vulnerable to slipping. His body reminds him when he is 'playing God'; i.e., the desire to drink returns. The alcoholic has a physiological reminder of sin. The process or processes within A.A. are unequivocally and inseparably tied to the notion of humility.

Where humility had formerly stood for a forced feeding on humble pie, it now begins to mean the nourishing ingredient which can give us serenity.... It brought a measure of humility, which we soon discovered to be a healer of pain. We began to fear pain less, and desire humility more than ever.²¹

Alcoholics Anonymous discovered from its experience with alcoholics that there is a disastrous effect when there is denial of human limitation. Bill W. implied that this refusal to acknowledge human limitation was the original sin by which the alcoholic, both sober and drinking, was most threatened — pride. This pride led to self-centered behaviour called grandiosity which inhibited the alcoholic's sobriety.

The word *alcoholic* proclaimed that there is 'sin', and that it was the enduring state of at least this portion of humankind. This state of 'sin' consisted in essential separation from ultimate reality, and the most destructive act of 'sin' was denial of the actuality of this separation from ultimate reality. Such denial led to self-destruction through increasing self-centeredness, because ultimate alienation affected those who acted as if they were themselves ultimate reality.²²

(This may not be the accepted, modern, theological projection of the angelic fall from grace, but it is nonetheless valid.) When man claims to be ultimate and unlimited, and in so doing attempts

²⁰ Harry M. Tiebout, "Alcoholics Anonymous — An Experiment of Nature," p. 55.

²¹ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 75-76.

²² Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 196.

to take upon himself characteristics of God, his self-centeredness so overwhelms him, that it is no wonder he does not feel at one with himself and the environment. Sin has made the individual feel separated. It is only in surrendering this self-centered behaviour that pride dissipates.

The natural outcome for the humbled alcoholic is dependence (a psychological state) which A.A. claims to contrive.²³ The alcoholic is left with no option other than to trust A.A.

It is at this stage that the notion of spirituality and religion enter the sphere. The language becomes vexed and convexed in relation to these two. Within A.A. religion is viewed as dogmatic and the antithesis of 'keeping it simple.'²⁴ Conversely we are told that with a spiritual experience the alcoholic has a personality change which would not have happened without a creative spirit.²⁵ Further, we are told that there can be no continuous sobriety without a religious component, spiritual development, and ultimately, belief in God.²⁶ "Religion is an act of humility, a consent to the truth about self....Know thyself; and know that thou art man and not God."²⁷ A.A.'s Step Two and Three reads:

Step Two Came to believe that a Power greater than
 ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three Made a decision to turn out wills and ourselves
 over to the care of God as we understand
 Him.²⁸

²³ Bill Wilson, "Basic Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous," in Three Talks to Medical Science. Alcoholics World Services, Inc., p. 25.

²⁴ One of the many sayings in Alcoholics Anonymous.

²⁵ Bill Wilson, "Basic Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous," p. 23.

²⁶ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 28.

²⁷ Antoine Vergote, Religious Man, p. 243.

²⁸ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 5-13.

The alcoholic had to get rid of the false sense of self-reliance that alcohol had bequeathed.

The alcoholic was 'not God;' he had to reach out for help; he had to surrender.

As they are humbled by the terrific beating administered by alcohol, the grace of God can enter them and expel their obsession. Here their powerful instinct to live can cooperate fully with their Creator's desire to give them new life.²⁹

In time the alcoholic comes to realize that what he mistook for strength, control and power was actually that rigidity which kept him from 'letting go and letting God'. When the individual lets go, there is the realization that one was merely hanging on tightly to an illusion, and in letting go of the illusion, power is relinquished to the 'higher Power'.

Alcoholism is surely not the only existential phenomenon that illustrates the desire for self-reliance. The God of the intellect displaced the wholistic God in this and other eras, or as A.A. describes it, the deification of the self or intellect, has displaced the pursuit of wholeness.³⁰

Within Alcoholics Anonymous it is understood that a spiritual awakening (conversion experience) occurs which allows for a personality change that will bring about recovery for alcoholics. They learned from William James that this change can be sudden and profound or it can take place slowly over a period of time. A.A. believe that they have found an inner resource without which they could not have obtained sobriety.³¹ The alcoholic has developed a relationship with a 'Power greater than himself' or 'God as he understands Him'.

All that the facts require is that the power should be both other and larger than our conscious selves. Anything larger will do, if only it be large enough to trust for the next step. It need not be infinite, it need not be solitary.³²

²⁹ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 65.

³⁰ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 29.

³¹ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 571.

³² William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1979, p. 407.

The conversion experience for the alcoholic has been referred to by Tiebout as a psychological event which produces shifts in personality resulting in a sense of communion.³³ Howard Clinebell enlarges upon the point of the relationship of the alcoholic with alcohol when he says that, "for the alcoholic, religion and alcohol often are functionally the same."³⁴ It may be stated that a spiritual substitute for alcohol by the alcoholic is required. (Alcohol is used to give the felt effect of harmony and unity within the self.) Thus, the synthesis reads: the subject recognizing and surrendering to finitude, acknowledging powerlessness and accepting humbly the truth about self, becomes open to the possibility of unity from within a spiritual experience.

A spiritual awakening touches all aspects of the alcoholic's being. He loses his attitude of negativity and aggressivity toward himself and the world. The problems of inferiority and superiority dissipate, being replaced with the feeling of 'live and let live'. He becomes gentle with himself and the world. The irritation of isolation and loneliness leaves, being replaced with the fellowship of A.A.

When the wall suddenly melts as in a sweeping personality turnabout there develops a peculiar phenomenon which people conversant with religion refer to as 'a release of power'...this state of ecstasy, for that is what it is, represents therefore, a time when the individual is at least momentarily able utterly and without reservation to identify himself with his environment, to unite himself totally and without hostility to all that goes on about him. Conflict, tension, doubt, anxiety, hostility, all dissolve as though they were nothing and the individual discovers himself on an extended place where he feels he is in communion with God, man, and all of the creative forces of the universe.³⁵

³³ Harry M. Tiebout, "Conversion as a Psychological Phenomenon In the Treatment of the Alcoholic," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. 2, 1959, p. 30.

³⁴ Howard J. Clinebell Jr., Understanding and Counselling the Alcoholic, Nashville: Abingdon, 1978, p. 154.

³⁵ Harry M. Tiebout, "Conversion as a Psychological Phenomenon In the Treatment of the Alcoholic," Pastoral Psychology, p. 30.

This experience gives the alcoholic a sense of harmony which was sought for so desperately 'within the bottle'.

By way of return to the vexatious linguistic issue it must be mentioned that the word 'conversion' need not necessarily infer relatedness to religion as conversion can be solely a psychological experience. The hoped-for change brought about by conversion could be solely psychological and not necessarily adroitly religious or, in A.A. terms, spiritual. However, within A.A. it is felt that unless the programme is understood and lived as a spiritual programme the alcoholic will not experience serenity and will remain vulnerable to drinking again. Spirituality is seen as acting upon the individual, inducing psychological change. Spirituality in this sense is seen as a prescription for cure. Phenomenologically, the conversion experience, effecting a complete change experience, rests with the individual.

With the aforementioned in mind, a viable hypothesis might be proposed and essayed. Within A.A. reference is made to 'a Power greater than self' and 'a higher Power'. The terms are wont to be used interchangeably but could it be that they are actually two different concepts? A.A. infers that a 'battle' goes on within the alcoholic prior to taking Step One and Step Two of the Twelve Steps. It could be suggested that the battle at this state is between the narcissistic ego and a Power greater than self and not with the higher Power. It might be posited that when the alcoholic turns to 'a Power greater than self' (resolution of narcissistic ego), he now functions approximately at what James Fowler calls the second state of faith development; i.e., Mythical Literal Faith.³⁶ The alcoholic now speaks of alcoholism in terms of a personal story, a story that encapsulates meaning. On the other hand, Tiebout employs a misnomer and 'jumps the gun' when

³⁶ James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith, San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1981, p. 135.

he describes the alcoholic as needing a 'deity' to stop the drinking process.³⁷ However, Fowler describes it more accurately perhaps as creating the need "for a more personal relationship with the unifying power of the ultimate environment."³⁸ Could it not be that in actual fact what is happening at the point of hitting bottom is that there is a clashing or rupturing of, the narcissistic ego, and (with alcoholic) reality. At the deepest level the alcoholic is admonished 'to change or die'.

So it is by circumstances rather than by any virtue that we have been driven to A.A. have admitted defeat, have acquired the rudiments of faith, and are now wont to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to a higher Power.³⁹

At the moment of surrender, egoism dissipates; i.e., the fight to be God⁴⁰ begins to gear down.

It would be at this point that the possibility exists for the introduction to a relationship with a 'higher Power'. The alcoholic heretofore was his own 'self-made' higher Power (induced by imbibing). In A.A. literature, it is noted that the more involved an alcoholic becomes in the programme, the more often the 'higher Power' is named God.⁴¹ When one understands that surrender to a Power greater than self is really dissipation of egoism, the religiosity or magic is removed from this concept, thus making possible religious experience within A.A. It is at this point that not only a religious experience is made possible, but the alcoholic is also ripe for personality change "because these men came and talked with him and made him forget

³⁷ Harry M. Tiebout, "The Ego Factors in Surrender in Alcoholism," p. 620.

³⁸ James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith, p. 150.

³⁹ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 38.

⁴⁰ Ernest Kurtz, Not God — A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 196.

⁴¹ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 28.

himself."⁴² It is at the point of becoming other-directed, rather than self-directed; it is at the moment one alcoholic reaches out to another from a bond of common suffering that the alcoholic becomes open to change. The alcoholic who once trusted only himself, at the moment of surrender not only trusts and has faith in a higher Power but also trusts fellow alcoholics. A.A. learned through experience that "faith without works is dead."⁴³ Alcoholics lived what they learned, and became sober.

A.A. often refers to its programme as spiritual in nature. By spiritual, A.A. means that because of an experience with a higher Power, a relationship with that higher Power has resulted in a changed life.⁴⁴ The changed life is only assured through the action of helping another alcoholic and by the grace of God. A.A. says that the alcoholic will only become well emotionally and physically when spiritual problems are attended to.⁴⁵

A.A. experiences spirituality as Fowler describes faith; i.e., as something that has no need of religious trappings such as creeds and dogma, but rather can be understood as something that encompasses the whole person.

Faith integrates and gives life, unity and meaning.⁴⁶

Faith, rather, is the relation of trust in, and the loyalty to the transcendent about which concepts or propositions — beliefs are fashioned.⁴⁷

⁴² Doctor Bob and the Good Oldtimes, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980. p. 188.

⁴³ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 88.

⁴⁴ Harry M. Tiebout, "Psychological Factors Operating in Alcoholics Anonymous," p. 153.

⁴⁵ Robert Thomsen, Bill W., Hamilton, London: Hamish, 1976, p. 255.

⁴⁶ James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith, p. 4.

⁴⁷ James W. Fowler, States of Faith, p. 11.

It is this understanding of faith that gives meaning to, and allows one to feel at home in, the universe. The alcoholic in A.A. would say that the spiritual programme offers a sense of serenity, a sense of peace with self and with the world and, to wit, a feeling of unity. A.A. would say that the spiritual programme influences every-day living.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.⁴⁸

Life comes together for the alcoholic by way of the Twelve Steps. By living the programme, the need (not necessarily the urge) to stop drinking ceases. The faith concept is wholistic, aiming not at effect but rather at cause. A.A. recognizes that it takes a lifetime of effort to be successful. "We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection."⁴⁹

Faith requires a relationship of trust with self and others. Religious faith requires trust in God. If one is correct in assuming that the idea of 'spiritual' in A.A. holds the same meaning as faith, it then offers the alcoholic the possibility of trusting. Therefore A.A. gives the alcoholic, mired in the pathology of the trust versus mistrust stage,⁵⁰ a second chance. This stage must be completed before any vertical relationship is possible. If one cannot have faith without trust, then one cannot have spirituality in A.A. without trust because for A.A. spirituality presupposes a relationship. As Erik Erikson says:

Trust, then, becomes the capacity for faith — a vital need for which man must find some institutional confirmation.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 84.

⁴⁹ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 60.

⁵⁰ Erik Erikson, Identity, Youth and Crisis, New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1969, p. 96.

⁵¹ Erik Erikson, Identity, Youth and Crisis, p. 106.

(A.A. might, nay would, take exception to the word 'institutional' here, for to it, institutionalization is the antithesis of 'letting go and letting God'.) Alcohol offered the illusion of unity whereas A.A.'s concept of spirituality fulfills the promise; 'let go and let God'.

To return to the notion of surrender is important. When the alcoholic surrenders, he is actually surrendering his sense of self-reliance. In total surrender there is agreement between the conscious and the unconscious mind.⁵² The act of surrender is not static. It starts a motion within the alcoholic's life pattern; it is a movement eliciting deflation of egoism, thereby opening up the possibility for trusting relationships. Surrender brings about the experience of integration. Could this experience of integration be the conversion experience spoken of before, though defined as not necessarily religious?

The religious conversion itself can be understood as a delayed maturity process in an individual whose awareness of group relatedness has been arrested.⁵³

The act of surrender initiates the possibility of a relationship with self and others. However, the alcoholic suffers from an immature ego, and is presumptive of being able, to stand on his own feet when he is least able; thus, his God image, made in his own image, is essentially defective. Thus the alcoholic must learn not only to trust others; he must also learn how to become trustworthy. Many years of compulsive drinking had elided this capacity.

Surrender, not being static, prompts Step Three. "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him." It is in the act of surrender that the offer of acceptance was made by God.⁵⁴ It is in the act of surrender that the alcoholic experiences acceptance in another. In the act of surrender the barriers built by the alcoholic come

⁵² Harry M. Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender in the Treatment of the Alcoholic," p. 36.

⁵³ Benjamin Weininger, "The Interpersonal Factor in the Religious Experience," in Psychoanalysis, Vol. 3, 1955, p. 32.

⁵⁴ Howard J. Clinebell Jr., Understanding and Counselling the Alcoholic, p. 158.

tumbling down. The alcoholic is no longer alone, because in the act of surrender the alcoholic accepts finitude and as a result admits the need for both a higher Power and relationships with others.

This feeling of being one with God and man, this emerging from isolation through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of guilt, brings us to a resting place where we may prepare ourselves for the following steps toward a full and meaningful sobriety.⁵⁵

Vergote states that the psychological roots of religion are found in fear, wonder and hope.⁵⁶ Who is better acquainted with these feelings than the alcoholic? Anxiety, we are told, is the only felt signal to let one know that the foundation of existence is getting out of hand.⁵⁷ Vergote says that anxiety is an enigma which can produce a rebirth for man and that, if there is victory over anxiety feelings, the possibility for authentic religious attitude lies therein.

Someone who knew what he was talking about once remarked that pain was a touchstone of all spiritual progress. How heartily we A.A.'s can agree with him, for we know the pain of drinking had to come before sobriety and emotional turmoil before serenity.⁵⁸

It would seem that at the very depth of alcoholic haplessness and despair, hope is offered. That there is light in darkness is best perceived in hindsight when illumination and clarity come to the fore.

When all else fails and man experiences finitude, he returns to God.

Having reduced us to a state of absolute helplessness, you now declare that none but a higher Power can remove our obsession....How he does cherish the thought that man, risen so majestically from a single cell in the primordial ooze, is the

⁵⁵ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 63.

⁵⁶ Antione Vergote, The Religious Man, p. 21.

⁵⁷ Antoine Vergote, The Religious Man, p. 131.

⁵⁸ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 93.

spearhead of evolution and therefore the only god that his universe knows! Must he renounce all this to save himself?⁵⁹

The alcohol allowed the illusion of power and control, until one day the controller became the controllee. The story, ever similar though essential, is a story of which the alcoholic never seems to weary. The story invited participation for it is in the involvement with the story that the alcoholic comes face to face with both finitude and the transcendent other. It is in the story that the process of self-transcendence begins.⁶⁰

Religious faith presupposes a transformation of the person. It takes faith to bridge the gap between the prereligious experience and a personal relationship with God. Uncertainty is addressed and a 'Kierkegaardian leap' is taken. Once this leap of faith is taken toward a relationship with a 'higher Power' there is that constant biological reminder of the need for humility, for the recognition of finiteness — loss of sobriety.

We could actually have earnest religious beliefs which remained barren because we were still trying to play God ourselves. As long as we place self-reliance first, a genuine reliance upon a higher Power was out of the question. That basic ingredient of all humility, a desire to seek and do God's will, was missing.⁶¹

Every human has a need for harmony. The alcoholic within A.A. then became a model of one being called to human maturity and religious attitude, out of human need.

The alcoholic par excellence has a neurotic need for harmony.⁶² Religion, "has its origin in Eros, the principle of happiness and union."⁶³ A.A. though not explicitly promising, does hint

⁵⁹ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Robert P. Roth, Story and Reality: An Essay on Truth, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973.

⁶¹ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 73.

⁶² Howard J. Clinebell Jr., Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic, p. 155.

⁶³ Antoine Vergote, The Religious Man, p. 165.

at the possibility of unity and cohesion. In A.A. terminology, this is serenity. In A.A. 'alcoholics' know that they experience serenity because they have found God, and in finding God, they have found themselves.

Faith is not being afraid of God; it is being able to stand up and admit faults of the past and present and at the same time, being thankful for present grace.⁶⁴ The non-drinking alcoholic uses his past to allow a drinking alcoholic to identify with him and uses his present state of sobriety and serenity as a living example of hope for the drinking alcoholic. True sobriety and serenity can only be attained when the past can be viewed without guilt and the present, without fear; when a subject humbly admits that without the alcoholics who cared, and a higher Power, serenity would not be his/hers. A strong community spirit grows within A.A. from this sharing. They understand that Alcoholics Anonymous must survive or the individual will not; they recognize that they are but a small part of a great whole.

How then did God get into the A.A. picture? How did A.A. become so innocently, dynamically spiritual? Perhaps Antoine Vergote sums it up in his statement:

By psychological self-criticism, these subjects have uncovered the face of God who, at one and the same time, hid himself and prefigured himself in the God of their needs and motives.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Antoine Vergote, The Religious Man, p. 298.

⁶⁵ Antoine Vergote, The Religious Man, p. 139.

Forever, a Phenomenon

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship that does not understand why it works; its membership is a living example of its validity. 'The prime mover is God' working through A.A. members.⁶⁶ Throughout the A.A. literature one reads that the fellowship will only exist for so long as God will need them.

Powerlessness, humility, anonymity and self-sacrifice would aptly describe A.A. It was in admitting weakness that strength blossomed; it was in turning oneself over to a higher Power that faith healed and made whole. Humility and anonymity were to be the assurances that no one individual alcoholic would ever take the credit that belonged to the higher Power. Anonymity and self-sacrifice, one alcoholic helping another with no expectation of return, produced an aura of mystery around the A.A. phenomenon, a mystery for a world that places value upon outcome for effort. 'Children of darkness' walked into light because one alcoholic told another alcoholic his story, a story that simultaneously spoke of despair and hope — just for today the darkness was gone.

Bill, a co-founder, understood that A.A. was a catalyst for religion and medicine. Because the effects of alcohol were all inclusive the alcoholic needed physical, emotional and spiritual healing. Experience had taught that all parts of the body must be healed or the alcoholic would eventually drink again. It was in the process of healing the entire being that the alcoholic experienced the impact of wholeness, and it was in the movement through the Twelve Steps (in the effort to remove imperfections) — on journey inward — that the alcoholic met 'the God of his understanding'.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 106.

⁶⁷ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 55.

A.A. is spiritual and not religious. Religious for A.A. means an institution and a perception of a God that instills guilt. Spirituality on the other hand bespeaks of a personal relationship with a 'God of our understanding' that originates from a pilgrimage and leads to a conversion experience. No one can foretell anyone's spiritual journey. For each alcoholic the movement from a drinking to a non-drinking state is his/her own autobiography; none but the individual alcoholic can pen the story. A.A. knew that for the alcoholic to become well each alcoholic needed his experience, story and reality⁶⁸— a borrowed experience would not do. A.A. would not, and could not, institutionalize the change experience because the experience was not theirs to control. A.A. understood spirituality as putting God in control and religion as putting man in control. They knew from the very depths of their being that they were certainly not the controllers.

The phenomenon of the A.A. experience is both subjective and objective; is not a 'once happening' but rather it is an experience that leaves the person both changed and in the process of being changed. Touched by the love of 'a Power greater than self', the alcoholic lives to carry his experience to other alcoholics. With sacrifice and humility, a positive disintegration⁶⁹ of self-centeredness and inflated ego, strength is brought to the alcoholics within Alcoholics Anonymous, bound together as they are, in a common story of pain and self-transcendence.

Each member carries the responsibility of keeping the story of A.A. alive, for within their bones they hold its future and in their heads, its legacy. They know that A.A. will continue only as long as they continue to reach out to other alcoholics in need; they have become co-creators.

⁶⁸ Robert P. Roth, Story and Reality: An Essay on Truth.

⁶⁹ Kazimier Dabrowski, Personality-Shaping Through Positive Disintegration, London: J.Q.A. Churchill, Ltd., 1967.

In A.A. wholeness came together in them, not as a model but as an instrument. They changed, but were not perfect. They became a pilgrim process people.

Conclusion

"...I bid thee say. What manner of man art thou?" (Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*)

Buried within the phenomenon of A.A.; encapsulated within the alcoholic's story, is the 'yarn' of a journey through alcoholism. The story is a constant reminder of a journey that takes the alcoholic from the delusions of the joys promised in drinking, to the depths of darkness and despair — of 'hitting bottom' and the loss of personal control over life. It is out of this acknowledgement of the loss of personal control and surrender to a higher Power that the alcoholic experiences change. He/she is transformed, not through willpower but rather changed through the recognition of being completely powerless over alcohol and totally dependent upon God. Of the A.A. experience, considered in the light of Tillich and Jung one might say that through alcoholism, the alcoholic has journeyed from the centre and then returns to the centre, initially in the experience of sobriety and ultimately in the experience of serenity. Alcoholism as viewed through the A.A. experience could then be seen as a process of separating from the centre and then returning to the centre

Jung calls the centre 'the self' and Tillich calls it 'the ground of being'. The A.A. experience of recovery may be considered to be analogous to the experience of psychological growth which Jung calls 'individuation' and the experience of religious maturation or salvation which Tillich describes as 'essentialization'.

A.A. recognizes that anonymity is the key to spiritual experience because in being anonymous a sacrifice is made of the will and the ego, acknowledging that a Power greater than self is at the centre. They acknowledge that it is not willpower but rather surrender to God as

A.A. understands Him, which is the key to sobriety. The alcoholic then is not only powerless over alcohol but is also powerless over sobriety.

In the A.A. experience, viewed in light of Jung's concept of individuation and Tillich's idea of essentialization, one sees the process in A.A. integrated into the healing current of essentialization and individuation. Their very own alcoholism becomes the base of their spiritual experience. The pain of their personal expression of the suffering through human frailty in alcoholism gives birth to an encounter with the infinite. For the alcoholic within A.A. God is no longer asleep in their unconscious for He has come to consciousness through the pain of alcoholism and His doings are ever retold in A.A. members' individual 'yarns'.

CHAPTER 111

THE A.A. EXPERIENCE IN PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Prelude: Jung's Terminology

With the assistance of Jungian analysis and psychology this chapter purposes to understand the change process which occurs in those alcoholics able to move from a drinking to a non-drinking state with the aid of A.A.

The problematic of language naturally arises as certain basic yet pertinent concepts present and elicit clarification. Specifically, it is important to address aspects of Jungian theory on the structure of personality. The key then to understanding this chapter is Carl G. Jung's interpretation of growth in the **individuation process**.

In Jungian psychology the structure of personality as a whole is referred to as the **psyche**. It embraces all aspects of a person's being; it is the totality of all psychological processes, conscious and unconscious. The premise within Jungian psychology is that a person is born into wholeness, and does not acquire it. Rather, it is present because of the psyche. As one lives through the states of life, that which is unconscious comes into consciousness as the archetypal psyche addresses the ego.

The premises are always far too simple. The psyche is the starting point of all human experience, and all the knowledge we have gained eventually leads back to it. The psyche is the beginning and end of all cognition. It is not only the object of science, but the subject also.¹

¹Carl G. Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, C.W., Vol. 8, New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1960, par. 261.

As Jung structures personality, **consciousness** is basically understood as the visible reality of the world within us and is that activity which sustains the affiliation of psychic contents to the ego. Consciousness grows in clarity through the four mental functions, thinking, feeling, sensing and intuiting. The orientation of consciousness is influenced by a particular attitude of it which is either extroversion or introversion though individuals tend to exhibit one attitude in consciousness and the other in the unconscious.

As the ego assimilates **unconscious** contents, making them conscious through the experience of archetypes, the process of individuation is initiated. For the inception of consciousness is also the beginning of individuation. Through the process of individuation one grows in self-knowledge which is personhood developing.

Consciousness does not create itself — it wells up from unknown depths. In childhood it awakens gradually, and all through life it wakes each morning out of the depths of sleep from an unconscious condition. It is like a child that is born daily out of the primordial womb of the unconscious....It is not only influenced by the unconscious but continually emerges out of it in the form of numberless spontaneous ideas and sudden flashes of thought.²

The **ego** grows out of and yet is the central complex in organized consciousness. Though it encompasses all of consciousness it occupies only a small portion of the total psyche. The ego influences the distinct personality of an individual determining which experiences will become conscious.

The amount of consciousness attained by the ego is determined by the level of individuation reached. A task within this process is for the ego to acknowledge complexes both within the personal and collective unconscious so avoiding the temptation to identify with them. At least in the initial stages of the individuation process the ego experience itself

²Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W., Vol. 11, New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1958, par. 935.

as the centre of the psyche over-identifying with the self. If this identification occurs the ego experiences both inflation and alienation.

The ego stands to the self as the moved to the mover, or as object to subject, because the determining factors which radiate out from the self surround the ego on all sides and are therefore supraordinate to it. The self, like the unconscious, is an a priori existent out of which the ego evolves.³

The **personal unconscious**, distinct from the collective unconscious, houses those inlife experiences which do not gain recognition by the ego, thus remaining in the encompassing psyche but not presently conscious to the ego.

The personal unconscious contains those experiences which for some blocking design or reason either do not reach or do not remain in consciousness.

The personal unconscious contains lost memories, painful ideas that are repressed (i.e., forgotten on purpose), subliminal perceptions, by which are meant sense-perceptions that were not strong enough to reach consciousness, and finally, contents that are not yet ripe for consciousness.⁴

Through the **collective unconscious** the individual is linked to the heritage of all of humanity in the inheritance of the accumulation of primordial images, i.e., symbols common to all of humankind. The collective unconscious unlike the personal unconscious is that part of the psyche which is not reliant upon individual human experiences for existence. Rather it turns to the collective experiences of humanity expressed through archetypes which have been in formation since the dawning of the human species. Jung says

fantasies (including dreams) of an impersonal character, which can not be reduced to experiences in the individual's past, and thus can not be explained as something individually acquired. These fantasies-images undoubtedly have their close analogues in mythological types....These cases are so numerous that

³Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W., Vol. 11, par. 391.

⁴Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, C.W., Vol. 7, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966, par. 103.

we are obliged to assume the existence of a collective psychic stratum. I have called this the collective unconscious.⁵

Archetypes are rudimentary structures that are inherent in man's nature and therefore timeless. Indeed, they are truths of man's beginnings not myths as commonly comprehended. "Every civilized human being, however high his conscious development, is still an archaic man at the deeper levels of his psyche."⁶ Archetypes act like instincts in that they employ an ordering function, intervening when consciousness becomes too one-sided resulting in requiring help to get out of difficulty. For example, when the ego and the self are split, the result is the ego feeling isolated precipitating an increase in the formation of archetypal symbols within consciousness. The ego and self are brought into a balanced relationship resulting in the ego no longer feeling cut off from life.

Though archetypes remain hidden from consciousness, one ascertains that they are present through dreams and such leitmotifs as life, birth, death and love. The presentation of these archetypal images coming up from the unconscious are experienced by consciousness as both growth inducing and healing. The function of consciousness then is not only to take in the reality of the world but also to make conscious that which lies in the unconscious. Reference is made to the individuation process when the inner world of the unconscious, the world of archetypes, becomes part of conscious attitude.

Psychologically...the archetype as an image of instinct is a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of man strives; it is the sea to which all rivers

⁵Carl G. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, C.W., Vol. 9i, New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1969, par. 262.

⁶Carl G. Jung, Civilization in Transition, C.W., Vol. 10, New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1959, par. 105.

wend their way, the prize which the hero wrests from the fight with the dragon.⁷

Some archetypes are of particular importance in the shaping of personality, **persona**, **anima/animus**, and **shadow**. The **self** is the central archetype of wholeness. It presents the ultimate goal of the individuation process.

The **persona** is a mask, a facade which people wear when they present themselves to the outside world. "The persona is that which in reality one is not, but which one's self as well as others think one is."⁸ The persona is not real, it is a name, a title or a function. It is more role than real. It is the presentation of an individual to society. People relate to each other through their personas.

If the individual forgets that a role is being played and identifies too strongly with the persona an imbalance occurs. Over-identification of the ego with the persona induces inflation resulting in the individual developing an exaggerated sense of self-importance. The feeling of inflation induces alienation which results in estrangement.

The **animus/anima** are the archetypes representing the masculine/feminine aspects of the psyche which evolved through the continuous interaction of males and females through the ages. The development of well balanced personalities demands a harmonious balance of the anima and the animus. Man and woman relations has notions of quadra polarity as (yin/yang) the duality of each is experienced. For Jung says "no man can converse with an animus for five minutes without becoming the victim of his own anima."⁹

⁷Carl G. Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, C.W., Vol. 8, par. 415.

⁸Carl G. Jung, Psychological Types, C.W., Vol. 6, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971, par. 801.

⁹Carl G. Jung, Aion, C.W., Vol. 9ii, New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1964, par. 29.

The **shadow** contains all that is best and worst in man. The shadow is hidden from the ego, in that, it is repressed or never acknowledged. The shadow contains negative and positive qualities. In the acknowledgement of it one not only becomes conscious of the dark aspects of personality but simultaneously becomes aware of possibilities and positive qualities that are buried within the shadow.

If it has been believed hitherto that the human shadow was the source of all evil, it can now be ascertained on closer investigation that the unconscious man, that is, his shadow, does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses, etc.¹⁰

Individuals tend to project on to others the unconscious aspects of their shadow until they acknowledge its presence within themselves. Recognition and acknowledgement of the shadow removes the need for projection. One can see it without it becoming other 'sited'.

Recognition of the shadow, on the other hand, leads to the modesty we need in order to acknowledge imperfection....The perfect has no need of the other, but weakness has, for it seeks support and does not confront its partner with anything that might force him into an inferior position and even humiliate him.¹¹

One can not experience wholeness until one acknowledges darkness. One must travel inward, (like Jonah into the belly of the whale) experiencing the darkness of the unconscious so as to emerge reborn and therefore transformed. In acknowledging the lost part of one's personality one experiences wholeness through the assimilation of unconscious contents. It is the shadow that is the portal to the unconscious and passage to wholeness.

¹⁰Carl G. Jung, Aion, C.W., Vol. 9ii, par. 423.

¹¹Carl G. Jung, Civilization in Transition, C.W., Vol. 10, par. 579.

Acceptance of the shadow is equivalent to acceptance of the self.¹² It is in the union of the light and the darkness that the self becomes evident. The archetype of the self is the goal of the individuation process on the way to wholeness.

The self is a paradox for it is both the centre and the circumference of totality embracing both the conscious and the unconscious. It is the impact of the self on consciousness that allows one to experience harmony, i.e., feeling at one with self and the world.

According to Jung the goal of every personality is to attain selfhood. This process does not make many inroads until middle age — midlife crisis prompts it. It is through the co-operation of the ego, which enables the unconscious to become conscious through dreams and fantasies, that the self impacts upon consciousness. In the process of making conscious what was unconscious one experiences harmony. In attaining self-knowledge one acknowledges origins in the unconscious and simultaneously comes to the realization that it is the self and not the ego that is at the centre. Jung said that "the self is our life's goal, for it is the completest expression of that faithful combination we call individuality..."¹³

The individuation process then is directed toward the growth and completeness of the personality. The goal of this process is to bring the contents of the unconscious into unity with consciousness — the result of which is the experience of healing wholeness.

According to Jung the goal of life is encapsulated in the realization of the self, a goal which is never fully attained nor fully comprehended. The self is never fully understood

¹²Edward F. Edinger, Ego and Archetype, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1972, p. 144.

¹³Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, C.W., Vol. 7, par. 238.

because the experience of it for man is indistinguishable from the God-image. The individuation process then (in religious language) is the realization of the divine in man.¹⁴

Within the individuation process it is the ego that becomes a vehicle for the unconscious becoming conscious. In this process the ego gives up its false sense of being at the centre acknowledging the self as the centre. There is pain in this acknowledgement because there is a death rebirth experience, through conscious suffering, whereby the ego surrendering humbly acknowledges that one is at the mercy of an irrational power which transcends consciousness.¹⁵ The individuation process, then, is coming to the self-realization of selfhood, i.e., the realization of the self as a psychic reality greater than ego.

Again and again I note that the individuation process is confused with the coming of the ego into consciousness and that the ego is in consequence identified with the self, which naturally produces a hopeless conceptual muddle. Individuation is then nothing but egocentricness and autoeroticism. But the self comprises infinitely more than a mere ego, as the symbolism has shown from old. It is as much one's self, and all other selves, as the ego.¹⁶

The individuation process initiated with the dawning of consciousness and acknowledged by ego in the mid-life crisis, is a process never completed. The goal of the individuation process is never attained, i.e., the realization of the self, the archetype of wholeness. Death becomes the only ultimate temporal boundary to the individuation process as the growth components of the personality spring from an unconscious realm to which no boundaries can be assigned.¹⁷

¹⁴Aniela Jaff , The Myth of Meaning, New York: Penguin Books Inc., 1975, p. 39.

¹⁵Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967, p. 101.

¹⁶Carl G. Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, C.W., Vol. 8, par. 432.

¹⁷Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, p. 96.

The needful thing is not to 'know' the truth but to experience it. Not to have an intellectual conception of things, but to find our way to the inner, perhaps worldless, irrational experiences — that is the heart of the problem.¹⁸

¹⁸Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, p. 98.

CHILDREN OF DARKNESS

The guilty man is eminently suited and is therefore chosen to become the vessel for the continuing incarnation, not the guiltless one who holds aloof from the world and refuses to pay his tribute to life, for in him the dark God would find no room.¹⁹

It is in the alcoholic's story, a story of brokenness, a story about the shadow side, a humiliating and a socially unacceptable story that the opposite emerges from within as gift. The story is ever repeated, for it is in the telling that a balance is created between the lux and tenebrae. Something new emerges from the balance: the alcoholic experiences a Power greater than himself.

Who could render an account of all the miseries that had once been ours, and who could estimate the release and joy that these last years had brought us? Who could possibly tell the vast consequences of what God's work through A.A. had already set in motion? And who could penetrate the deeper mystery of our wholesale deliverance from slavery, a bondage to a most hopeless and fatal obsession which for centuries had possessed the minds and bodies of men and women like ourselves?

It may be possible to find explanations of spiritual experiences such as ours, but I have often tried to explain my own and have succeeded only in giving the story of it. I know the feeling it gave me and the results it has brought, but I realize I will never fully understand its deeper why and how.²⁰

Within Alcoholics Anonymous a phenomenon occurs whereby the alcoholic moves from a drinking to a non-drinking state, from despair to hope, from isolation to embracing and being embraced by community, from disintegration to wholeness. A.A. would attribute the

¹⁹ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 746.

²⁰ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980, p. 44.

change to a spiritual experience, a concept introduced to them by Dr. Carl Jung. Writing to Jung, Bill W. said:

When he then asked you if there was any other hope, you told him that there might be, provided he could become the subject of a spiritual or religious experience — in short, a genuine conversion. You pointed out how such an experience, if brought about, might remotivate him when nothing else could....This concept proved to be the foundation of such success as Alcoholics Anonymous has since achieved. This has made conversion experience...available on an almost wholesale basis.²¹

Jung is of the opinion that the alcoholic drinks because of a spiritual quest that leads into oblivion and addiction. Alcohol not only produces a feeling of a self-induced synthesis and balance; it also has the potential to initiate the opposite experience not unlike the dual nature of mercury.²² Jung, corresponding with Bill W., wrote:

His craving for alcohol was the equivalent on a low level of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with God. ("As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." — Psalm 42, 1) ...Alcohol in Latin is spiritus, and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: spiritus contra spiritum.²³

Jung is considered to be instrumental in initiating the chain of events that evolved into the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is therefore appropriate to use Jungian psychology as an aid to better understand the A.A. phenomenon. An additional reason to use Jungian psychology is that Jung teaches the art of seeing without interrupting process — an

²¹ Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World, New York, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1984, p. 383.

²² Carl G. Jung, Alchemical Studies, C.W. Vol. 13, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967, par. 267.

²³ Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World, p. 384.

interruption phenomenaologists like Husserl find abhorrent. Encapsulation for Jung tends to produce models; models obscure process. To obscure the process within A.A. is to endanger the healing mystique experienced by the alcoholic within the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Jungian psychology allows one to see the phenomenon without interrupting it because Jungian psychology acknowledges that the phenomenon takes place because of a power outside of the control of the ego. Alcohol for the alcoholic becomes a symbol of the self, the central archetype of the psyche which expresses psychic wholeness.

Step One of the Twelve Steps states that the alcoholic becomes totally powerless over alcohol that greater totality. "Anything that a man postulates as being a greater totality than himself can become a symbol of the self."²⁴ For the alcoholic, alcohol becomes the power greater than self.²⁵ Initially, the alcoholic experiences the power of alcohol by its calming, peaceful effect, a power imbibed at will. The ingester imagines that the power created by consuming alcohol is his power; an inflated ego is resultant. As Bill W. noted, 'before A.A. we were trying to find God in the bottle'. The alcoholic experiences harmony and peace of mind by imbibing alcohol because he no longer feels split or alienated from life as alcohol allows him to return to the experience of unconscious wholeness; the "unconscious containment in the mother."²⁶ When consciousness stops, there is a natural movement back into the unconscious; the alcoholic stupor moves one from consciousness to unconsciousness.

²⁴ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 232.

²⁵ Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., "Philosophical — Religious Factors in the Etiology and Treatment of Alcoholism," Quarterly Journal For Studies in Alcoholism, Vol. 24, 1963, p. 476.

²⁶ Carl G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, C.W. Vol. 5, New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1956, par. 417.

In the unconscious state, one is free from all the pain and suffering that consciousness brings. The alcoholic chemically induces an illusion of wholeness, or in Jungian terms, the God image.

Alcohol takes the alcoholic on a journey backwards to the unconscious in a search for the experience of wholeness but in time the double nature of alcohol shows its other side, the dark side, the side that produces pain and suffering. The alcoholic no longer experiences the bliss of wholeness within the unconscious but rather a self-induced torture from which there is seemingly no escape. At this stage alcohol no longer numbs the pain; rather, it magnifies and intensifies discomfort. The alcoholic is left with only a torturing memory of the harmony that alcohol once offered. The illusion of paradise is lost, alcohol is master, imbibor becomes victim. To the very depths of his being and in every aspect of his being, the alcoholic experiences the shadow side. The alcohol first induced in the alcoholic the illusion of all that is perceived as good, but then, because of its dual nature, the alcohol showed its dark and evil other side. It never demonstrated both faces at the same time, but rather first the lux and then the tenebrae. When light shines into darkness one is blinded by the light, but when light rises up through the darkness the vision is clear. Alcoholics Anonymous takes the alcoholic through darkness to light, ever remembering the dark side, for to forget the shadow is to lose the light.

It is from this hopeless perspective that some are called to oneness with God through the grace of alcoholism.²⁷ Suffering initiates the process of individuation through the Twelve Step programme where the alcoholic meets the higher Power — the God image.

²⁷ S. James Roessler, The Role of Spiritual Values In The Recovery of Alcoholics, D.Min. diss., Washington, D.C., 1982. p. 6.

That is the meaning of the divine service, of the service which man can render to God, that light may emerge from the darkness, that the Creator may become conscious of His creation, and man conscious of himself.²⁸

Alcoholics Anonymous knew that suffering was important for their change experience — they divined the steps to take without understanding the process. They followed guidance from God; sobriety was a gift and not earned. In Jungian terms, the unconscious offered answers in the form of symbols, producing a balance between the conscious and the unconscious. Robert Thomsen, in his book *Bill W.*, attempted to capture the power of suffering when he wrote about Bill W.

Sitting back in his chair, unnoticed, he would be struck again by the extraordinary thing that had come to pass, for the cure for the illness that had baffled men throughout history had finally been given, not to the scientist or the ministers, nor to the learned of this earth, but to the outcast, the lowest of the sufferers.²⁹

Suffering alcoholics found a key for altering addictive behaviour. According to Jung, answers come to man not from the conscious but rather the unconscious, not from perceived perfection but in error and sinfulness. Sin, evil, the shadow do not stultify according to Jung; rather, they allow the individual to experience, to see the other side: it is only when one has seen good and evil that one has the possibility of growing toward wholeness for

...there is no light without shadow no psychic wholeness without imperfection. To round itself out, life calls not for perfection but for completeness; and for the 'thorn in the flesh' is needed, the suffering of defects without which there is no progress and no assent.³⁰

²⁸ Carl G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, New York: Random House, Inc., 1963, p. 338.

²⁹ Robert Thomsen, Bill W., London, Hamish: Hamilton, 1976, p. 360.

³⁰ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, C.W. Vol. 12, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1953, par. 208.

Jungian psychology does not interpret sin in a way that petrifies changes; rather, it interprets in such a way that the cycle is broken. Only those who have sinned and suffered will see the light. Alcoholism takes the alcoholic on a journey where he has no desire to go; he will become well acquainted with the shadow side before his journey is complete. The change process that occurs within Alcoholics Anonymous can best be understood in recalling that spiritual experience, was the only thing that Jung had seen that would cure helpless alcoholics.

The phenomenon of change can only be understood in unravelling what Jung meant by religious experience, an idea that was central to his perception of what took place within the healing process per se.

You were quite right, the main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neurosis but rather with the approach to the numinous. But the fact is that the approach to the numinous is the real therapy and inasmuch as you attain the numinous experience you are released from the curse of pathology. Even the very disease takes on a numinous character.³¹

Jung's approach to the numinous is coterminous with A.A.'s understanding of a spiritual experience. Sobriety is considered to be the result of a spiritual experience and alcoholism is presented as a disease that has baffled mankind throughout history and so the disease takes on as much of a mystical aura as does the cure.

According to Jung, people fall ill particularly in the second half of life if they have lost their religious outlook on life, or what A.A. would call, spirituality. Jung says that this religious outlook has nothing to do with religious membership in an institutional church, but rather a religious attitude. Individuals must regain a spiritual attitude toward life in order to

³¹ Adler, Gerhard, ed., in Collaboration with Aniela Jaffé Translated from German, R. F. C. Hall. Letter, 20 August 1945 in C. G. Jung Letters, Vol. 1:1906-1950, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973.

be healed.³² In A.A. terms, alcohol is seen as a spiritual illness and until the alcoholic is mentally, physically and spiritually healed, the alcoholic will be unable to attain and maintain sobriety.

...for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.³³

There is a clearer picture of the change process that occurs within A.A. as one understands what he means by the numinous as the 'real therapy' within his concept of the process of individuation. This change process in A.A. fits the Jungian psychotherapeutic model in an uncanny way, both weird and wyrd (fate-destiny).

Individuation is ultimately a religious process which requires a corresponding religious attitude — the ego will submit to God's will.³⁴

The process of individuation unites the light and dark side of the psyche, broadening consciousness, which is the conversion process.³⁵ The individuation process unites that which was divided. It brings wholeness. It broadens consciousness. In it man experiences a sense of unity rather than onesidedness.³⁶ With the coming together of conscious and unconscious within the experience of wholeness, something new is born: as a result of the

³² Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 509.

³³ Alcoholics Anonymous, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976, p. 64.

³⁴ Adler, Gerhard, ed., in Collaboration with Aniela Jaffé Translated from German, R. F. C. Hull. Letter, 15 June 1955 in C. G. Jung Letters, Vol. 2:1951-1961, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975.

³⁵ Robert M. Doran, "Jungian Psychology and Christian Spirituality: III," in Carl Jung and Christian Spirituality, ed. Robert L. Moore, New York: Paulist Press, p. 107.

³⁶ Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, 1967, p. 104.

transcendent function.³⁷ It is the experience of the transcendent function for which each member of A.A. strives.

The individuation process is initiated when there is no solution to a situation, when the ego is backed up against a wall.³⁸ The alcoholic suffers from the problem of an inflated ego, an ego that is self-centred and self-destructive; self-destructive, because for the alcoholic, as long as he drinks, he drinks in the illusion of 'Power', which (who?) inflates his ego. The result is a desire for more power and more alcohol. As long as alcohol is viewed as a symbol of the self for the alcoholic, a narcissistic, inflated ego is inevitable.

Again and again man has experienced that from the centre he could sense God's workings in his psyche at their most overwhelming, that "the voice of transcendence resounds through it". And as often as he put another content in his centre in place of God — whether it were a beloved partner, money, nation, party, or any other "ism" — and made it a surrogate for God, he became its victim to his own destruction.³⁹

According to Ernest Kurtz, the alcoholic thirsts after transcendence and this thirst is expressed in the alcoholic's drinking behaviour. "The thirst for transcendence had been perverted into a thirst for alcohol."⁴⁰ For the alcoholic the individuation process is difficult to initiate because of the cycle; i.e., alcohol induces the inflated ego, thus producing a state of self-centred narcissism which blinds the alcoholic to the problems that arise out of his drinking.

³⁷ Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, C.W. Vol. 7, 1966, par. 368.

³⁸ Marie-Louise von Farnz, The Interpretation of Fairy Tales, New York: Spring Publications, 1970, p. VI-4.

³⁹ Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, p. 54.

⁴⁰ Ernest Kurtz, Not — God A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, City Center: Minnesota, Hazelden Educational Services, 1980, p. 205.

Jung shines further light on the problem of an inflated ego. He says that people who assimilate a pre-existing, unconscious heritage of the collective psyche into themselves take in the collective psyche that is comprised of '*les parties inferieures*'.⁴¹ Because of the nature of the collective psyche it has the potential of being detrimental to the personality. This negative aspect is acted out in inflation of the ego that is overly self-confident.

This shows itself in inflation, taking the form either of a smothering or self-confidence or else of an unconscious intensification of the ego's importance to the point of a pathological will to power.⁴²

Tiebout observed in the alcoholic personality that it was not only self-reliant, ego-centred and narcissistic, but that self-image was that of omnipotence.⁴³ The problem that arises out of 'the will to power' or 'omnipotence' is the problem of projection, for who can help an individual who feels that he has taken on the qualities and attributes of God? The alcoholic is left feeling that everyone has a problem but himself.

The inflated ego in Jungian terms arises out of an over-identification with the self. When the ego is unconscious it is in total identification with the self because the self is both the centre and totality of being, for the ego identified with the self experiences itself as a deity.⁴⁴ Alcohol keeps the alcoholic stagnant in ego unconsciousness because it removes the possibility of experiencing the felt difference between the self and the ego. Alcohol anaesthetizes any pain that arises out of consciousness; the alcoholic then never has to deal

⁴¹ Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, C.W. Vol. 7, par. 235.

⁴² Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, C.W. Vol. 7, par. 235.

⁴³ Harry M. Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms of Alcoholics Anonymous," The Journal of American Psychiatry, Vol. 100, 1944, p. 470.

⁴⁴ Edward F. Edinger, Ego and Archetype, p. 7.

with the feeling of being separate or separating from the self. Alienation, the felt experience of the ego separate from the self, becomes inconsequential for the alcoholic because it is never felt as an actuality. For the alcoholic the self is symbolized as alcohol, providing the key to understanding Jung's 'spiritus contra spiritum' pun, formula and directive to Bill W.⁴⁵

The self existed as the central archetype before consciousness; it operated as the organizer and director of this psychic process. Within the first half of life the ego grows out of the self, developing a sense of distinction between the ego and the self.

The term "self" seems to me a suitable one for this unconscious substrate, whose actual exponent in consciousness is the ego. The ego stands to the self, as the moved to the mover, or as object to subject, because the determining factors which radiate out from the self surround the ego on all sides and are therefore supraordinate to it. The self, like the unconscious, is an *a priori* existent out of which the ego evolved. It is, so to speak, an unconscious prefiguration of the ego. It is not I who create myself, rather I happen to myself.⁴⁶

According to Jolande Jacobi, if the ego is not conscious of the fact that it grows out of unconscious, the self is seen as a projection; i.e., an external object resulting in an inflated ego.

...it produces an inflation of the ego because the ego is not separate from the figure in the unconscious and is still wholly contained in the Self, identical with it, which amounts to megalomania.⁴⁷

Megalomania would aptly describe the personality of the alcoholic as recounted in the stories of every member in A.A. Drinking made the alcoholic feel like God, but unbeknown to the alcoholic, the chemical alcohol would in time, produce feelings of alienation, the felt

⁴⁵ Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1984, p. 384.

⁴⁶ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 391.

⁴⁷ Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, p. 50.

experience of separation between the ego and the self. Anxiety would separate the alcoholic from the unconscious, his feeling of unity and wholeness. The nostalgia of the unconscious state would become an Edenic memory contrasted with a coarse reality brought into focus by addiction.

A.A. recognizes that an inflated ego produces self-centred behaviour that must be altered, for without change the alcoholic will 'go mad or die'. Bill W. learned through his own experience that the alcoholic had to be 'deflated at depth' before the alcoholic would be willing to hear about 'a Power greater than himself'. He first had to admit defeat; i.e., alcohol had defeated him, his life was out of control because of weakness and he was in need of God.⁴⁸ The alcoholic had to hit bottom; the inflated ego could be stopped only by 'deflation at depth'. It was necessary for the alcoholic to experience humility and to remain humble because loss of humility would mean that the ego could become once more inflated and rise up.⁴⁹

The alcohol was responsible for both inflating the ego and deflating the ego. "Wisdom never forgets all things have two sides:..."⁵⁰ A.A. members knew that it was alcohol which had humbled them and prepared them to surrender to a Power greater than themselves.

⁴⁸ Robert Thomsen, Bill W., p. 234.

⁴⁹ Harry M. Tiebout, "Alcoholics Anonymous — An Experiment of Nature," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. 13, 1962, p. 55.

⁵⁰ Carl G. Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, C.W. Vol. 14, par. 470.

A.A. intuitively posits that the experience of alcoholism had become the precursor for seeing God, that none would choose to be alcoholic, but then again that none would choose not to experience God.

When men and women pour so much alcohol into themselves that they destroy their liver, they commit a most unnatural act. Defying their instinctive desire for self-preservation, they seem bent upon self-destruction. They work against their own deepest instinct. As they are humbled by the terrific beating administered by alcohol, the grace of God can enter them and expel their obsession. Here their powerful instinct to live can cooperate fully with their Creator's desire to give them new life.⁵¹

Jungian analyst Edward Edinger says that the ego begins in a state of inflation because of identification with the self. In the alcoholic situation the identification is with alcohol, a situation that cannot persist because over a period of time the alcoholic loses tolerance for alcohol. Edinger says that in time reality dictates and therefore a split occurs, which promotes a break in the ego self-relationship — in the alcoholic's situation, a split between the ego and alcohol. The alcohol produces a felt sense of anxiety rather than harmony. It is at this point that the ego can be deflated, and surrender and humility may be ushered in.

The estrangement is symbolized by such images as a fall, an exile, an unhealing wound, a perpetual torture. Obviously, when such images come into play, not only has the ego been chastened, it has been injured.⁵²

Only at the point where the ego feels discomfort, is it willing to surrender, to give up and only when the ego is willing to stop fighting and protecting itself does it become open enough to realize that there is something else present other than itself. It was always there but self-

⁵¹ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, New York:Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1953, p. 65.

⁵² Edward F. Edinger, Ego and Archetype, p. 37.

aggrandizing behaviour blocked out awareness of everything but 'the I'. Jung presents this process as a paradox.

An inflated consciousness is always egocentric and conscious of nothing but its own presence. It is incapable of learning from the past, incapable of understanding contemporary events, and incapable of drawing right conclusions about the future. It is hypnotized by itself and therefore cannot be argued with. It inevitably dooms itself to calamities that must strike it dead. Paradoxically enough, inflation is a regression of consciousness into unconsciousness. This always happens when the consciousness takes too many unconscious contents upon itself and loses the faculty of discrimination, the *sine qua non* of all consciousness.⁵³

The individuation process emerges with pain and conflict. Of the A.A. Twelve Steps it is the first. 'We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable'. The pain experienced is in the puncturing of the inflated ego and in estrangement from the self.

Who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one, of course. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit that, glass in hand, we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only an act of Providence can remove it from us.⁵⁴

It is in pain that there is the recognition that one is not alone. It is in pain and suffering that man meets God, conscious and unconscious intersect.⁵⁵ In suffering man experiences estrangement. Paradoxically this estrangement acts as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious, for one has to know something exists before there can be a relationship. It is through pain that one becomes conscious of the presence of a Power greater than self — A.A. Second Step.

⁵³ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, C.W. Vol. 12, par. 563.

⁵⁴ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 21.

⁵⁵ John P. Dourley, The Illness That We Are, Toronto: Inner City Books, 1984, p. 57.

...they are all symptoms of inflation which will not grant the existence of a greater reality than one's personal desires. Job asked why his misery should happen to him. The answer that emerges from the Book of Job is so that he may see God.⁵⁶

Tiebout recognized the egoism of alcoholics, and spent a professional lifetime in attempting to understand the process within A.A. that moves the alcoholic from egotistical imbibing to a state of non-drinking serenity. In his later articles he noted that the key to this process was surrender; i.e., until the alcoholic could surrender to a Power greater than himself, egoism doomed the alcoholic to drink. He observed that it was after the act of surrender that the individual spoke of a feeling of unity, a sense that the struggle was over.

After an act of surrender, the individual reports a sense of unity, an end of struggle, of no divided inner counsel. He knows the meaning of inner wholeness and, what is more, he knows from immediate experience the feeling of being whole-hearted about anything.⁵⁷

In other words, I now believe that the abandonment of resistance during treatment is in reality an act of surrender which, typically, as in the conversion experience, is followed by a positive state of mind in which elements of resistance are no longer present.⁵⁸

A.A. unlike Tiebout, does not attribute their change experience to the act of surrender, though they recognize it as a necessary step within the process. Rather it is their view that in the act of acceptance by God the change occurs. In the act of surrender the alcoholic acknowledges a Power greater than self and the powerlessness of self, but it is only in the action of 'the Other', in the act of acceptance that one is healed. Even in the act of surrender there is still

⁵⁶ Edward F. Edinger, Ego and Archetype, p. 96.

⁵⁷ Harry M. Tiebout, "Surrender Versus Compliance in Therapy," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. 9, 1958, p. 32.

⁵⁸ Harry M. Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender in the Treatment of the Alcoholic," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. 1, 1950, p. 40.

a remnant of control, and even this control has to be relinquished. The ego must know at the very depths of its being that it has no power of persuasion; rather, that it is, and always has been, the one being persuaded.

Such is the paradox of A.A. regeneration: strength arises out of complete defeat and weakness, the loss of one's old life as a condition for finding a new one. But we of A.A. do not have to understand this paradox; we only have to be grateful for it.⁵⁹

According to the Twelfth tradition of A.A. anonymity is its spiritual foundation, so principles are placed before personality.⁶⁰ God is considered to be the author of A.A. not man. Anonymity means that the alcoholic acknowledges a Power outside of himself, a Power which is responsible for his healing serenity. Anonymity acknowledges that the alcoholic is only part of a great whole but that he is verily part of the whole. Anonymity does not diminish the person but rather puts him in right relationship with the self. As long as the ego dominates the consciousness it forgets its origin in the unconscious. Jung states it is in maturity that a conscious recognition of the importance of the unconscious takes place; a new conscious harmony can take place indeed similar to the childhood harmony but differing in its conscious awareness. The ego, instead of attempting to break away and to defy the unconscious (which happened in the ego-centred world of the alcoholic) now lives in harmony with it.⁶¹

Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or another it is there. For

⁵⁹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 45.

⁶⁰ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 188.

⁶¹ Charles Bartruff Hanna, The Face of the Deep, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967, p. 42.

faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself.

We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the great reality deep down within us.⁶²

Alcohol leads the alcoholic to a spiritual experience no matter how obscure the route.

"The anguish the alcoholics experience may be a true grace."⁶³ A.A. recognized that it was an inflated ego that provoked a thirst for alcohol. Jung would say it is the will of God working in egoism. The egoism should not be blocked but rather it should be enhanced so as to help "the patient prevail in his egoism,"⁶⁴ for it is in egoism that the person experiences isolation and estrangement. The egotistical person pushes anyone away who attempts to help "for they were seeking to rob him of his 'sacred' egoism."⁶⁵ The egoism holds the key to the healing power.

This must be left to him, for it is his strongest and healthiest power; it is as I have said, a true will of God, which sometimes drives him into complete isolation. However wretched this state may be, it also stands him in good stead for in this way alone can he get to know himself and learn what an invaluable treasure is the love of his fellow beings. It is, moreover, only in the state of complete abandonment and loneliness that we experience the helpful powers of our natures.⁶⁶

More succinctly A.A. responds.

⁶² Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 55.

⁶³ S. James Roessler, The Role of Spiritual Values in the Recovery of Alcoholics, p. 83.

⁶⁴ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 525.

⁶⁵ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 525.

⁶⁶ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 525.

After a few such experiences, often years before the onset of extreme difficulties, he would return to us convinced. He had hit bottom as truly any of us had. Johnny Barleycorn himself had become our best advocate.⁶⁷

The nemesis of alcohol becoming manifest in the alcoholic was acted out in egoism. It deceptively showed itself first as all-powerful and self-sufficient, and then as overbearing, forcing the alcoholic to become dependent, crushing his personality. Alcohol had forced the ego to step aside.

At the point where the ego steps aside, A.A. suggests to the alcoholic the possibility of turning one's will over to a Power greater than self. From the bottom rung of defeat and weakness, a strength rises up out of the alcoholic. He loses the old life and replaces it with a new life. The alcoholic has begun the change experience. He experiences

the divine paradox that strength rises from weakness, that humiliation goes before resurrection; that pain is not only the price but the very touchstone of spiritual rebirth.⁶⁸

The destructive forces are converted into healing powers. This occurs because the archetype is awakened and takes over the guidance of consciousness, overtaking the ego's futile desire to lead. The unconscious comes forward in a dominant way in order to offer balance to a precarious situation.

When one has several times seen this development at work one can no longer deny that what was evil has turned to good, and that what seemed good has kept alive the forces of evil. The archdemon of egoism led us along the royal road to that ingathering which religious experience demands. What we observe here is a fundamental law of life — enantiodromia or conversion into the opposite; and it is this that makes possible the reunion of the warring halves of the personality and thereby brings the civil war to an end.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 24.

⁶⁸ Ernest Kurtz, Not — God A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 61.

⁶⁹ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 526.

A.A. says that when an individual acknowledges a Power greater than himself, she/he observes that the 'fight' is over. The alcoholic not only becomes aware of God but becomes receptive to others in his presence.

The individuation process is a journey inward.⁷⁰ The alcoholic, in making the journey inward, finds God, and in finding God he finds himself. As the alcoholic broadens his consciousness he grows in self-knowledge and openness to the collective unconscious touching him through the self. This broadened consciousness takes him out of the realm of egotistical behaviour and brings him into communion with others and the world around him. The alcoholic's felt experience of being alone has vanished; his spiritual journey has begun. He is not yet perfect: he is in process having 'seen' the image of God. The alcoholic is now able to freely acknowledge that a Power greater than himself rather than his own ego leads him. The self, not the ego is understood to be the centre of the psyche. He is no longer under the illusion of being master in his own house. It is as it always has been, but the alcoholic now knows that God is with him because of his felt experience. In the union of opposites, in the coming together of the lux and tenebrae, the alcoholic experiences the numinous. The wholeness that the alcoholic sought in the bottle is at last experienced in the encounter with the self.

The significance of the sober statement only dawns on us when we consider that the archetype of the self is "nameless, ineffable", a hidden X whose concretisations are indistinguishable from God images. Accordingly, the individuation process culminates not in the fullest possible life lived for its own sake, and not in profound or intellectual understanding: its meaning flows from numinosity of the self. To put it in religious language, individuation has to be understood as the realization of the "divine" in man.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Robert M. Doran, Jungian Psychology and Christian Spirituality, p. 86.

⁷¹ Aniela Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, p. 79.

According to Jungian thinking even the alcoholic's egoism was the will of God. The egoism produced an imbalance in the alcoholic's psyche which elicited the activation of the archetype. The unconscious took hold, removing the axis of the psyche from the ego to the self. The unconscious becoming conscious is painful because in the process the ego is crucified; it dies so that the self can come forth. Viewed in this light those of A.A. might say that the alcoholic was called to suffer so that God could become incarnate through them. "Individuation is a law of nature."⁷² Contrary to the alcoholic's thinking he had in actual fact always been the one being acted upon rather than acting. He had not chosen God. God chose him.

There must be a crucifixion of the ego⁷³ whereby the individual's ego submits to the recognition that powers apart from the human ego are influencing it. With this act of submission man must surrender his higher opinion of his ego consciousness; he must surrender his sense of confidence and control over his life; he must submit to the reality that his rationality is not the controller but is controlled.

How he does cherish the thought that man, risen so majestically from a single cell in the primordial ooze, is the spearhead of evolution and therefore the only God that his universe knows! Must he renounce all this to save himself?⁷⁴

The ego must come to realize that it is not the only part of the psyche; the totality of the psyche is the self.

The great danger about our ego is that it tends to assume that it is all there is to the psyche. It becomes autonomous and altogether disconnected from the

⁷² Carl G. Jung, Aion, C.W. Vol. 9ii, par. 170.

⁷³ Charles Bartruff Hanna, The Face of the Deep, p. 76.

⁷⁴ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 25.

larger psyche, or the Self....we suppose that we are what we know; we have lost the dimension of awe and wonder and terror and fear before aspects of ourselves and of the life around us which we do not know or understand.⁷⁵

The ego must die to the self and be reborn. It 'symbolically' speaking returns to *uisge beatha* — 'the water of life', the quelle from which it came. Whiskey in English is a transliterate form from the Irish. "Thus man encounters himself in the numinous transformations of the God image too, but he encounters himself as the self, not as an ego."⁷⁶ In letting go the self takes over, the alcoholic experiences wholeness, healing occurs — he experiences serenity that comes not from will-power but from the self.

In the last analysis every life is a realization of a whole, that is, of a self, for which reason this realization can also be called "individuation". All life is bound to individual carriers who realize it and is simply inconceivable without them. But every carrier is charged with an individual destiny and destination, and the realization of these alone make sense of life.⁷⁷

Jung says that in the second half of life one has to let go instead of seeking more control. Life begins with the ego totally integrated with the unconscious. In the first half of life it is the individual's task to separate from the unconscious, but in the second half of life one is called to make the journey inward so as to encounter the self. The members of Alcoholics Anonymous are well acquainted with the concept of letting go and letting God, for it was only in letting go and admitting powerlessness over alcohol that they were able to attain sobriety. They admit their life is out of control and turn their wills over to a God of their understanding. In admitting weakness and powerlessness the alcoholic paradoxically experiences strength and a new sense of power.

⁷⁵ Charles Bartruff Hanna, The Face of the Deep, p. 74.

⁷⁶ Aniela Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, p. 125.

⁷⁷ Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, C.W. Vol. 12, par. 330.

If I keep on turning my life and my will over to the care of Something or Somebody else, what will become of me?...The more we become willing to depend upon a higher Power, the more independent we actually are. Therefore dependence, as A.A. practices (sic) it, is really a means of gaining true independence of the spirit.⁷⁸

Jung observed in his patients that healing could take place in 'letting go', 'in doing nothing'. He said that in letting go, letting things happen through non action⁷⁹ becomes the key in allowing the unconscious to influence the conscious.

It is a condition of panic, a letting go in the face of apparently hopeless complications. Mostly it was preceded by desperate efforts to master the difficulty by force of will; then came the collapse, and the once guided will crumbles completely. The energy thus freed disappears from consciousness and falls into the unconscious. As a matter of fact, it is at these moments that the first signs of unconscious activity appear.⁸⁰

A.A. would say that they 'let go and let God'. God did for them what they could not do for themselves for "we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction."⁸¹ According to Jung what has happened is the conscious has fallen back upon the collective unconscious; i.e., collective unconscious or God image has taken over the leadership position.⁸² He says that when an individual knows that he/she is limited, then that same individual also possesses "the capacity for becoming conscious of the infinite."⁸³ It was alcoholism that allowed the alcoholic to experience limitation. This experience of limitation

⁷⁸ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 37.

⁷⁹ Carl G. Jung, Alchemical Studies, C.W. Vol. 13, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967, par. 20.

⁸⁰ Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, C.W. Vol. 7, par. 252.

⁸¹ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 46.

⁸² Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, C.W. Vol. 7, par. 254.

⁸³ Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, p. 130.

became the foundation for the alcoholic's spiritual experience. It was for the alcoholic to make the journey for he was 'not-God'.

When the alcoholic experiences the self in the merging of conscious and unconscious, he is open not only to religious experience but also healing because both draw on a common source in the human psyche.⁸⁴ This was the key that Bill W. discovered within his own religious experience; i.e., being freed of the imbibing compulsion because of his experience with the numinous. The discovery that the numinous heals the whole person, body, mind and soul, became the foundation stone of A.A. It is for this reason that Alcoholics Anonymous has become known as a spiritual programme, for A.A. believes that until the alcoholic acknowledges the spiritual aspect of being and surrenders to a higher Power he/she will remain helpless on the journey to sobriety. Bill W.'s explanation of his conversion experience is like unto Jung's concept of one being touched by the unconscious whereby he says that, "No one who has undergone the process of assimilating the unconscious will deny that it has gripped his very vitals and changed him."⁸⁵ Bill W. was so changed by his religious experience that he never again had the compulsion to drink and it was in the sharing of his personal story with other alcoholics that Alcoholics Anonymous was formed.

A.A. is adamant that the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous is God and that A.A. will exist for as long as God finds it useful. 'They learned' that if alcoholics took credit for the founding of A.A. (taking the credit from God), they would return to drinking because their egos would once again inflate. They had learned that the only way to sustain serenity was to maintain a constant attitude of humility.

⁸⁴ John P. Dourley, The Illness That We Are, p. 14.

⁸⁵ Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, C.W. Vol. 7, par. 261.

"I don't believe I have any right to get cocky about getting sober," he said. "It's only through God's grace that I did it. I can feel very thankful that I was privileged to do it...If my strength does come from Him, who am I to get cocky about it?"⁸⁶

A.A. recognized the value of humility so as to keep the ego in right relationship with the self. The ego must not identify with the self (God image), nor the Power greater than self (God). The onus is to avoid jettisoning the alcoholic back into the illusion of control position. The process then is deflation at depth, surrender to God, and constant humility. Humility acts to keep the ego at bay so as to keep the conscious and unconscious in a balanced relationship with the self as the centre of the psyche. In Alcoholics Anonymous terms, God (higher Power) is the centre. Humility, then, became key to activating the individuation process, allowing the transcendent function to emerge.

Where humility had formerly stood for a forced feeding on humble pie, it now begins to mean the nourishing ingredient which can give us serenity....Then, in A.A. we looked and listened. Everywhere we saw failure and misery transformed by humility into priceless assets. We heard story after story of how humility had brought strength out of weakness. In every case, pain had been the price of admission into a new life. But this admission price had purchased more than we expected. It brought a measure of humility, which we soon discovered to be a healer of pain. We began to fear pain less, and desire humility more than ever.⁸⁷

Alcohol for the alcoholic takes him on a shadowside journey, encountering those parts of himself that he would like to disown or project onto others. He becomes aware of his potential for evil. The shadow is an indispensable guide to a deeper experience of the psyche; it is a gateway to the unconscious.⁸⁸ According to Jung, to have knowledge of wholeness,

⁸⁶ Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980, p. 222.

⁸⁷ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 76.

⁸⁸ Aniela Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, p. 30.

one must be aware of capabilities for both good and evil. Alcohol showed the alcoholic his power to do evil. A.A. showed him his potential to do good, utilizing all that the shadow had taught him. It would be his woundedness that would heal. It is Jung who says that only the wounded physician heals,⁸⁹ while A.A. presents it so.

The paradox is that the member of A.A. approaches his suffering alcoholic brother not from the superiority and strength of his position of recovery but from the realization of his own weakness. The member talks to the newcomer not in a spirit of power but in a spirit of humility and weakness. He does not speak of how misguided the still suffering alcoholic is; he speaks of how misguided he once was. He does not sit in judgement of another but in judgement of himself as he had been.⁹⁰

Built within the Twelve Steps the alcoholic is asked to take an inventory of his faults, admit his imperfections to another human being and make amends where possible. Instead of projecting and blaming others for his problems he takes ownership and acknowledges the wrong that he has done. It is a veritable Chapter of Faults⁹¹ in the Canonical religious sense. The alcoholic takes responsibility for and acknowledges his shadow side each time he tells his story within the fellowship of A.A.

Most of us would have declared that without a fearless admission of our defects to another human being we could not stay sober. It seems plain that the grace of God will not enter to expel our destructive obsessions until we are willing to try this.⁹²

⁸⁹ Carl C. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 134.

⁹⁰ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 279.

⁹¹ All duly erected canonical societies, orders and congregations hold a regular (some daily) open forum where faults are admitted and correction sought.

⁹² Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 58.

Jung says that until one withdraws projections by making them conscious one cannot achieve the union of opposites. One will not know these projections until they are confessed for it is only then that the schism between the conscious and the unconscious can be healed.

There appears to be a conscience in man which severely punishes the man who does not somehow and at sometime, at whatever cost to his pride, cease to defend and assert himself, and instead confess himself fallible and human. Until he can do this, an impenetrable wall shuts him out from the living experience of feeling himself a man among men. Here we find a key to the great significance of true, unstereotyped confession — a significance known in all the initiation and mystery cults of the ancient world, as is shown by a saying from the Greek mysteries: "Give up what thou hast, and then thou wilt receive."⁹³

Alcoholics Anonymous takes one through a process that allows the acceptance of the whole self, good and evil, weakness and strength which acknowledges God as the centre, not man. This is the process of individuation, a recognition of both the light and the shadow. Alcohol showed the alcoholic his guilt and shadow side, a precondition for individuation.⁹⁴ According to Jung the goal of individuation is not to become perfect but rather to become complete and whole. Individuation means on the way but not yet there; it is a journey that will only be completed when the last breath is drawn. A.A. posits that the removal of character-defects is a life-long process, and claims "spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection."⁹⁵ This process is reflected and acknowledged in individuation.

For the alcoholic the shadow is always there in the form of a personal story. Each time an alcoholic shares his story with other alcoholics, they are reminded of the power of

⁹³ Carl G. Jung, "Problems of Modern Psychotherapy," in A Modern Man in Search of a Soul, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1933, p. 34.

⁹⁴ Adler, Gerhard, ed., in Collaboration with Aniela Jaffé Translated from German, R. F. C. Hull. Letter, 5 January 1952 in C. G. Jung Letters.

⁹⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 60.

alcohol and of the sighs, sights and insights on their journey through alcoholism. They are reminded of the power of light within every alcoholic who stands before them. The alcoholic within A.A. has experienced both the shadow and the light, each a cornerstone on a spiritual journey, each transformed and transforming — an interdependent foursome has been birthed.

The anonymous alcoholic is constantly reminded of the power of evil. Anonymity unceasingly reminds the ego of the alcoholic that there is a Power greater than himself, thus keeping the ego in a humbled position, ever allowing conscious and unconscious to come together. Wholeness being experienced, healing and peace emanate from the transformed alcoholic.

When a man or woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being. He has been set on a path which tells him he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered. In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he hitherto denied himself. He finds himself in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love of which he had thought himself quite incapable.⁹⁶

Alcoholics (A.A.) say that they have two dictators: the Father of Light⁹⁷ and alcohol. Both are never far from 'their elbow', and as long as they remember this they will remain sober. A.A. long ago learned that to forget the power of alcohol — taking sobriety for granted — is to endanger sobriety. Serenity is a gift, a grace from God, that is not induced at will.

⁹⁶ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 110.

⁹⁷ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 14.

The alcoholic, immersed in the quelle experienced death and rebirth, the paradox of strength being born out of weakness.

We trust in an infinite God rather than our finite self. We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be.⁹⁸

It was in suffering the anguishes of alcoholism and the perils of an inflated ego that the alcoholic 'saw God'.

On tape Wilson maintains that 'light shone through the child of darkness and the image of God was before him'.

⁹⁸ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 68.

Conclusion

In summary, A.A. 'taught the art of seeing' (Jung's terminology), for it taught the alcoholic to recognize a Power greater than self through experience — first in alcohol and then in a higher Power as the God-image. The Twelve Steps facilitate the alcoholic's participation in the individuation process wherein the alcoholic ego no doubt much to its chagrin, learns, that it is not alone in the psyche nor is it the centre. It is in the admission of being alcoholic and in surrendering to a higher Power that the alcoholic initiates his/her personal individuation process on the journey to the unconscious. Bill W. summarizes A.A.'s perception of this process in a letter he wrote in 1966.

There are few absolutes inherent in the Twelve Steps. Most Steps are open to interpretation, based on the experience and outlook of the individual.

Consequently, the individual is free to start the Steps at whatever point he can, or will. God, as we understand Him, may be defined as a 'Power greater...' or the Higher Power. For thousands of members, the A.A. group itself has been a 'Higher Power' in the beginning. This acknowledgement is easy to make if a newcomer knows that most of the members are sober and he isn't.

His admission is the beginning of humility — at least the newcomer is willing to disclaim that he himself is God. That's all the start he needs. If, following this achievement, he will relax and practise as many of the Steps as he can, he is sure to grow spiritually.⁹⁹

Alcoholism viewed in the light of Jungian psychology is the unconscious leading the alcoholic to a spiritual experience — inception to the individuation process. The unconscious makes its presence felt through alcoholism, whereas the self is masked by the alcohol 'becoming the genie in the bottle'. The alcohol becomes the symbol of the self for the alcoholic, as the identification with the symbol not only induces an inflated ego but also

⁹⁹As Bill Sees It, p. 191.

becomes a power greater than self. Alcoholics Anonymous know what mystics have always known; i.e., at the end of the self there is God. The voice within the disease alcoholism is the unconscious leading the alcoholic back to the centre in the experience of humility and surrender. God breaks the alcoholic, the alcoholic does not break himself. It is as if some are called to journey through alcoholism in order to see God.

This peregrination may also be seen in Paul Tillich's Systematics, as the process of essentialization; that movement away from and return to centre. From the perils of the dark (alcoholism) and changed in suffering — a 'kindly light' leads. The existential suffering of alcoholism brings the alcoholic to see God, giving meaning to the alcoholism. The dreaded, painful disease viewed in this light comes to be seen as gift. Alcoholism comes to be experienced by the alcoholic as that reality through which the numinous makes its presence felt.

CHAPTER 1V

THE A.A. EXPERIENCE IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Prelude: Tillich's Terminology

He who has encountered the mystery of life has reached the source of wisdom. In encountering it with awe and longing, he experiences the infinite distance of his being from that which is the ground of his being. He experiences the limits of his being, his finitude in the face of the infinite. He learns that acceptance of one's limits is the decisive step toward wisdom. He wants to be unlimited in power and knowledge. He who is wise accepts his finitude. He knows that he is not God.¹

The purpose of this prelude is the defining and clarifying of those concepts '*de rigueur*' in understanding Tillich's concept of essentialization. Essentialization is the movement from essence into existence and back to essence (New Being) or, the movement from the centre and return to the centre.

Tillich's interpretation of the fall equals the fall into existence and redemption as the reunion with one's essential self. In the movement from essence to existence an experience of **estrangement** (the 'fall' into existence) occurs, whereby one feels split (the experience of sin) from the essential and left alone in the existential predicament of ambiguity. Though man feels alone, the essential never deserts man in his existential predicament. Ontological participation in the essential (the ground of being) continues though man is not necessarily conscious of the relationship. It is because of the continued bond with the essential that there is the experience of the pain of existential estrangement. This pain, the result of sin, urges man (driven by the memory of original unity in dreaming innocence) to seek out redemption

¹Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1963. p. 1.

and reconciliation. It is the process of essentialization — the search for unity through salvation.

Reconciliation, reunion, resurrection — this is the New Creation, the New Being, the New State of things....A New State of things has appeared, it still appears; it is hidden and visible, it is there and it is here.²

To Tillich, it is within the awareness of estrangement that a desire for salvation arises and this because of the effect of the presence of saving power.

Tillich focuses on the 'ontological method' whereby man encounters God (religious experience) through human experience. The experience becomes a medium for and not the content of religious truth. Human experience then is not the object of theology, rather it is the object which produces the experience. "The object of theology is what concerns us ultimately."³ God is not an object discovered by man, rather He both transcends and precedes the distinction between subject and object — the emphasis to be placed on God not as supreme being but as the ground of being in which every particular being participates.

Human existence is experienced as estrangement from the ground of being. This estrangement and lost unity are experienced in the form of what Tillich calls ontological polarities. The three outstanding pairs of elements which constitute the second level of the basic ontological structure are: individuality and universality, dynamics and form, and freedom and destiny.

²Paul Tillich, The New Being, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955, p. 24.

³Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 162.

The first ontological polarity (**individuality** and **universality**) points not only to a centred self in which every individual exists but also to participation in the human community. For

there is not person without an encounter with other persons....Without individualization nothing would exist to be related. Without participation the category of relation would have no basis in reality.⁴

The dynamics and form polarity comes into view through immediate experience disclosed as vitality and intentionality. **Vitality** gives power to life and cannot be separated from intentionality. It gives meaning to vitality. Vitality and intentionality are interdependent freeing man to transcend any situation. "Vitality is the power of creating beyond one's self without losing one's self."⁵ **Intentionality** means, "being related to meaningful structures, living in universals, grasping and shaping reality."⁶ So, man, directed toward meaningful contents is not just a body nor merely a spiritual being: all parts of his being participate.

Freedom and **destiny** is the third ontological polarity. Freedom is the option of the movement from essence into existence.

Freedom is not the freedom of a function (the will) but of man, that is, of that being who is not a thing but a complete self and a rational person.⁷

The parameter to one's finitude is destiny.

⁴Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 177.

⁵Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, Clinton, Mass.: Yale University Press, 1952, p. 81.

⁶Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 180.

⁷Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 183.

Destiny is not a strange power which determines what shall happen to me. It is myself as given, formed by nature, history and myself. My destiny is the basis of my freedom; my freedom participates in shaping my destiny.⁸

Destiny appoints limits and conditions to freedom, mapping out the direction freedom will take.

The characteristics of being which constitute the conditions of existence involves the movement from essence into existence which is an analysis of finitude and infinity. In the fall from essence into existence one experiences finitude and therefore limitation — a boundary situation out of which anxiety arises. Anxiety, because in finitude, there is the knowledge that one will die. It is in the state of anxiety (an expression of powerlessness) that one is free to recognize the infinite.

If one asked how nonbeing is related to being-itself, one can only answer metaphorically: being "embraces" itself and nonbeing. Being has nonbeing "within" itself as that which is eternally present and eternally overcome in the process of divine life. The ground of everything that is, is not a dead identity without movement and becoming; it is living creativity. Creatively it affirms itself, eternally conquering its own nonbeing.)⁹

The tension that occurs between the essential and the existential is estrangement. This process induces the experience of self-transcendence, initiating the return journey to the centre, and setting in motion the actualization of essentialization. "Man as he exists is not what he essentially is and ought to be."¹⁰ Essentialization is similar to the process of individuation in Jung, it is the transformation of the individual into the person one was meant to be. It is the actualization of that person's essential being.

⁸Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 185.

⁹Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, p. 34.

¹⁰Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 45.

Essence can mean the nature of a thing without any variation of it, it can mean the universals which characterize a thing, it can mean the ideas in which existing things participate, it can mean the norm by which a thing must be judged, it can mean the original goodness of everything created, and it can mean the patterns of all things in the divine mind. The basic ambiguity, however, lies in the oscillation of the meaning between an empirical and valuating sense....In the second case essence is the basis of value judgement, while in the first case essence is a logical ideal to be reached by abstraction of intuition without the interference of valuations....Essence empowers and judges that which exists.¹¹

Essence then means true and undistorted nature, the potential of being which encompasses all those possibilities that belong to man. Essence is the original goodness from which all beings are created but from which man has become estranged. Even in this condition man is never totally separated from the ground of his being.

Existence also is used with different meanings. It can mean the possibility of finding a thing within the whole of being, it can mean the actuality of what is potential in the realm of essences, it can mean the "fallen world," and it can mean a type of thinking which is aware of its existential conditions or which rejects essence entirely. Again, an unavoidable ambiguity justifies the use of this one word in these different senses. Whatever exists, that is "stands out" of mere potentiality, is more than it is in the state of mere potentiality and less than it could be in the power of its essential nature.¹²

Existence is the actualization of potentiality. It is the state of being a finite individual in time and space, distinct from possibilities that have not been realized. It is existence that makes estrangement possible, for it prompts independence. And this action results in a denial of the ground of being fracturing essence.

Essence and existence are the two factors which portray the essential state. The fall from essence into existence is the act of finite freedom. The actualization of potentiality which produces estrangement is destiny. In this process man awakens from **dreaming**

¹¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 202-203.

¹²Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 203.

innocence (the state of unactualized potentialities). It is a turning away from that to which one belongs.¹³ In dreaming innocence freedom and destiny are in harmony but in estrangement there is the experience of separation between creator and creation. The created (man) is "caught between the desire to actualize his freedom and the demand to preserve his dreaming innocence."¹⁴

The individual act of existential estrangement is not the isolated act of an isolated individual; it is an act of freedom which is embedded, nevertheless, in the universal destiny of existence. In every individual act the estranged or fallen character of being actualizes itself. Every ethical decision is an act both of individual freedom and of universal destiny.¹⁵

In the state of estrangement man turns away from the ground of his being toward himself. He does so in hubris and concupiscence. **Hubris** is the failure to admit finitude, thus elevating man to the sphere of the divine. Man turns away from the divine centre.¹⁶ **Concupiscence** is "the unlimited desire to draw the whole of reality into one's self."¹⁷ It is the desire to take everything into one's self attempting to be unlimited — ignoring finitude. Ontologically this produces a polar imbalance — a drive towards self-destruction and existential estrangement. In the attempt to be the centre, the opposite happens — both self and world are threatened. Man experiences finitude and therefore limitation.

Under the control of hubris and concupiscence, man is driven in all directions without any definite aim and content. His dynamics are distorted into a

¹³Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 46.

¹⁴Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 35.

¹⁵Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 38.

¹⁶Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 50.

¹⁷Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 52.

formless urge for self-transcendence. It is not the new form which attracts the self-transcendence of the person; the dynamics has become an aim in itself.¹⁸

Anxiety is the awareness of being in the fallen state of estrangement and knowing the limits of finitude. Man feeling cut off from the ultimate as a result of his attempts to be ultimate himself enters despair. **Despair** is,

the final index of man's predicament; it is the boundary line beyond which man cannot go. In despair, not in death, man has come to the end of his possibilities. The word itself means "without hope" and expresses the feeling of a situation from which there is "no exit" (Sartre)...Despair is the state of inescapable conflict. It is the conflict, on the one hand, between what one potentially is and therefore ought to be and, on the other hand what one actually is in the combination of freedom and destiny. The pain of despair is the agony of being responsible for one's existence and of being unable to recover it. One is shut up in one's self and in the conflict with one's self. One cannot escape because one cannot escape from one's self.¹⁹

In despair one comes to understand that it is only through grace that one is reconciled in the New Being. The overcoming of estrangement is a gift freely given (and not willed by man) in the courage to accept acceptance though unacceptable. **Grace** is forgiveness at the centre of one's being²⁰ — it is the presence of God.

The term grace qualifies all relations between God and man in such a way that they are freely inaugurated by God and in no way dependent on anything the creature does or desires.²¹

Faith is the courage to accept the gift of grace. It is in faith that one finds the source of courage to overcome the anxiety of nonbeing, because in faith one finds God's omnipresence even in estrangement.

¹⁸Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 64.

¹⁹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 75.

²⁰Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 285.

²¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 285.

Faith in the Almighty God is the answer to the quest for a courage which is sufficient to conquer the anxiety of finitude. Ultimate courage is based upon participation in the ultimate power of being. When the invocation "Almighty God" is seriously pronounced, a victory over the threat of nonbeing is experienced, and an ultimate courageous affirmation of existence is expressed. Neither finitude nor anxiety disappears, but they are taken into infinity and courage.²²

In Tillichian thought, the fulfilment of creation and the fall though different are ontologically inherently dependent and reciprocal.²³ Phenomenologically both are participants in the spiritual motion toward essentialization, salvation and New Being.

Creation in time produces the possibility of self-realization, estrangement, and reconciliation of the creature, which, in eschatological terminology, is the way from essence through existence to essentialization.²⁴

Essentialization is identified with reconciliation, the goal of all finite existence: it is the experience of New Being or salvation. In the experience of existential estrangement one's freedom and destiny are exercised, for one is open to actualize potential. Embedded within potentiality is the possibility of experiencing **self-transcendence**, for under the impact of the Divine Spirit one is driven toward unambiguous harmony.²⁵ In self-transcendence one is driven toward the unambiguous fulfilment of the potentialities of one's being.²⁶

One could refer to this rhythm as the way from essence through existential estrangement to essentialization. It is the way from the merely potential

²²Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 273.

²³Paul Tillich, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," in Charles W. Kegley ed., Theology of Paul Tillich, New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982, p. 387-388.

²⁴Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 422.

²⁵Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 138.

²⁶Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 332.

through actual separation and reunion to fulfilment beyond the separation of potentiality and actuality.²⁷

Essentialization is the final fulfilment of finite being in relation to the infinite: it reunites that which is estranged: it gives a centre to what is split.²⁸

In existence one encounters ambiguity, in essentialization one participates in the unambiguous. In essentialization one experiences wholeness. In faith and grace, one is accepted though unacceptable. Affirmed in one's existence (both in participation and submission to a power greater than self) one experiences the courage to be. Courage is discovered "rooted in a power of being that is greater than the power of one's self and the power of one's world."²⁹

In essence then, health and salvation, individuation and essentialization are coterminous. Tillich could have truly written that the latter pair no less than the former pair

are identical, both being the elevation of man to the transcendent unity of the divine life....Health in the ultimate sense of the word, health is identical with salvation, is life in faith and love. In so far as it is created by the Spiritual Presence, the health of unambiguous life is reached; although unambiguous, it is not total but fragmentary, and it is open to relapses into the ambiguities of life in all its dimension.³⁰

²⁷Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 421.

²⁸Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 166.

²⁹Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, p. 156.

³⁰Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 280.

COSMIC GOAD

We thank Thee when we look back on our life, be it long or short, for all that we have met in it. And we thank Thee not only for what we have loved and for what gave us pleasure, but for what brought us disappointment, pain and suffering, because now we know that it helped us to fulfil that for which we were born. And if new disappointments and new suffering take hold of us and words of thanks die on our tongues, remind us that a day may come when we will be ready to give thanks for the dark road on which Thou has led us.³¹

Those within the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous know the blessings that estrangement brings because they have experienced it in their personal journey through alcoholism. In the book 'Alcoholics Anonymous' one reads that "pain is the touchstone of spiritual progress,"³² that 'deflation at depth',³³ to use A.A. terminology, is required to prepare for a spiritual journey. It is with the attitude of humility in the act of participation, 'one alcoholic talking to another',³⁴ that the door becomes open to the possibility of transformation. Intentionality becomes an option for both; i.e., the pre-process and in-process alcoholic — at different stages 'on the road less traveled'.³⁵

It is the experience of 'hitting bottom'; it is in the midst of complete despair that the felt experience is to stop drinking or die. In the experience of estrangement, faced with the knowledge of utter finitude, the alcoholic is opened up to the possibility of change. As soon

³¹ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 184.

³² Alcoholics Anonymous, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976, p. 3.

³³ As Bill Sees It, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1967, p. 168.

³⁴ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980, p. 64.

³⁵ Scott M. Peck, The Road Less Traveled, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978.

as the alcoholic acknowledges powerlessness over alcohol, the individual becomes more completely aware of who he is as 'person'. In the act of saying 'I am an alcoholic', the identity of the person begins to unfold. The process of self-transcendence is initiated.

Under the dimension of self-awareness, self-transcendence has the character of intentionality; to be aware of one's self is the way of being beyond one's self.³⁶

The experience of self-transcendence frees the alcoholic to transcend the predicament of compulsive drinking. Self-transcendence allows one to be freed from a present situation, "leaving the real for the sake of the possible."³⁷ In the act of the admission of being powerless over alcohol, in existential realization, freedom and destiny are united.³⁸ The essential and existential merge, producing ecstasy, what A.A. terms — a spiritual experience.

To Tillich, ecstasy

...is the act of breaking through the fixed form of our own being. In this sense of the term we must say: Only through ecstasy can the ultimate power of being be experienced in ourselves, in things and persons, and in historical situations.³⁹

While for A.A.

When a man or woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being. He has been set on a path which tells him he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered. In a very real

³⁶ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, 1971, p. 91.

³⁷ Robert W. Renouf, Freedom and Alcoholism, Dissertation, School of Theology at Claremont, in Partial fulfillment, Doctor of Ministry, 1981, p. 11.

³⁸ Robert W. Renouf, Freedom and Alcoholism, p. 56.

³⁹ Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 79.

sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which he had hitherto denied himself.⁴⁰

A.A. recognizes that a spiritual experience opens the alcoholic to a power of being which they call a Power greater than self. It is this Power that transforms them, to which they were not receptive while they were attempting 'control' in the power of alcohol. It was only when the alcoholic experienced the dark side of alcohol that he/she was opened to the possibility of encountering a power of being. When confronted with a seemingly self-induced experience of alienation, the alcoholic encounters being.

Your own alcoholism and the immense deflation that finally results are indeed the foundation upon which your spiritual experience rests.⁴¹

While "nonbeing opens up to the mystery of being,"⁴² it is with the experience of nonbeing that the destructiveness caused by alcoholism has the possibility of being conquered.

It is in the experience of deflation at depth and brokenness that the alcoholic becomes aware of being separate. He experiences complete finitude, knowing that he is mortal and will die. The alcoholic is alone for even the alcohol which once offered a chemically delayed state of 'dreaming innocence',⁴³ now only reinforces, the existential experience of finitude. Dreaming innocence becomes a fading memory dulled by an alcoholic lifestyle of concupiscence and hubris.

⁴⁰ As Bill Sees It, p. 85.

⁴¹ As Bill Sees It, p. 168.

⁴² Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, Clinton, Mass.: Yale University Press, 1952, p. 67.

⁴³ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 33-36.

Under the control of hubris and concupiscence the self can approach the state of disintegration. The attempt of the finite self to be the centre of everything gradually has the effect of its ceasing to be the centre of anything.⁴⁴

We see that the alcoholic has become aware that his problems arise from selfishness and self-centredness and he realizes that he must get rid of it or it will kill him.⁴⁵

Hubris, to Tillich is a 'spiritual sin'⁴⁶ because it is the act of turning away from the Divine centre and turning towards one's self, placing self in the centre rather than the Divine.⁴⁷

The word alcoholic proclaimed that there is 'sin', and that it was the enduring state of at least this portion of humankind. This state of 'sin' consisted in essential separation from ultimate reality, and the most destructive act of 'sin' was denial of the actuality of this separation from ultimate reality. Such denial led to self-destruction through increasing self-centredness, because ultimate alienation affected those who acted as if they were themselves ultimate reality.⁴⁸

A.A. recognizes that until the alcoholic acknowledges alcoholism as being a spiritual illness,⁴⁹ he/she will not be able to address alcoholism completely. For the alcoholic the spiritual illness manifested itself in the act of 'playing God'.⁵⁰ Admission to powerlessness over alcohol and surrender to a Power greater than themselves is understood by A.A. as the beginning of a spiritual response to an essentially spiritual disease — alcoholism. Until the

⁴⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 62.

⁴⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 62.

⁴⁶ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 50.

⁴⁷ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 50.

⁴⁸ Ernest Kurtz, Not — God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, Center City, Minnesota: Hazelden Educational Services, 1980, p. 196.

⁴⁹ Robert Thomsen, Bill W. Hamilton, London: Hamish, 1976, p. 255.

⁵⁰ As Bill Sees It, p. 87.

spiritual response is initiated the alcoholic is always in danger of drinking again, because he/she is susceptible to putting self rather than God at the centre.

In the very act of imbibing alcohol the alcoholic endeavours to retain dreaming innocence. By the act of undertaking control, by ingesting alcohol, he attempts to take on the characteristics of the infinite, stepping out of what he actually is, finite. The more the alcoholic feels to be in control, the ever more distant becomes the experience of unity with the infinite for

...in trespassing on his mere potentiality, he separates himself from his original and immediate unity with the infinite. He tries to become himself like God in magic knowledge and magic power. He tries to reach infinity, not in subjection to the infinite, but by drawing the infinite into his own finite being.⁵¹

In time alcohol will make the alcoholic feel that he is 'not God' but rather, finite and consequently, estranged. "Vicissitudes of life take on new and enlarged meaning."⁵² Dreaming innocence is lost for the song of experience is harsh — *a fado-a cancon triste*. The alcoholic, in actualizing freedom, experiences the felt loss of destiny resulting in despair. To Tillich, the pain of despair is knowing that one is responsible for the loss of meaning and that there is no finite way of retrieving this meaning.⁵³

One becomes a prisoner of self-created walls. Alcoholism becomes a prison because of the illusion offered by alcohol. A.A. acknowledges this self-imposed bondage in Step One, the alcoholic admitting that his/her life has become powerless over alcohol. Tillich says of

⁵¹ Paul Tillich, "Psychotherapy and a Christian Interpretation of Human Nature," in The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis and Religion, ed. Perry LeFevre, Chicago: Exploration Press, 1984, p. 54.

⁵² Edward F. Edinger, Encounter With the Self, Toronto: Inner City Books, 1986, p. 9.

⁵³ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 75.

despair that it is man without hope — "in despair, not in death, man has come to the end of his possibilities."⁵⁴

When we become alcoholics, crushed by self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else he is nothing. God either is or he isn't. What was our choice to be?⁵⁵

Despair breaks the alcoholic. In the breaking the alcoholic experiences separateness, opening him to the awareness of a spiritual presence or to a Power greater than self. In the experience of powerlessness he encounters the presence of 'the Other'. The alcoholic is guided to humility by an inflated ego. Within the experience of humility, the subject-object split is felt, opening the alcoholic to Spiritual Presence. The experience of the Spiritual Presence actualizes the essential within the existential in 'an unambiguous way'.⁵⁶ It is in the suffering of finitude that the alcoholic is opened to the possibility of participating in essentialization, that process by which one retrieves essence from disintegration. Alcohol offered the promise of salvation from finite pain, 'forever' protected, safe within dreaming innocence. However, the promise is broken as the alcoholic is confronted with the abyss of despair. The broken alcoholic, fractured through alcoholism is totally immersed in 'the water of life' — alcohol. If the alcoholic emerges, he emerges transformed because he has been touched by the 'ground of being', as participant with the unambiguous. Tillich says,

Without the 'I am undone' of Isaiah and his vocational vision, God cannot be experienced (Isaiah 6:5). Without the 'dark night of the soul' the mystic cannot experience the mystery of the ground. The positive side of mystery — which includes the negative side — becomes manifest in actual revelation.

⁵⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 75.

⁵⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 53.

⁵⁶ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 269.

Here the mystery appears as ground and not only as abyss. It appears as the power of being, conquered by nonbeing. It appears as our ultimate concern.⁵⁷

It is out of the depths of alcoholism that the alcoholic experiences the grace of God.⁵⁸ Out of the encounter of the threat of nonbeing, being is apprehended. For the alcoholic, alcoholism produces the experience of nonbeing, the negative side which lays the foundation for the positive side, that spiritual experience which for A.A. conquers alcoholism.⁵⁹

A change occurred when their way of thinking and living changed in the face of collapse and despair, in the face of total failure of their human resources, they found that a new power, a new peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them.⁶⁰

In A.A. in the light of Tillich, there is no being without nonbeing, just as there is no light without darkness in Jung. It is out of the experience of alcoholism that the alcoholic experiences self-transcendence because out of the dark experience grows self-awareness; i.e., the alcoholic is accepted by a Power greater than self.

They have asked the question to which the Christian message is the answer....the power of acceptance that could overcome their despair of self-rejection.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 110.

⁵⁸ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1969, p. 65.

⁵⁹ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 44.

⁶⁰ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 50.

⁶¹ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 53.

To paraphrase Tillich, more alcoholism can be the Divine way of making alcoholics aware of themselves.⁶²

The alcoholic learns through the process of self-transcendence that he is finite and not infinite, separate but part, that participation is gift and not a self-created design. It is as if alcoholism leads the alcoholic to the self-awareness that he is not God but rather that he is a participant in the Divine through alcoholism (sin). The compulsion to drink for the alcoholic becomes woven into the intricate process of essentialization, that painful process of separating from the centre and returning to the centre. Is this not truly that very individuation process delineated by Jung when the ego grows out of the self, is consolidated and is re-rooted in 'the creative background of the psyche'? Alcoholism forced the alcoholic to stand alone in estrangement apart from self, others and God. It is, Tillich implies, the result of freedom.⁶³ In separation, the experience of ambiguity and anxiety opens the alcoholic to the realization of the human potentiality to participate in the New Being and thus grace is experienced, through, with and in (*Mysterium Coniunctionis*/*Mysterium consubstantionis*?) the conquest of nonbeing.⁶⁴

When the wall suddenly melts as in a sweeping personality turnabout, there develops the peculiar phenomenon which people conversant with religion refer to as "a release of power." By "release of power" they are trying to describe a sensation of freedom, an inner strength which comes when people find themselves liberated or released from the confines of their psychological walls. This state of ecstasy, for that is what it is, represents, therefore, a time when the individual is at least momentarily able utterly and without reservation to identify himself with his environment, to unite himself totally

⁶² Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 53.

⁶³ Guyton B. Hammond, The Power of Self-Transcendence, St. Louis, Missouri: The Bethany Press, 1966, p. 43.

⁶⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 125.

and without hostility to all that goes on about him. Conflict, tension, doubt, anxiety, hostility, all dissolve as though they were nothing and the individual discovers himself on an exulted plane where he feels he is in communion with God, man, and all the creative forces of the universe.⁶⁵

The alcoholic, surrendering to a Power greater than self, acknowledges this Power with his entire being, because of the overwhelming experience of the ominous power of alcohol.

No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master.⁶⁶

Once a crack occurs in the alcoholic's grandiose ego, he sees himself as he truly is — weak. It is with this insight then that intentionality originates — new awareness, projects new reality. Emerging from weakness the alcoholic experiences self-transcendence.⁶⁷ In the knowledge rising up from the very depths of his humanity he proclaims weakness in acknowledging powerlessness over alcohol. What the alcoholic discovers in this proclamation is that God participates in weakness, giving strength to weakness through His participation.⁶⁸ It is in participation that the alcoholic becomes open, resulting in the experience of a Spiritual Presence — essence and existence have come together. The alcoholic comes to know participation in the unambiguous but for her/him the awareness of the ambiguous is always present through the proclamation of being alcoholic and, therefore, finite. Within the

⁶⁵ Harry M. Tiebout, "Conversion as a Psychological Phenomenon In the Treatment of the Alcoholic," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. 2, No. 13, April 1951, p. 29.

⁶⁶ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 8.

⁶⁷ Robert W. Renouf, Freedom and Alcoholism, p. 56.

⁶⁸ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 154.

statement 'I am an alcoholic', there is the reminder of 'the already and the not yet', for "the fulfilled transcendent union is an eschatological concept."⁶⁹

In the experience of self-transcendence the alcoholic comes to realize that the Divine was there within him all the time.⁷⁰ Alcoholism comes to be seen by the alcoholic as a blessing rather than a curse because it is out of alcoholism that the spiritual experience occurs, an encounter with the ground of being. The alcoholic within A.A. knows ambiguity because he knows that he is an alcoholic and therefore weak, but he also knows the unambiguous because he knows through participation, that there is a Power greater than himself.

Ours is not the usual success story; rather it is the story of how, under God's Grace, an unsuspected strength has risen out of great weakness;...⁷¹

In the courageous act of admitting ambiguity, 'I am an alcoholic', a unity occurs and the cleavage between essence and existence is bridged. In unity, the alcoholic experiences self acceptance and acceptance by a Power greater than self.⁷² This dual acceptance is in spite of all the ramifications of being alcoholic.

"We admitted that we were powerless — that our lives had become unmanageable" and "we made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to God as we understood Him." Everyone of us who could make and fairly well maintain this humbling admission and sweeping decision had found relief from obsession and had begun to grow in a totally and wonderfully different mental, physical, and spiritual existence.⁷³

⁶⁹ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 140.

⁷⁰ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 140.

⁷¹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 79.

⁷² Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundation, New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1976, p. 160-163.

⁷³ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 45.

The act of surrender by the alcoholic to a higher Power is simultaneously experienced as acceptance by this Power. Surrender to the Divine acknowledges that one is not Divine and brings to awareness the feeling of separation from the Divine. In surrender one acknowledges finitude in the admission of powerlessness over alcohol. The moment one experiences finitude, according to Tillich, one concurrently is pointed in the direction of the infinite.

Nonbeing makes God a living God. Without the No he has to overcome in himself and in his creature, the divine Yes to himself would be lifeless. There would be no revelation of the ground of being, there would be no life....Wherever philosophers or theologians have spoken of the divine blessedness they have implicitly (and sometime explicitly) spoken of the anxiety of finitude which is eternally taken into the blessedness of the divine infinity.⁷⁴

The alcoholic, when recognizing finitude through the admission of powerlessness over alcohol, steps beyond self only to return to self — changed. This is the experience of self-transcendence.

The finitude of the finite points to the infinity of the infinite. It goes beyond itself in order to return to itself in a new dimension. This is what "self-transcendence" means.⁷⁵

Within the depths of the existential experience of alcoholism the alcoholic experiences what it means to be human with all finite frailty — a frailty which joins him in a universal way with others. Alcoholism then becomes one way of expressing finitude, joining as it does, the alcoholic to others in the commonality of human frailty. Alcoholism seen in this light then becomes merely one expression of finitude, one expression of participation allowing the alcoholic to join with others and to participate in the 'Other'.

A.A. learned through experience and verbalized 'understanding' of change experience.

⁷⁴ Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be, p. 180.

⁷⁵ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 8.

Such is the paradox of A.A. regeneration: strength arising out of complete defeat and weakness, the loss of one's old life as a condition for finding a new one. But we of A.A. do not have to understand this paradox; we only have to be grateful for it.⁷⁶

A.A. came to know through experience that alcoholics could participate in the New Being, a Power greater than themselves, through their alcoholism; the experience of strength coming from weakness becomes for the alcoholic an experience of the New Being working within him/her conquering estrangement.⁷⁷

The alcoholic within A.A. acknowledges powerlessness over alcohol and the need of turning her/his life over to a Power greater than self in order to attain sobriety and serenity. The latter duality reflects the act of being accepted by a Power greater than self. Before turning over to this Power, there was neither. 'I am an alcoholic', speaks of one who accepts acceptance in spite of the knowledge of being unacceptable. Tillich calls this courage, "the power of life to affirm itself in spite of this ambiguity."⁷⁸ Because a Power greater than the alcoholic accepts the alcoholic in spite of alcoholism, a leap of faith is taken, resulting in the experience of self-acceptance in spite of being alcoholic.

But one must remind theologians and ministers that in the fight against the anxiety of guilt by psychotherapy the idea of acceptance has received the attention and gained the significance which in the Reformation period was to be seen in phrases like "forgiveness of sins" or "justification through faith." Accepting acceptance though being unacceptable is the basis for the courage of confidence.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 45.

⁷⁷ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 125.

⁷⁸ Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, p. 27.

⁷⁹ Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, p. 164.

The alcoholic who, in close proximity to those who call themselves alcoholics, yet practise sobriety and experience serenity, becomes a reflection of the New Being in the very admission and proclamation of being alcoholic. They know that they are accepted 'in spite of' being alcoholic and participate in the unambiguous through their alcoholism. The process of essentialization for the alcoholic is a process in freedom that leads to destiny.

In the act of one alcoholic talking to another — in the encounter where one alcoholic accepts another within human weakness and finitude, the alcoholic becomes a medium of grace; i.e., "a medium for the feeling of overcoming the cleavage between essence and existence."⁸⁰ The alcoholics within A.A. incarnate those who have been accepted by a Power greater than self and the power of grace working through them as alcoholics.⁸¹

It is as if alcoholism works as a catalyst driving the alcoholic to see God. Pushing the alcoholic out of complacency, so as to see beyond finitude, allows participation in that which is not finite but infinite. Viewed in this light alcoholism for the alcoholic within A.A. comes to be seen as a process that leads to the experience of self-transcendence.⁸² Alcohol takes the alcoholic to the sinister depths of humanity to 'see' darkness and 'know' misery. Therein the alcoholic comes face to face with the Holy.

It was only when I came fully to believe I was powerless over alcohol, only when I appealed to God who just might exist, that I experienced a spiritual awakening. This freedom-giving experience came first, and then faith followed afterward — a gift indeed!⁸³

⁸⁰ Paul Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis," in The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis and Religion, ed. Perry LeFevre, p. 94.

⁸¹ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 228.

⁸² Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 31.

⁸³ As Bill Sees It, p. 152.

In knowing weakness and limitation the alcoholic simultaneously knows participation, because, it is in knowing the opposite of strength and self-sufficiency, that one is free to recognize the invitation, offered through grace, to participate in the New Being. Alcoholic egoism gave the illusion of strength. This deception left the imbiber knowing alienation and separation which in turn allowed the alcoholic to experience participation because, in separation, there is the freedom to see the 'Other' as 'Other' rather than as an extension of self.

When I was driven to my knees by alcohol I was made ready to ask for the gift of faith. And all was changed. Never again, my pains and problems notwithstanding, would I experience my former desolation. I saw the universe to be lighted by God's love; I was alone no more.⁸⁴

Alcohol for the alcoholic becomes a medium of grace because it is out of the depths of alcoholism that the alcoholic comes to see God. (*De profundis clamavi ad te Domine.*)

When the alcoholic utters the words 'I am an alcoholic', self-transcendence is experienced through the individual, not because of the individual, but rather because one has been touched by essence which gives power of being.⁸⁵ Man's centered reaction affords him the opportunity of transcending the given situation and leaving the realm of the real for the sake of the possible.⁸⁶ With the touch that unites, there is the simultaneous experience of healing and salvation. There is the return to the centre, yet changed, because of alcoholism; "self-transcending cognition comes out of the centre of totality and leads back to it."⁸⁷ The only way for the alcoholic to return to the centre is to accept alcoholism which means

⁸⁴ As Bill Sees It, p. 51.

⁸⁵ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 101.

⁸⁶ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 303.

⁸⁷ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 255.

accepting weakness. For the alcoholic then, self-alteration is accepting powerlessness over alcohol. It is in the humbled state of accepting weakness that the process of essentialization is initiated.

The alcoholic never wanted to leave 'dreaming innocence'. Alcohol gave the illusion of being in the centre while it simultaneously carried the alcoholic far from the centre.

It is the experience of many of us in the early stages of drinking to feel that we have had glimpses of the Absolute and a heightened feeling of identification with the cosmos. While these glimpses and feelings doubtless have a validity, they are deformed and finally swept away in the chemical, spiritual, and emotional damage wrought by alcohol itself.

In A.A. and in many religious approaches, alcoholics find a great deal more of what they merely glimpsed and felt while trying to grope their way toward God in alcohol.⁸⁸

In the acceptance of powerlessness over alcohol and surrender to a higher Power the alcoholic experiences self-transcendence, basking in the memory of dreaming innocence.

It is only in the self-transcendence of life that the "memory" of the essential unity with the infinite is preserved.⁸⁹

Unbeknown to the alcoholic, alcoholism is intertwined in the process of essentialization, a process which forces the experience of separation, a separation that frees the alcoholic to return to the centre as alcoholic but transformed.

A.A. discovered (within the experience of sobriety and serenity) that disintegration of the old life is replaced by the gift of a new one. In the very act of surrender to a higher Power the alcoholic becomes a participant in the 'power of being' itself. Therein (act of surrender) the compulsion to drink is removed, as if life is given back to the alcoholic through

⁸⁸ As Bill Sees It, p. 323.

⁸⁹ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3., p. 113.

the power of grace, "for the power of being acts through the power of the individuals' selves."⁹⁰ In knowing powerlessness, the alcoholic participates in being itself, resulting in being healed from the compulsion to drink. It is as if the alcoholic has been given a second chance; the self is returned as gift because of participation in the power of being-itself.

The alcoholic looked for the experience of essence in 'the bottle' — to control what was perceived to be 'essence'. The 'genie in the bottle' taught the alcoholic chaos — controller becoming controlee. Alone and lonely in the depths of despair the alcoholic experiences existential estrangement. It is out of this experience of nonbeing that the alcoholic comes to New Being. Sol is existential estrangement conquered, the experience of which simultaneously produces the state of faith which is grace given. The alcoholic actualized through alcoholism, becomes a fortuitous participant in essentialization.

Creation into time produces the possibility of self-realization, estrangement, and reconciliation of the creature, which, in eschatological terminology, is the way from essence through existence to essentialization.⁹¹

In surrender to a higher Power or in the act of participation, a sensitivity to essentialization takes hold, whereby the alcoholic knows that his life is no longer under self-direction but rather, is being directed by a higher Power. Within A.A. sobriety for the alcoholic is not an example of what the group has created but rather, sobriety demonstrates what God does through the alcoholic.⁹² Thus, when an alcoholic experiences serenity and declares powerlessness over alcohol it bespeaks of a transformation through participation in the New Being and not sobriety because of willpower.

⁹⁰ Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, p. 188.

⁹¹ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 422.

⁹² Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 64.

New Being is essential being under the conditions of existence, conquering the gap between essence and existence.⁹³

Encompassed in the utterance of the words 'I am an alcoholic', the manifestation of the essential being is reflected under the mantle of existence in both fragmentary form and finite ambiguity. For, to A.A. the declaration of being alcoholic simultaneously speaks of the union of essence and existence and of the human predicament of ambiguity.

The anonymous alcoholic now in the state of serenity, 'in' the declaration of being alcoholic, reflects the knowledge that the higher Power is the bearer of the gift of sobriety. This declaration acknowledges participation 'in' the New Being as the author of human transformation. The alcoholic is invited to be a participant 'in' the transformation — A.A. emphasizing 'prodigality' and Tillich 'sonship', in the return to grace.

'In' is the preposition of participation; he who participates in the newness of being which is in Christ has become a new creature.⁹⁴

Alcoholism for the alcoholic becomes an ultimate concern which leads the alcoholic to the possibility of reunion with the ground of his being. Through this existential experience of ultimate concern the alcoholic participates in being, placing the alcoholic in the grip of the Spiritual Presence.⁹⁵ The alcoholic, opened by alcoholism, surrenders to and acknowledges reliance on a higher Power, thereby participating in his destiny.

⁹³ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 118.

⁹⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 119.

⁹⁵ Guyton B. Hammond, The Power of Self-Transcendence, p. 79.

...that strength can come out of weakness, that perhaps only those who have tasted the fruits of reliance upon a higher Power can fully understand the true meaning of personal liberty, freedom of the human spirit.⁹⁶

Alcoholism opened the alcoholic to the knowledge of being and nonbeing through experience. Tillich says that creatureliness implies both being and nonbeing.⁹⁷ But, for the alcoholic, it was not until the experience of self-transcendence that he could articulate through his story the knowledge of both being and nonbeing. It is through alcohol that the alcoholic comes to know what it means to be a creature; that is, the experience of nonbeing and to participate in the power of being within being. Alcohol viewed in this light becomes for the alcoholic both a tragedy and a grace — a divine paradox.

Alcohol offered the illusion of harmony, a chemically self-induced experience producing the illusion of a continuum within the participation of dreaming innocence. Alcohol initially offers the semblance of harmony and the feeling of self-sufficiency but in time the imbiber becomes totally self-centred, cut off from self and others, resulting in discord, despair and estrangement. Tillich says that under the condition of estrangement one becomes the prisoner of one's self, cut off from participation.⁹⁸ Succumbing to the power of the object, the user becomes the used. The power of the object takes control.

In Step One of the Twelve Steps the alcoholic acknowledges that the object alcohol has taken control. In acknowledging powerlessness over alcohol, the alcoholic simultaneously acknowledges separation. In actualizing finite freedom through drinking, the alcoholic

⁹⁶ Bill Wilson, "Basic Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous," New York State Journal of Medicine, Vol. 44, 1944, p. 1808.

⁹⁷ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 253.

⁹⁸ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 65.

experiences the outcome of freedom; that is, separation and estrangement. Estrangement leaves the alcoholic knowing that he had attempted to 'drink in the power of God'.⁹⁹ In acknowledging powerlessness over alcohol, freedom and destiny are realized within the felt experience of separation from the ground of being. Embodied within this existential realization of finitude which Tillich calls wisdom, the alcoholic comes face to face with finitude. "Acceptance of one's limits is the decisive step towards wisdom."¹⁰⁰ It is only in the experience of powerlessness that one is open to participating in the ground of being. In the experience of complete brokenness and of being out of control, the alcoholic encounters that which controls all, out of and through love. The loss of unity with one's essential nature is the tragedy of actualizing freedom and opening one to destiny, according to Tillich.¹⁰¹

The experience of powerlessness over alcohol produces the experience of separation which results in the awareness of finitude, predisposing the alcoholic to a knowledge of the infinite, a Power greater than self. Through the pain and suffering brought about by the ingesting of a substance which promised harmony and thus power and control over destiny, the ingestor is confronted with the austere reality of freedom and the separation from destiny. In acknowledging powerlessness over alcohol, the alcoholic accepts finitude. In accepting finitude, one is opened to the possibility of experiencing the infinite. In separation, the alcoholic no longer mistakes the self for the infinite; the illusion suggested in alcohol is erased by estrangement.

⁹⁹ As Bill Sees It, p. 323.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 168.

¹⁰¹ Guyton B. Hammond, Man in Estrangement, Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1965, p. 156.

The fool rebels against the limits set by his finitude. He wants to be unlimited in power and knowledge. He who is wise accepts his finitude. He knows that he is not God.¹⁰²

The alcoholic knows what it means to be unacceptable. The challenge A.A. places before the alcoholic, is to accept acceptance in spite of being alcoholic and therefore unacceptable. He/she must have the 'courage to be'. A.A. discovered that healing occurs, not because of finite willpower, but rather because one is accepted by the higher Power, a power one may participate in but not control nor elicit, through willpower. The alcoholic is accepted through the self-awareness of being both alcoholic and the guilt thereof.¹⁰³ The experience of being accepted 'in spite of ', by the infinite, is incarnated within A.A.

In reunion with the infinite the alcoholic is healed; the compulsion to drink is removed. This does not mean the removal of the finite characteristics of being alcoholic, but rather, it means the acceptance of finitude or the acceptance of being indeed an alcoholic. The alcoholic within A.A. understands that release from the power of alcohol is but a daily reprieve¹⁰⁴ and not a cure. It is with this understanding that alcoholism becomes a daily reminder that one is accepted by the higher Power 'in spite of ', being finite. If the alcoholic forgets the 'in spite of' quality of acceptance, that it is grace and not earned, the alcoholic becomes vulnerable to drink again. To be freed from the compulsion to drink, as viewed from Tillich's system, is to say that one experiences salvation from estrangement. Salvation for Tillich, is the experience of healing and reunion of that which was estranged,

¹⁰² Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 168

¹⁰³ Paul Tillich, "Psychotherapy and Christian Interpretation of Human Nature," in The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis and Religion, ed. Perry LeFevre, p. 56.

¹⁰⁴ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 85.

...giving a centre to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself.¹⁰⁵

A.A. describes the experience of healing in a similar manner whereby they recognize that sobriety arises out of a centering experience which overcomes separateness.

This feeling of being one with God and man, this emerging from isolation through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of guilt, brings us to a resting place where we may prepare ourselves for the following steps toward a full and meaningful sobriety.¹⁰⁶

They might well have added that with God, there was now no longer, dependence on an external agent (alcohol) on their sought but elusive and meandering motility towards the centre. The alcoholic is an exemplary paradigm of the intrinsic need for this journey.

There is a process whereby one may undertake to prepare one's self for a healing action. The growth process within A.A. is uncanny in its similarity to that found within Tillich's systematics. This process evolves from within the depths of the human experience in all of its fragmentation. Articulating the healing experience through the human encounter with the Holy, A.A. discovered that at the depth of humanity lies the power of the Divine life and the invitation to salvation.¹⁰⁷

The first step of healing is always that we realize our situation; the second, that, in spite of this situation, we accept ourselves as being accepted; and the third step, that on the basis of this reunion, the splits and compulsions of our separate existence are discovered.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 166.

¹⁰⁶ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 63.

¹⁰⁷ John P. Dourley, "Trinitarian Models and Human Integration," Journal of Analytical Psychology, Vol. 19, 1974, p. 134.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Tillich, "Psychotherapy and Christian Interpretation of Human Nature," in The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis and Religion, ed. Perry LeFevre, p. 56.

Step One

We admit that we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step Two

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.¹⁰⁹

Healing occurs in the recognition of separation or in the understanding that in weakness there is strength, because in weakness and separation one becomes open to participating in the ground of being. In the acknowledging of a Power greater than one's self a reunion of that which was split occurs. For the alcoholic the actualization of this experience is expressed when compulsion to imbibe is alleviated.

It would seem that, for the alcoholic, the initiation to rebirth, that is, the initiation to the process of essentialization, occurs after being washed in 'the water of life'.¹¹⁰ It is only through a rebirth that a transformation may take place. Alcohol, through the process of essentialization, takes the alcoholic to a place where he has no wish to go.

As they are progressively humbled by the terrific beating administered by alcohol, the grace of God can enter them and expel their obsession to drink.¹¹¹

Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness. It strikes us when we walk through the dark valley of a meaningless and empty life. It strikes us when we feel that our separation is deeper than usual, because we

¹⁰⁹ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ Whisky is the English for Uisge Beatha — meaning 'the water of life'.

¹¹¹ As Bill Sees It, p. 246.

have violated another life, a life which we loved, or from which we were estranged. It strikes us when our disgust for our own being, our indifference, our weakness, our hostility, and our lack of direction and composure have become intolerable to us. It strikes us when, year after year, the longed-for perfection of life does not appear, when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: "You are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you..."¹¹²

It is through the experience of separation and the still more acute separation incurred because of the overpowering compulsion to drink, that the pain of alcoholism quickens the alcoholic so as to allow him to touch the hand of God. The alcoholic experiences God as he emerges from the darkness of alcoholism. When the alcoholic sees destiny woven into alcoholism, the realization is that the process of essentialization begins within the spirits of alcohol for the alcoholic. In this awareness alcohol not only encompasses darkness and despair but also offers the promise of the light of grace — *et lux in tenebre et in tenebre non comprehenderunt*.

"...I am an alcoholic," he speaks those words when he no longer drinks alcohol. Thus, when the time comes that members describe themselves as alcoholics, society ceases to regard them as such. Yet it is only in the moment when a member ceases to drink that he asserts the right to describe himself as an alcoholic.¹¹³

The acceptance of being powerless over alcohol is for the alcoholic to be grasped by the eternal. This human experience of being out of control, yet controlled by alcohol is how the alcoholic comes to know personal finitude. To experience one's ultimate limits and depth of finitude is to experience a transformation into the eternal.

¹¹² Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 161.

¹¹³ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 278.

One accepts one's self as something which is eternally important, eternally loved, eternally accepted.¹¹⁴

When the alcoholic ego is in the state of brokenness, the gift of self-knowledge is given to the alcoholic. He simultaneously experiences finitude and self-transcendence. There is the awareness that this knowledge comes not from willpower but rather through the grace of God. A.A. discovered that it was not willpower that allowed the person to participate in the higher Power but brokenness — 'broken by the grace of God'. The alcoholic comes to know that in surrender to the higher Power there is the felt experience of participation or, for him/her the experience of sobriety and serenity. The alcoholic has the tangible experience of transformation through the experience of sobriety and serenity. In weakness there is strength; in weakness the alcoholic is transformed, transformed not because of willpower, but because of participation in the Power greater than self.

The alcoholics within A.A. discover a God not wholly other — external. Rather, they experience God from within, working through them as alcoholics. God, then for the alcoholic through the experience of alcoholism comes to be known as being itself — a being that the alcoholic participates in, incarnated through the alcoholic. The anonymous alcoholic is the reflection of finitude participating in the unambiguous. The anonymous alcoholic sacrifices his authority, the power of being which results in giving meaning to alcoholism. It is through alcoholism that the alcoholic is returned to the centre.

In every religious sacrifice, finite man deprives himself of a power of being which seems to be his but which is not his in an absolute sense, as he acknowledges by the sacrifice; it is his only because it is given to him and,

¹¹⁴ Paul Tillich, The New Being, p. 22.

therefore, not ultimately his, and the acknowledgement of the situation is the sacrifice.¹¹⁵

Alcoholism comes to be seen as grace, because it is through alcoholism that the alcoholic is brought to the point of surrender, and that experience of surrender initiates the awareness of participation in the New Being.

So it is necessary for all of us to accept whatever possible gifts we receive with a deep humility, always bearing in mind that our negative attitudes were first necessary as a means of reducing us to such a state that we could be ready for a gift of the positive ones via the conversion experience. Your own alcoholism and the immense deflation that finally results are indeed the foundation upon which your spiritual experience rests.¹¹⁶

According to Tillich we are transformed by grace alone,

...because in our relation to God we are dependent on God, on God alone, and in no way on ourselves; we are grasped by grace, and this is only another way of saying that we have faith. Grace creates the faith through which it is received.¹¹⁷

Grace grasps us, turns us and transforms us, which is a painful process, — the same process the alcoholic experiences, as alcohol grasps, turns and transforms her or him.

A.A. is no success story in the ordinary sense of the word. It is a story of suffering transmuted, under grace, into spiritual progress.¹¹⁸

For the alcoholic within A.A. alcohol comes to be seen as the grace through which faith is received. Alcohol is the painful gift through which the alcoholic comes to experience the higher Power. This experience, which heals and transforms, is apprehended in a death and

¹¹⁵ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 271.

¹¹⁶ As Bill Sees It, p. 168.

¹¹⁷ Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era, p. XVII.

¹¹⁸ As Bill Sees It, p. 35.

rebirth encounter: the New Being is touched, as the alcoholic emerges out of the existential estrangement produced by alcoholism.

The alcoholic is freed from the estrangement produced by alcoholism in the act of totally embracing the estrangement. It is in this act of acceptance that the alcoholic discovers self, and in discovering self, discovers God.¹¹⁹ It is in the acceptance of powerlessness over alcohol and surrender to a higher Power that an act of faith is made. "But faith means being grasped by a power that is greater than we are, a power that shakes us and transforms us and heals us. Surrender to this power is faith."¹²⁰ The estrangement arising out of alcoholism pushes the alcoholic toward essentialization,¹²¹ whereby the alcoholic, experiences a Power greater than himself, which induces the experience of faith — the felt experience of love and acceptance.

The alcoholic within A.A. came to know the seeming paradox of finding strength in weakness.

In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of the total failure of their human resources, they found that a new power, peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them.¹²²

God participates in human weakness and frailty, giving the finite experience of strength rising out of weakness,¹²³ and a knowledge of Spiritual Presence from the human experience of defeat and failure. What better, what more 'touted' example of human failure and weakness

¹¹⁹ Guyton B. Hammond, The Power of Self-Transcendence, p. 10.

¹²⁰ Paul Tillich, The New Being, p. 30.

¹²¹ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 247.

¹²² Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 50.

¹²³ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 154.

than one addicted to alcohol? In the humbled state of total defeat by alcohol, encompassed within the humbling experience of uttering the words 'I am alcoholic', the alcoholic articulates the beginning of the return journey to the centre. There is no turning back; there is no way of retrieving the words once they are spoken. When one has seen the reflection of who one is, one cannot say that he/she has not seen. Captured in the moment of acknowledging estrangement, the alcoholic experiences centeredness¹²⁴ and Spiritual Presence. The alcoholic comes to realize that it is not in spite of, but as a result of alcoholism that he/she has the response to Spiritual Presence — Faith! This is so

...because faith is, so to speak, the human reaction to the Spiritual Presence's breaking into the human spirit; it is the ecstatic acceptance of the divine Spirit's breaking-up of the finite mind's tendency to rest in its own self-sufficiency.¹²⁵

The alcoholic, grasped by faith, experiences healing in being released from the compulsion to drink.

We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality — safe and protected. We have not even sworn off it. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us.¹²⁶

The alcoholic participates in the unambiguous through the unity of the essential and existential, actualized for the alcoholic in the experience of sobriety and serenity. It is in the coming together of these elements of being that the admission of being alcoholic becomes

¹²⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 38.

¹²⁵ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 135.

¹²⁶ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 85.

also an expression of potentiality as he/she experiences that self-transcendence exemplified in sobriety and serenity.

That [sic] we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionalized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.¹²⁷

In the act of saying 'I am an alcoholic', one is raised above one's self which allows for the recognition of the Power beyond one's self. This opens the alcoholic to the possibility of transcending and transforming the negative aspects of alcoholism.

The character of curse is taken away from it. It becomes a blessing by the transforming power of forgiveness.¹²⁸

To Tillich, surrender to a Power greater than one's self is faith, a process found within A.A. in Steps Two and Three. "Surrender to this power is faith."¹²⁹

Step Two

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.¹³⁰

In the act of surrender the alcoholic experiences faith which is actualized in the healing experience of sobriety. The alcoholic though guilty is justified by grace.

¹²⁷ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 25.

¹²⁸ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 129.

¹²⁹ Paul Tillich, The New Being, p. 94.

¹³⁰ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 5.

Faith is receiving forgiveness; grace is the divine giving of forgiveness.¹³¹

In the experience of surrender the alcoholic experiences faith which, according to Tillich, is simultaneously responded to, by the felt experience of forgiveness and acceptance — 'in spite of'. Tiebout says of acceptance:

...if the alcoholic can sustain that inner feeling of acceptance, he can and will remain sober for the rest of his life.¹³²

When the alcoholic finds acceptance in spite of alcoholism he maintains his status as an alcoholic. To declare that one is an alcoholic is a reminder of finitude and is a declaration of being accepted despite finitude. To forget that one is alcoholic is to forget that one is justified through faith and accepted by a Power greater than one's self, makes the alcoholic vulnerable to drink again.

As an insurance against "big shotism" we can often check ourselves by remembering we are today sober only by the grace of God and that any success we may be having is far more His success than ours.¹³³

As Tillich says, "The finitude of the finite points to the infinity of the infinite."¹³⁴ Alcoholism opened the alcoholic to know that finitude and the limitations of being finite are at the very core of his being. At the moment the alcoholic experienced finitude the opposite as it were happened — he/she could 'see' the infinite. To paraphrase Bill Wilson: God is everything or is nothing.¹³⁵ In the knowledge of being finite, the alcoholic becomes open

¹³¹ James B. Ashbrook, "Paul Tillich Converses with Psychotherapists," in The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, and Religion, ed. Perry LeFevre, p. 237.

¹³² Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 311.

¹³³ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 94.

¹³⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 8.

¹³⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 53.

to participate in the infinite. In the act of participation the alcoholic sacrifices personal individuality: "I must give up something of what I now am for the sake of something possible which may enlarge and strengthen my centered self."¹³⁶ Calling self anonymous, he/she retains the qualities of finitude by guarding a symbol of finitude — alcoholic.

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.¹³⁷

The anonymous alcoholic becomes a transparent vessel through whom the Spiritual Presence acts. To be called alcoholic is to be grounded in finitude; to be called anonymous is the symbolic presence of participation in the infinite.

Alcohol had shown the alcoholic that one does not grasp but rather is grasped by a Power greater than one's self. The self-destructive act of alcoholism becomes an act of God's love working through justice, "resisting and breaking what is against love."¹³⁸ In this act of love the human spirit is driven out of seclusion by alcoholism. The alcoholic, touched by the ultimate, calling himself anonymous, experiences humility — a humility that transforms because he has been moved by "the presence of the Creative spirit of the universe."¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 42.

¹³⁷ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 13.

¹³⁸ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 175.

¹³⁹ Bill Wilson, "Basic Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous," p. 22.

Conclusion

A.A. seemed to intuit that it was alcoholism, the very 'source' of the experience of estrangement which led to a spiritual experience. It came through the experience of being totally powerless, and cognizance that there was nothing that they could do of themselves to be rid of the problem.

Who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one, of course. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit that, glass in hand, we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only an act of Providence can remove it from us.¹⁴⁰

It was from the depths of despair, in acknowledging powerlessness over alcohol and in surrendering to a higher Power, that the alcoholic experienced acceptance though 'guilty'. In acceptance the alcoholic experiences unconditional forgiveness, for there is nothing he/she or anyone else could have done to merit either. The alcoholic had to first experience powerlessness, this grace granted through alcoholism, before he could access and accept unconditional acceptance.

There is no condition whatsoever in man which would make him worthy of forgiveness. If forgiveness were conditional, conditioned by man, no one could be accepted and no one could accept himself.¹⁴¹

The alcoholic's path, leads him/her to suffer the 'dark night of the soul' through alcoholism. But, it is through this suffering that the alcoholic comes to experience great love — loved by a Power greater than self which makes whole. There being no Greek dichotomy

¹⁴⁰ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 21.

¹⁴¹ Paul Tillich, The New Being, p. 8.

of body, mind and spirit, in the act of surrender, all is surrendered, because the whole is hurt. When the alcoholic is healed, salvation comes to the whole person.

Alcoholism turns the face of the anonymous alcoholic from man to God. 'Suffering' the loss of alienated identity, he/she becomes a 'transparent vessel' so that the New Being may shine through. Is not anonymous to the alcoholic but another addition to the litany of the names for the Supreme Being?

CHAPTER V

THE A.A. EXPERIENCE: THE GOD/MAN MEETING PLACE

But if this recollection of one's falling off, of the deactualized and the actual I, were permitted to reach down to the roots that man calls despair and from which self-destruction and rebirth grow, this would be the beginning of the return.¹

Introduction

Encapsulated within A.A. is a change experience whereby an alcoholic moves from a drinking to a non-drinking state, to sobriety and serenity. A.A. is a catalyst in religion, psychology, and medicine but sees itself as appropriated by none of these, as independent, standing in 'no-man's-land.'

A.A. calls itself a spiritual programme, insisting that in order to attain sobriety and maintain serenity, the whole person must be healed — body, mind, and spirit, all being the provenance of spirituality. Through experience he/she learns that to concentrate merely on one aspect of the alcoholic's being is to endanger both sobriety and serenity: the imbalance which would occur, would precipitate a throwback into the terrible chaos and darkness of alcoholism. A.A. though it definitely recognizes the value of religion and psychology, does not take sides because in that personal experience of suffering through alcoholism they cannot separate the two. To view alcoholism as totally psychological or totally religious, for A.A. did not lead to sobriety let alone serenity. It is interesting to note at this point though that

¹ Martin Buber, "I and Thou," in The World Treasury of Modern Religious Thought, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1990, p. 117.

the articulation of their experience is not too dissimilar to what was being endorsed at that time by the Religion and Health movement, a movement endorsed by Paul Tillich. Though Bill Wilson did not have any contact with Tillich, A.A.'s books were endorsed by Harry E. Fosdick, a supporter and friend of Alcoholics Anonymous, who was attached to the Religion and Health movement. Bill Wilson did correspond with Jung though, saying that the founders of A.A. had read *Modern Man in Search of A Soul*. In Wilson's letter to Jung he writes that A.A. had found through experience, that cognitive speculation about religion could not give direction to life, but rather, at least for the alcoholic, there had to be first a spiritual awakening induced by conflict. Bill goes on to say that the impasse that the alcoholic encounters in alcoholism becomes the key to a spiritual awakening. Bill, in identifying with Jung, said that Jung was neither theologian nor pure scientist; rather he said, 'you (Jung) stood with us in a no-man's land between the two'.²

A.A. members knew that they were 'in a no-man's land' between religion and psychology but they also knew through experience that they had to be there to be well. To be well they had to 'let go' — which religion purported to understand and which psychology would call a transfer of dependence. A.A. in appropriating neither psychology nor theology, simply voiced that something new grew out of the experience and called it serenity. Tillich, open to the impact of human experience on salvation, called it essentialization and Jung, open to the God-image on the psyche, called it individuation.

² Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1984, p. 386.

The Grounding of A.A.

When looking at the history of A.A. one is compelled to see it as the founders themselves would have us perceive it. The history is written articulating the change experience as personal encounter with a higher Power. The sharing of personal situations is *tout à fait* the alcoholic's personal journal of a very personal journey. History, evolved in this way, allows each alcoholic to participate in the living history of A.A. for his/her personal story becomes intertwined in the becoming. It is story and reality for them. It is a living testament phenomenologically speaking, a live event, not a phenomenon incised, dissected and reduced to allow misnomered, scientific, objective observation which Husserl might describe as reality distorted.

In the history of A.A. through the alcoholic's story, one comes to realize that total dependence upon God is the perceived basis for their change experience. It would seem that the founders were introduced to this understanding of the change experience through the influence of Sam Shoemaker of the Oxford Group. The Oxford Group posited that only God brings about change in man.³ William James, another influence on the Oxford Group, uses E. D. Starbuck, a noted turn-of-the twentieth century psychologist, to press this point.

...he must fall back on the larger Power that makes for righteousness, which has been welling up in his own being and let it finish in its own way the work it has begun.... The act of yielding, in this point of view, is giving one's self over to a new life, making it the centre of a new personality, and living, from within, the truth of it which had before been viewed objectively.⁴

³ Charles Taylor Knippel, "Samuel M. Shoemaker's Theological Influence on William G. Wilson's Twelve Step Spiritual Program of Recovery." Ph.D. diss., St. Louis University, 1987, p. 134.

⁴ E. D. Starbuck, "The Psychology of Religion," p. 115 in William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, New York: Collier Books, 1979, p. 175.

Neither James nor Starbuck wrote in isolation. Indeed it was popular, almost trendy as a theme of the turn of the century. The Religion and Health movement pioneered by Vincent Peele and Elwood Worcester⁵ et al. had carried the message. Allison Stokes in *Ministry After Freud* says, "I must say that what impressed me initially was the willingness of theological liberals to see God's purpose in Freud's work."⁶ Suspicion of psychology and psychiatry and viewing Freud as less than holy, they yet were willing to extol his experience through which God acts.

For A.A. the notion of dependence on God had to become pathology specific; i.e., it had to deal with one evil and one evil only, alcoholism. Their task therefore became the process of zeroing in on what they perceived as the action and place of God in their disease. The personal encounter of existential estrangement through alcoholism vastly altered what it meant to be totally dependent upon God for healing. The Word was no longer 'word' for the alcoholic; it was incarnated in this healing.

A.A. broke from the Oxford Group because the 'alcoholic personality' could not tolerate the concept of absolutes as presented. In its rejection of the four absolutes of the Oxford Group the alcoholic unknowingly actualized total dependence on God. Living total dependence rather than absolutes — A.A. acknowledged dependence on alcohol and then dependence on God. A.A. knew through experience that man did not capture but rather was captured by God. The Oxford Group in its presentation of absolutes had intimated the antithesis.

⁵ Allison Stokes, Ministry After Freud, New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1985, p. 8.

⁶ Allison Stokes, Ministry After Freud, p. 10.

Tiebout Wilson's psychiatrist had unresolved difficulty with A.A.'s, acknowledgement of weakness and consequent reliance on a higher Power. He questioned why the alcoholic would want to maintain that dependence identity. He questioned how A.A. could talk about maturity if the alcoholic was always to simultaneously recognize the danger of experiencing self-sufficiency. To him, dependence and maturity were opposites.

The alcoholic, to remain serene, had to live what had been learned through experience. That change resulted from a Power greater than self rather than personal willpower. Jung and Tillich elucidate further the wisdom of the path A.A. opted to take, based on their historical experience.

Abandon yourself to God as you understand Him. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.⁷

⁷ Alcoholics Anonymous, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976, p. 164.

The A.A. Experience

Within the A.A. experience there is a phenomenon which occurs, whereby the alcoholic moves from a drinking to a non-drinking state, changed by what A.A. has identified as a spiritual experience. As a result of overimbibing the alcoholic ego suffers from megalomania, leading to defeat and despair — that felt experience of hitting bottom.

In acknowledging powerlessness the alcoholic no longer feels to be the controller, but rather, knows that he/she is being controlled. The surrender made first to alcohol is now to a higher Power. A Power greater than self is master of destiny.

According to A.A. the experience of humility is of primary importance in that it keeps the grandiose ego at bay. For an alcoholic to relinquish humility is simultaneously to endanger sobriety and lose serenity. To be humble is to acknowledge limitation and therefore finitude. To be alcoholic is to be limited and thus finite.

While imbibing, the alcoholic had through alcohol somehow touched the infinite in the experience of 'a harmony'. Alcohol for the alcoholic always left a bitter-sweet communion and the problem only arose when he/she remembered the sweet and forgot the bitter. In the self-same action of imbibing he had the mark of being both controller and controlled.

The sober alcoholic must keep alive a memory of limitation, for there is a memory of a moment in time when he/she was touched by an illusion of being 'the power' at the centre of creation. To maintain a state of humility is to remember that it is alcohol that brings the alcoholic to his/her knees. Alcoholism demonstrates for the alcoholic that it is a Power greater than self that is at the centre rather than the imbiber, and that it is from that Power that serenity and sobriety spring.

When alcoholics 'let go and let God', the 'Other' is recognized for they have found an resource without which they could not have obtained serenity and experienced sobriety. The alcoholic, recognizing and surrendering to finitude, acknowledges powerlessness and in accepting humbly the truth about self, becomes open to a spiritual experience. In surrendering to a Power greater than self the ego is sacrificed which dissipates the ego's sense of control. At the point of surrender, the alcoholic is open to both a conversion experience and personal change. Tiebout says of the alcoholic that when he/she is able to accept "the presence of a Power greater than himself, he,...is no longer typically alcoholic."⁸ The experience of the infinite results in a changed life — release from a compulsion to drink being the most visual.

Surrender for the alcoholic brings about the felt experience of integration. Tillich might account for this experience by saying that essence and existence have come together whereas Jung would say that the unconscious has become conscious. When the alcoholic surrenders he/she gives up self-reliance, acknowledging dependence upon a Power greater than self. In surrender the alcoholic feels accepted, and breaks down the barriers of self-seclusion.

Out of the depths of despair the feeling of hope is born. It is out of this darkness that man comes to know finitude, a knowledge that initiates the return journey to the centre. The alcoholic story ever repeated is a story of simultaneously coming face to face with finitude and the Transcendent Other. This encounter initiates the spiritual experience.

The alcoholic within A.A. becomes a model of one being called to human maturity and religious attitude, out of human need. Each alcoholic shares the story of the separation

⁸ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980, p. 311.

from the centre and the return journey to the centre. From each alcoholic a similar story might be expected, yet each story is vastly different for each is about 'a personal encounter'. And so it is that A.A. is a spiritual programme where there is no method without 'God' as guide. The alcoholic discovered, in the depths of despair and left without options, that in letting go one experiences healing and wholeness. They are whole but not perfect — they are alcoholic. They are pilgrims released from the leash of alcoholism and given a new lease on life.

A.A. — Jungian Perspective

Jungian psychology allows for a clearer understanding and explanation of some of the dimensions of the change experience which occur within A.A. that is, the process and agency in moving from a drinking to a non-drinking state and to sobriety and serenity. Jungian psychology offers insight into the meaning the alcoholic has found in the very disease itself wherein the alcoholic experiences and therefore comes to know a Power greater than ego, first in and as alcohol and then as a higher Power.

This is brought about by the archetype's awakening to independent life and taking over the guidance of the psychic personality, thus supplanting the ego with its futile willing and striving. As a religious-minded person would say: guidance has come from God.⁹

As the alcoholic 'lets go and lets God', the disease itself becomes the path that the alcoholic follows on his/her journey in order to come to 'know' the numinous. It is in the admission of being alcoholic, in the admission of the shadow side, the alcoholic comes to 'know' the light, for light always comprehends darkness, not vice versa.

The alcoholics within A.A. understand that in order to attain sobriety and serenity they must undergo a spiritual experience,¹⁰ an idea introduced to them by C. G. Jung through an early member in the Fellowship. The alcoholic experiences the change that occurs through a spiritual experience, whereas Jungian psychology elucidates the process that the alcoholic apprehends in his/her fibre.

The alcoholic imbibed in order to remove the discomfort of feeling the split within, and alcohol allowed the alcoholic to feel for a time in control of his/her quest for wholeness.

⁹ C. G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1958, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 534.

¹⁰ As Bill Sees It, New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1967, p. 171.

Jung said of alcohol that it was the equivalent on a low-level of the spiritual thirst of the being for wholeness or, as expressed in medieval language, union with God.¹¹ In the alcoholic's search for the experience of wholeness, alcohol becomes a symbol of the self because for the alcoholic it becomes a Power greater than ego. In his/her self-aggrandizement, 'supreme' stature is aspired to. Alcohol, though it is not the self, leads to the self. It is as if the collective unconscious uses as it were, the experience of powerlessness over alcohol to guide the alcoholic ego to experience separateness. Through this experience of alienation, the result of the effects of alcoholism, the alcoholic becomes open to recognize alcohol as a power greater than self, freeing him/her to acknowledge a higher Power, greater than either alcohol or ego. It is in this experience of separation that the alcoholic declares himself/herself to be alcoholic. This admission allows the God-image to emerge into consciousness within the alcoholic.

Deep down in every man, woman, and child is the fundamental idea of a God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or another it is there. For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that Power in human lives are facts as old as man himself.¹²

Encapsulated within the declaration of being alcoholic, there is not only the profession of being powerless over alcohol but there is simultaneously the acquisition of the knowledge that there is a higher Power because the alcoholic has experienced it. In Jungian terms this would be called an experience of the self. For the alcoholic within A.A. the manifestation of wholeness is experienced first in a religious experience and then through the removal of the compulsion to drink. The order is from the sacred to the sacral.

¹¹ Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World, p. 384.

¹² Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 55.

Alcohol becomes the alcoholic's first recollection of harmony, a harmony invoked at the behest of the alcoholic. Alcohol as a symbol of the self puts the inflated ego in an unusual situation in that in a state of inflation the ego not only perceives itself as owning the power of the self but of also controlling it. By the very nature of the symbol the ego chooses when to participate in harmony.

Alcohol moves the imbiber back to the experience of unconscious wholeness. In this state the ego does not experience itself as separate from the unconscious but rather is engulfed by it. Intoxication offers an experience of wholeness, enticing any who should choose to immerse themselves 'in the water of life'. It is only when the inflated ego feels to be in control of wholeness and thus destiny that the water of life shows its other side, 'which is both water and spirit, killer and vivifier'.¹³

When consciousness is neutralized by the act of imbibing, the ego naturally flows backward into the unconscious by the drowning of consciousness in alcohol. Pain and suffering seem no longer to exist for the ego while in the state of a chemically self-induced harmony. Jung says that when consciousness is neutralized and inactive, this naturally brings about the activity of the unconscious¹⁴ which makes its presence known through the felt experience of the shadow. 'The ego is abruptly ripped from the unconscious bliss by pain which the shadow brings, denoting the dawn of consciousness — that 'knowing' that one is separate from the unconscious. Alcohol, the spirit which had lured the alcoholic ego into feeling that he/she was totally in control, left the alcoholic standing before an abyss of

¹³ C. G. Jung, Alchemical Studies, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967, C.W. Vol. 13, par. 135.

¹⁴ C. G. Jung, Psychological Types, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971, C.W. Vol. 6, par. 824.

nothingness. Alcohol, which had become a symbol of the self had first inflated the alcoholic, waxing the feeling that he/she needed no one and then deflated the self-same ego so that he/she came to 'know' the meaning of estrangement, of disunity and disaffection.

It is in the ordeal of suffering one's shadow, that one comes to the knowledge of being out-of-control and therefore not master in one's own house. In Step One of A.A. the alcoholic acknowledges being powerless over alcohol, thereby acknowledging the shadow side. It is through pain and suffering that the light of the self is born. It is in the birthing of the light that a shadow is cast. This portal to the unconscious, offers the opportunity of a deeper experience of the psyche — that religious experience of healing and wholeness.

A.A. is no success story in the ordinary sense of the word. It is a story of suffering transmuted, under grace, into spiritual progress.¹⁵

Man has always searched for meaning in, and for, suffering. Both Jung and A.A. see meaning in suffering in that it initiates a spiritual experience. A.A. knows that pain is the touchstone of spiritual progress, understanding that for them, the pain (produced by alcoholism) has to come before serenity. The spiritual process of becoming whole and of healing the inner split is actualized for the alcoholic within sobriety and serenity. For Jung, a religious experience is the experience of overcoming opposites within the self. For the alcoholic within A.A. one might say that it is in the admission of the shadow side; being 'alcoholic and not God' one is opened to the possibility of a religious experience. In Jungian terms the alcoholic has become open because there is the awareness of opposites within one's self. It was alcohol that had led the alcoholic to the knowledge of lux and tenebrae within

¹⁵ As Bill Sees It, p. 35.

himself/herself. In the Jungian word play, '*spiritus contra spiritum*', opposites are shown emanating from the word spirit — one 'ethereal', one 'guttural'.

The alcoholic learns that it is not perfection but rather it is wholeness for which one must strive. The alcoholic had attempted to be perfect and therefore God-like; in time he/she learned that this goal would lead to personal demise. Bill W. lectures A.A. on the downfall of striving for perfection through his own personal story.

In my teens, I had to be an athlete because I was not an athlete. I had to be a musician because I could not carry a tune. I had to be the president of my class in boarding school. I had to be first in everything because in my perverse heart I felt myself the least of God's creatures. I could not accept my deep sense of inferiority, and so I strove to become captain of the baseball team, and I did not learn to play the fiddle. Lead I must — or else. This was the "all or nothing" kind of demand that later did me in.¹⁶

For the alcoholic to quest after perfection merely inflates his/her ego because the felt experience produced by alcohol is the belief and satiate that one has attained perfection. Projection of faults becomes the obvious 'out' for any personal shortcomings. Jacobi questions an individual's striving after perfection, asking "will life again and again bring about his downfall,"¹⁷ as he seeks this pathological 'God image'?

A.A. discovered that it was in admitting faults and living with the shadow side rather than attempting to be perfect that joy is experienced. It is in the acceptance of being alcoholic and not perfection that wholeness is experienced, which for the alcoholic simultaneously means that the compulsion to drink goes. For the alcoholic then, there must

¹⁶ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 53.

¹⁷ Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967, p. 119.

not only be the knowledge of being alcoholic but also the acceptance of being alcoholic, the shadow being a constant companion in maintaining sobriety.

The precondition for a cure, therefore, is that the alcoholic should keep his shadow qualities constantly before him, seeing in his mind's eye this drinker in himself as his unswerving companion, until he can no longer forget his presence.¹⁸

Jung says that it is in the rediscovery of one's shadow that a person is made whole.¹⁹ He says also that an individual may strive after perfection but that it is only in experiencing shadow the opposite of perfection; that one experiences completeness.²⁰ For the alcoholic then, it is in the acceptance of being alcoholic that the shadow is simultaneously accepted. Indeed, they are truly one. It is in the acceptance of being alcoholic and therefore imperfect that the individual experiences wholeness — wholeness, not perfection! In admitting the shadow side the compulsion to drink is removed. As the conscious and unconscious merge, the light shines through the pain and darkness of alcoholism and the alcoholic knows that there is a Power greater than self, a Power on whom he/she relies for balance and harmony. A.A. refers to this as a spiritual experience which according to Jung is the only thing that can heal a helpless alcoholic.²¹

Alcoholics Anonymous came to the realization through experience, that in order for the alcoholic to be healed, a spiritual awakening was necessary. An individual was able to

¹⁸ Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, p. 40.

¹⁹ C. G. Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1933, p. 35.

²⁰ C. G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1956, C.W. Vol. 9, par. 123.

²¹ Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World, p. 384.

move from a drinking to a non-drinking state, which could not have happened, according to A.A. without the help of the Creative spirit of the universe.²²

They listened to, and learned from, what Jung had said — they learned and verified from their experience by living what they learned and further, touched by the source in this process, they had had religious experience. The experience of the numinous for Jung becomes the real therapy; that is, the feeling within the person that, that which was dichotomized is now becoming whole, for the individuation process has begun. Bill W. said of religious experience in a 1965 letter:

These experiences can not make us whole at once; they are a religious birth to a fresh and certain opportunity²³

The experience of being one-sided or lop-sided for the alcoholic produces egoism, which leads the alcoholic to the experience of being out-of-control and therefore no longer in balance. No longer being centered results in a feeling of crisis, the consequence of being separated from the unconscious. Egoism, according to Jung, leads to "that in-gathering which religious experience demands,"²⁴ hence the creation of a new balance as the instinctive activity of the unconscious takes over.²⁵ The conversion experience is the coming together of the conscious and the unconscious, out of which something new is born, a higher state of consciousness which for the alcoholic is characterized by serenity — the transcendent function.

²² Bill Wilson, "Basic Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous," New York State Journal of Medicine, Vol. 44, 1944, p. 1, 807.

²³ As Bill Sees It, p. 246.

²⁴ C. G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 526.

²⁵ C. G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, C.W. Vol. 5, par. 253.

Alcohol for the alcoholic brings to his/her life both the lux and the tenebrae. It inflates the ego, making the imbiber feel like God, and then shows its other side, the dark side. The inflated ego experiences deflation at depth, leaving the alcoholic to experience complete defeat, and darkness — a darkness so penetrating that the alcoholic willingly sacrifices himself in order to remove the pain. In the sacrifice of the ego the light is free to shine through the alcoholic. In contrast with the darkness the light is easily seen by the alcoholic. In the experience of pain, defeat, and finally, surrender, the alcoholic gives birth to the self. The terrible journey through alcoholism becomes the antecedent for spiritual experience.

The spiritual experience is simultaneously the experience of acceptance because in spite of being alcoholic and therefore 'sinful', he/she has experienced the numinous. The numinous was not persuaded as the alcoholic realized he/she had no power of persuasion over it. Realizing this the alcoholic activates and experiences acceptance, both as subject and object.

I always thought that when we accepted things they overpowered us in some way or another. This turns out not to be true at all, and it is only by accepting them that we can assume an attitude toward them. So now I intend to play the game of life, being receptive to whatever comes to me, good and bad, sun and shadow forever alternating, and, in this way, also accepting my own nature with its positive and negative sides. Thus everything becomes more alive to me. What a fool I was! How I tried to force everything to go according to the way I thought it ought to!²⁶

The spiritual experience does not make the alcoholic perfect but rather results in wholeness, actualized for the alcoholic in the removal of compulsion to drink.

²⁶ C. G. Jung, Alchemical Studies, C.W. Vol. 13, par. 70.

Anonymity is considered by A.A. to be the basis of its spiritual foundation. God, not man, is recognized as the veritable author of A.A. When an alcoholic chooses to be anonymous it puts him/her in right relation with the self; being called anonymous is a symbolic expression of the sacrifice that the ego makes when acknowledging a Power greater than self (greater than the ego). Anonymity is the symbolic recognition that the self is a supraordinate authority. To say that one is anonymous is to participate in the individuation process moving toward the self, the archetype of wholeness in the psyche. The acceptance that the ego is not at the centre, that the self is the centre,²⁷ frees the ego to move toward the centre.

The ego is reborn to the self in the acceptance of anonymity. The old dies, only to be reborn, when he/she acknowledges limitation and consequently dependence on a Power greater than ego. Individuation has begun because the ego, in giving up its ego-inflated personality in favour of the self as a supraordinate authority,²⁸ allows the alcoholic to work toward the selfhood which is the goal of individuation.²⁹ When the alcoholic no longer perceives alcohol as a symbol of the self, he/she becomes free to grow towards selfhood. The alcoholic feels the painful separation from the self as it emerges from the terrible shadow of alcoholism. This experience teaches the alcoholic to know the separation between the finite and the infinite — he/she acknowledges a Power greater than self and calls this Power, God.

²⁷ C. G. Jung, Alchemical Studies, C.W. Vol. 13, par. 67.

²⁸ Aniela Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, New York: Penguin Books Inc., 1975, p. 89.

²⁹ Aniela Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, p. 74.

The self used alcohol as a mediator, taking the alcoholic on a circuitous journey through alcoholism to the God-image — the very thing that the alcoholic had been looking for in the bottle.

A.A. discovered that when the alcoholics experienced the numinous in the merging of the conscious and the unconscious, they became whole and thus opened to healing. They had, through the existential dilemma of alcoholism, touched the source of the experience and its concomitant healing — the numinous and the psyche. It is a spiritual illness because the egoism produced by imbibing cuts the alcoholic off from the access to 'Wholeness', the healing self. It was through the alcoholic's lived experience that A.A. became known as a spiritual programme viewing alcoholism as a spiritual disease: a spiritual programme because it is a higher Power that heals, not method or person, nor therapy or therapist. Access to wholeness is for the alcoholic a saving grace and a serene experience.

When a man or woman has a spiritual awakening, ...He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being...transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself.³⁰

The alcoholic when telling his/her lived story speaks from the personal experience of the movement from darkness to light — of capacity to do evil and desire to do good. In the telling of the story, the alcoholic demonstrates a desire to maintain an attitude of humility. As the shadow side is thwarted in the story telling, 'evil will out'. The alcoholic knows that humility offers the balance between the conscious and the unconscious, a prerequisite for the experience of wholeness actualized for the alcoholic in serenity. Serenity, then, for the alcoholic, can be seen as the living out of the self coming to consciousness through each

³⁰ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. 1969, p. 110.

alcoholic who has attained the gift of sobriety and serenity; "we tried to let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do."³¹

³¹ Akshaya's Anonymous, p. 68.

A.A. — Tillichian Perspective

Meaning to the seemingly meaningless suffering of alcoholism, and understanding of the healing process encapsulated within the change experience in A.A. is offered by Tillich in his Systematics.

Born out of the brokenness produced by alcoholism, the alcoholic learns what it means to die and rise again. Within the experience of sobriety and serenity something new is born. Out of the humbling experience brought about by alcoholism, deflation at depth is experienced; i.e., the inflated ego dies. It is in this death experience that alcohol loses its power, making a rebirth experience possible. The alcoholic discovers that the New Being is born within the torment and anguish experienced within alcoholism. He/she comes to see alcoholism as a blessing (definitely in disguise) for the transcendent sought for in the bottle is born out of the pain found 'in the bottle'. Alcoholism becomes for the alcoholic a vibrant symbol that is simultaneously a living expression of brokenness and healing wholeness. It has become a living symbol because alcohol produced the experience of estrangement which allowed the alcoholic to know finitude. In the 'knowledge' of being finite, the alcoholic becomes aware of the infinite, so turning his/her face from man to God. This change of focus brings about the transformation experience found within A.A.

Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it "God-consciousness."³²

In the admission of being an alcoholic and therefore, finite, the alcoholic becomes aware of who he/she is as person and knows powerlessness in endeavouring to manipulate destiny. The alcoholic learns not to manipulate but rather to participate in being itself. The

³² Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 570.

awareness of this participation is initiated in acknowledging powerlessness over alcohol and in surrender to a higher Power, the individual being freed from the compulsion to drink. The alcoholic experiences self-transcendence in that he/she is no longer bound to alcoholism though alcoholic.³³ In acknowledging alcoholism one becomes aware of the infinite "to which he belongs, but which he does not own like a possession."³⁴ In the acceptance of being finite, according to Tillich, "a transformation into the eternal takes place."³⁵ For the imbibor this transformation occurs when he/she accepts being alcoholic and therefore, finite.

The knowledge of being finite and therefore powerless over alcohol results in a spiritual experience. In this knowledge the essential and existential merge, producing the feeling of ecstasy. Through this sensation of ecstasy the alcoholic experiences the ultimate power of being which A.A. refers to as a higher Power. It is in the act of surrender, and the knowledge that it is not self but rather the ultimate power of being over which they have absolutely no control, that transformation occurs. Alcoholism teaches through experience what it means to be totally defeated and absolutely powerless. Through this consummate experience one becomes aware of the power of being.

A.A. maintains that until alcoholism is viewed as a spiritual illness of cosmic balance and psychic separation, little possibility of the imbibor obtaining or maintaining sobriety exists. Until the alcoholic recognizes that in the act of being self-centred rather than God-

³³ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 303.

³⁴ Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, New York: Harper and Row, 1957, p. 9.

³⁵ Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture, New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 120.

centred, what Tillich calls a spiritual sin,³⁶ the result is the self-destructive behaviour of imbibing. A.A. recognizes that until the alcoholic surrenders to a Power greater than self, placing God rather than man at the centre, there is no release from the spiritual disease of alcoholism.³⁷

In the act of ingesting alcohol the alcoholic was striving after the transcendent,³⁸ the felt experience of harmony referred to by Tillich as the attempt to preserve 'dreaming innocence whereby freedom and destiny are united'. In drinking the finite attempts to control by maintaining a state of dreaming innocence, an attribute of the infinite. In this act of control the alcoholic ego, taking on the characteristics of the infinite, becomes inflated. The alcoholic sees himself/herself as God,³⁹ a perception which causes separation from original unity with the infinite.⁴⁰ In separation there is the experience of estrangement which is the actualization of freedom. The alcoholic experiences despair in the knowledge that he/she is responsible for the loss of meaning and acknowledges that there is no finite way of retrieving this meaning.⁴¹

A.A. refers to despair as deflation at depth, for the alcoholic is humbled by the very substance that promised harmony and "identification with the cosmos."⁴²In the act of

³⁶ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 50.

³⁷ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 118.

³⁸ As Bill Sees It, p. 323.

³⁹ As Bill Sees It, p. 247.

⁴⁰ Paul Tillich, "Psychotherapy and a Christian Interpretation of Human Nature," in The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis and Religion, ed. Perry Le Fevre, p. 54.

⁴¹ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 75.

⁴² As Bill Sees It, p. 323.

ingesting alcohol, the alcoholic unintentionally initiates a process which actualizes freedom to experience existential powerlessness. With the admission of being powerless over alcohol and therefore finite, harmony is restored between freedom and destiny.

When the alcoholic utters the words 'I am an alcoholic', identity is understood as finite and not infinite, resulting in "the essential self shining through the contingencies of the existential self."⁴³ In the knowledge of being finite the alcoholic experiences salvation "reuniting that which is estranged, giving a centre to what is split"⁴⁴ and existentially expressed in the alcoholic as sobriety and serenity. In A.A. when the alcoholic experiences healing or serenity, he/she is actually experiencing a form of salvation — the effect of Spiritual Presence.⁴⁵

It is through the journey of alcoholism that the alcoholic learns that he/she is finite and not infinite. Alcohol becomes a medium for faith 'grasping and turning' the alcoholic when everything else has lost its power of influence over him/her. The journey of alcoholism leads the alcoholic to experience 'the dark night of the soul' — estrangement is experienced at depth; the alcoholic experiences his/her separateness in the stark awareness of being finite.

At the point of knowing finitude the alcoholic is free to surrender to a higher Power. Surrender according to Tillich is faith⁴⁶ and faith is the result of grace freely given. Alcoholism becomes a grace freely given, the individual being transformed; through the

⁴³ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 234.

⁴⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 106.

⁴⁵ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 277.

⁴⁶ Paul Tillich, The New Being. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1955, p. 38.

darkness of alcoholism — it is in the darkness that he/she sees the light. The alcoholic is transformed; the power of being has conquered nonbeing.⁴⁷

And for the alcoholic then, alcoholism becomes a vehicle through which the alcoholic literally feels grasped — grasped by the grace of God. It is through this grace that the bleakness of alcoholism is transformed into a meaningful destiny. The alcoholic, "justified by grace through faith"⁴⁸ in the act of receiving from God, knows that one is accepted 'in spite of' being unacceptable.

God Himself may throw them into more sin in order to make them aware of what they really are....By His throwing them into more sin, they have felt the awakening hand of God. And awakened, they have seen themselves in the mirror from which they had always turned away. No longer able to hide from themselves, they have asked the question, from the depths of their self-rejection, to which the Christian message is the answer — the power of acceptance that can overcome the despair of self-rejection. In this sense, more sin can be the Divine way of making us aware of ourselves.⁴⁹

For the alcoholic the compulsion to drink is woven into the personal journey of essentialization. Alcoholism induces the experience of estrangement which allows the alcoholic to feel the subject/object split which is the actualization of freedom. Encompassed within the experience of freedom the alcoholic realizes that he/she is not the centre. This knowledge opens the imbiber to the awareness of participation in the centre — a participation which transforms and heals. In the acknowledging of being powerless over alcohol and in the act of surrender to a Power greater than self, the alcoholic experiences faith. According

⁴⁷ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 1, p. 110.

⁴⁸ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 224.

⁴⁹ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963, p. 54.

to Tillich faith is the state of being grasped by the New Being "who conquers existential estrangement and thereby makes faith possible."⁵⁰

They flatly declare that since they have come to believe in a Power greater than themselves, to take a certain attitude toward that Power, and to do certain simple things, there has been a revolutionary change in their way of living and thinking. In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of total failure of their human resources, they have found that a new power, peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them.⁵¹

Admission of being alcoholic is simultaneously the declaration of being finite. It is in this admission that one feels himself/herself to be participating in the 'already and not yet' in an unambiguous way. As part of process out of calamity comes a creative tension for there is a certain space and time to be passed in what might be described as 'a no-man's-land'. This land lies between the seemingly secure ultimate and the penultimate salvific destinations. Alcoholic identity is retained but is transformed through participation, consequently transforming what it is to be alcoholic. The very depths of the alcoholic come to know separation and thus, finitude. The paradox is that in this knowledge the alcoholic is transformed and therefore healed, because in separation he/she is free to see the infinite. It is in this experience of healing that the compulsion to drink is removed, resulting in the felt experience of the meshing of the erstwhile oxymoron, fate and freedom.

In the state of nonbeing produced by alcoholism, the alcoholic has a spiritual experience, for in the reunion of the essential with the existential the alcoholic apprehends self-transcendence.

All ambiguities of life are rooted in the separation and interplay of essential and existential elements of being. Therefore, the creation of unambiguous life

⁵⁰ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 114.

⁵¹ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 50.

brings about the reunion of these elements in life processes in which actual being is the true expression of potential being, an expression, however, which is not immediate, as in "dreaming innocence" but which is realized only after estrangement, contest, and decision. In the reunion of the essential and existential being, ambiguous life is raised above itself to a transcendence that it could not have achieved by its own power.⁵²

This, according to Tillich, is the answer to the process of self-transcendence. Alcohol for the alcoholic is an attempt to preserve 'dreaming innocence' which results in the opposite. Alcoholism produces ambiguity; that is, it separates the essential from the existential but it is only after the experience of the opposite which is estrangement, that ambiguous life is raised above itself to the transcendent unity of the unambiguous life.⁵³ When the alcoholic surrenders to a higher Power he/she experiences acceptance by this Power greater than self. This gift of love results in the process of self-transcendence; i.e., being opened to that transcendent unity of the unambiguous life by Spiritual Presence.⁵⁴

In the act of saying 'I am an alcoholic', the alcoholic is raised above the self in the recognition of a Power greater than self. The admission of being an alcoholic becomes an expression of potential in that he does what he could not do by his own willpower — attain sobriety. In admitting alcoholism, he not only acknowledges finitude but acknowledges a Power greater than self, thereby, participating in the unambiguous life in the process of self-transcendence.

⁵² Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 129.

⁵³ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 138.

⁵⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 131.

He transcends the given situation, leaving the real for the sake of the possible. He is not bound to the situation in which he finds himself, and it is just this self-transcendence that is the first and basic quality of freedom.⁵⁵

The alcoholic in the admission of being alcoholic is no longer bound to his/her alcoholism. He is alcoholic but in surrender to a higher Power the imbibor experiences sobriety and serenity, thus 'leaving the real for the sake of the possible'.

Step One showed us an amazing paradox: We found that we were totally unable to be rid of the alcohol obsession until we first admitted that we were powerless over it. In Step Two we saw that since we could not restore ourselves to sanity, some higher Power must necessarily do so if we were to survive. Consequently, Step Three we turned our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.⁵⁶

The anonymous alcoholic experiences self-transcendence in uttering the words 'I am an alcoholic' as in this awareness the imbibor has gone beyond himself/herself. The anonymous alcoholic not only knows that he/she is not God but he/she sacrifices personal identity in anonymity. The anonymous alcoholic in the proclamation of his/her anonymity declares a preference for participation over individual identity and personal power.

The alcoholic learned that in weakness there is strength. It was through the experience of weakness that the alcoholic learned that God participated in that very weakness, transforming it to strength, not, of course, the experience of a personal strength but rather the experience of strength in a fragmentary way through participation. Enlightened by this paradox the alcoholic came to understand that it was not self-will that arrested alcoholism, but rather, it was the dawning of the experience of self-transcendence within the alcoholic, whereby, the alcoholic 'leaves the real for the possible'. The removal of the compulsion to

⁵⁵ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 303.

⁵⁶ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 110.

drink through the experience of self-transcendence becomes a vibrant example of the freedom that destiny brings and vice versa. But this freedom is actualized for the alcoholic in sobriety and serenity, which initiates the cognitive awareness of personal participation within essentialization. For the alcoholic then, alcoholism becomes a call to participate in essentialization through the death and rebirth experience induced by the estrangement of alcoholism. Bill shares these sentiments.

When I was driven to my knees by alcohol, I was made ready to ask for the gift of faith. And all was changed. Never again, my pains and problems notwithstanding, would I experience my former desolation. I saw the universe to be lighted by God's love; I was alone no more.⁵⁷

The alcoholic's way to participation is from the depths of alcoholism. Alcoholism acts as a catalyst, transforming the imbiber. Transformed, the alcoholic comes to view alcoholism as grace, because it is through this, that the spiritual presence is made known.

For the alcoholic the return journey to the centre is initiated in the admission of being alcoholic. In acknowledging alcoholism and thus, estrangement, the consequence of finitude, the alcoholic has a spiritual experience, the result of Spiritual Presence. From the Spiritual Presence the alcoholic is transformed rather than from anything that the alcoholic has done. The alcoholic remains what he/she is, alcoholic, but transformed under the impact of the Spirit — transformed because alcoholism acknowledges finitude and in acknowledging finitude, one recognizes the infinite.

In uttering the words 'I am an alcoholic', the alcoholic experiences acceptance in spite of being alcoholic. This feeling of acceptance is the gift of grace and according to Tillich,

⁵⁷ As Bill Sees It, p. 51.

is the impact of Spiritual Presence.⁵⁸ Within the alcoholic's personal story is encapsulated the process of being accepted 'in spite of'. The result is the alcoholic's acceptance of his/her own alcoholism because he/she feels acceptance by that which is greater than self.⁵⁹ It is out of this experience that courage is born. Tillich states that this is the courage of confidence which comes about after one ceases to base one's confidence in self. "It is based on God and solely on God, who is experienced in a unique and personal encounter."⁶⁰ A.A. acknowledges the power of the courage of confidence by recognizing that change experience originates in a spiritual experience, resulting in a realization that spiritual maturity rests finally on dependence on God.⁶¹

This is what most A.A.'s are trying to say when they talk about a spiritual experience. They mean a certain quality of personal change which, in their belief, could not have occurred without the help and presence of the Creative spirit of the universe.⁶²

The shell of self-seclusion is pierced through the impacting of the Spiritual Presence.⁶³ The Spiritual Presence is realized by the alcoholic through the experience of deflation at depth and surrender to a higher Power, which state actualizes self-transcendence. Touched by Spiritual Presence through self-transcendence the alcoholic overcomes self-seclusion by "the impact of the Power which elevates the individual person above himself

⁵⁸ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, 274.

⁵⁹ Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations, New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1967, p. 163.

⁶⁰ Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be, Clinton, Mass.: Yale University Press, 1952, p. 163.

⁶¹ As Bill Sees It, p. 109.

⁶² Bill Wilson, "Basic Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous," p. 1807.

⁶³ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 262.

ecstatically and enables him to find the other person."⁶⁴ Robert Thomsen refers to the experience of self-transcendence and the removal of self-seclusion in the encounter of another person in this way:

But to the drunk it was curiously therapeutic. When the sick and shaking man, who has been living alone with the secret guilt, suddenly finds himself roaring with laughter at his own behaviour, that man is beginning to grasp some small degree of perspective. And when this happens in a room full of other guilty drunks, he is no longer alone.⁶⁵

For the alcoholic the New Being is born out of weakness, whereby when one alcoholic talks to another; they become as transparent vessels encountering the ground of their beings in the New Being. This New Being is born out of the experience of death and disintegration found within alcoholism.⁶⁶

What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.

Most of us think that the awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it 'God consciousness'.⁶⁷

The alcoholic, no longer estranged from God or self, has the gift of wisdom to accept that he is alcoholic and therefore, finite. The alcoholic remains anonymous once he has attained sobriety because he/she knows that a Power greater than self has restored, and continues

⁶⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 234.

⁶⁵ Robert Thomsen, Bill W., Hamilton, London: Hamish, 1976, p. 292.

⁶⁶ Paul Tillich, The New Being, p. 24.

⁶⁷ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 569.

enabling serenity. Tillich would say that it is the power of the New Being that has overcome existential estrangement.⁶⁸

In the act of surrender the alcoholic participates in the power of being, itself — in participation, the compulsion to drink is removed. Essence and existence come together — experienced by the alcoholic as healing. The alcoholic in the experience of healing becomes aware of personal participation in essentialization, knowing thereby that he/she is no longer under self-direction but rather is being directed by a Power greater than self. The alcoholic is transformed through participation in the New Being. Retaining the human predicament of ambiguity by calling himself alcoholic: he explicitly acknowledges a Power greater than self in using the appellation 'anonymous'.

⁶⁸ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 101.

Conclusion

The alcoholic stands "before a void out of which all things may grow."⁶⁹ The experience of God for the alcoholic within A.A. is born out of what the world perceives as evil and negative and from what the alcoholic experiences as darkness. The experience of God was birthed, with all the pains of birthing, in the terrible struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. God becomes incarnate in those whom society rejects: God is born in the darkness of alcoholism.

According to Jung, one must suffer from the opposite for the sake of wholeness and completeness. The paradox is, that the only way the alcoholic could see God — could experience wholeness — could grasp a Power greater than self was through the experience of alcoholism. In the experience of suffering the opposite — darkness — he/she sees God. The alcoholic experienced wholeness but not perfection.⁷⁰ The alcoholic within A.A. experiencing sobriety and serenity, knows fullness but remembers that he/she is imperfect, for the appellation of alcoholism is not relinquished through sobriety. For the alcoholic within Alcoholics Anonymous, alcoholism is understood to be both torment and blessing, yet as invitational to union with God.

Tiebout's quest was to find what the alcoholics had encapsulated within A.A. What allowed them the freedom to attain sobriety and serenity? He concluded that the change experience that the alcoholic encountered within A.A. would be better understood when "more

⁶⁹ C. J. Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1933, p. 197.

⁷⁰ C. G. Jung, Aion, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959, C.W. Vol. 9, par. 123.

insight is gained into the phenomenon of religion and spiritual growth."²¹ Wilson, in correspondence with Jung, shared his perception that it is through the act of admitting to, and participating in, the very process induced by alcoholism that a spiritual experience is activated, which change experience takes the alcoholic from a drinking to a non-drinking state.

We saw that the alcoholic's helplessness could be turned to vital advantage. By the admission of this, he could be deflated at depth, thus fulfilling the first condition of a remotivating conversion experience."²²

A A speaks the language of the heart in that they learned to understand the process of healing through their personal experience. Their knowledge of healing comes to them through their entire beings. They know themselves to be healed because they experience the joy and peace that sobriety and serenity bring. Jung had shared with them a punning formula to understand their alcoholism: *spiritus contra spiritum* which formula they had already acquired through their experience and rarely articulated.

After a few such experiences, often years before the onset of extreme difficulties, he would return to us convinced. He had hit bottom as truly as any of us. John Barleycorn himself had become our best advocate."²³

A A acknowledges participation in a healing process, recognizing that though the process makes them well, they do not control the process. They say that God works through them as alcoholics and call this guidance"²⁴ - a guidance that comes from God, not man.

Harry M. Furstow, "Psychological Factors Operating in Alcoholism Anonymous," in Current Concepts of Personality Disorders, ed. Bernard Glaser, New York: Grune and Stratton, 1966, p. 155.

²¹ Page 8-10: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A A Message Reached the World, p. 384.

²² Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 14.

²³ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 107.

They learned through experience that when they found God they found themselves⁷⁵ — as anonymous alcoholics. Paulus Tillich is adamant.

Man discovers himself when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical with himself although it transcends him infinitely, something from which he is estranged but from which he has never been and never can be separated.⁷⁶

The A.A. experience is one that can be interpreted psychologically and theologically. That is to say that the A.A. experience may be described as 'individuation', using Jungian terminology, and theologically, as 'salvation' or 'essentialization' as expressed by Tillich. Their analogous domain is the overcoming of estrangement and the coming together of wholeness. The A.A. experience might be viewed as a concrete example and fortuitous paradigm, of the kind of experience described by Jung as 'individuation' and by Tillich as 'essentialization'. One might suggest then, that the process which the alcoholic encounters in A.A. not only comes into clear focus, after being reflected upon using the psychology of Jung and the theology of Tillich, but that in the end A.A. becomes a paradigm for the process described by Jung and Tillich. Illustrative of this conclusion are pertinent matters discussed in the A.A. experience.

The A.A. experience is a process experience — there is no attempt to trap or to encapsulate the phenomenon that occurs in A.A. Rather, the phenomenon is perceived as part of the process. A.A. does not feel that they have created a method to heal, but rather they have discovered a process in which they may participate, a via out of the estrangement they experience through alcoholism. Though they may participate in the process, they recognize

⁷⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 15b

⁷⁶ Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 10

that they have no control over that which results in sobriety and serenity. The only control the alcoholic can elect is to 'let go and let God'. This allows the alcoholic to participate in a process which may result in healing if the alcoholic can maintain an attitude of surrender. In their experience they have encountered the paradox that in weakness there is strength.

We admitted we couldn't lick alcohol with our own remaining resources, and so we accepted the further fact that dependence upon a Higher Power (if only our A.A. group) could do this hitherto impossible job. The moment we were able to accept these facts fully, our release from the alcohol compulsion had begun.⁷⁷

The alcoholics within A.A. come to realize that it is not method that makes them well. Rather, experience teaches them that it is God working through them as alcoholics that allows them to attain sobriety. Alcohol, 'a good teacher', teaches powerlessness. Though the alcoholic within A.A. has the opportunity of experiencing sobriety and serenity, he/she comes to realize that this healing is a gift over which the alcoholic has no control. The gift is only given when the alcoholic relinquishes control. A.A. discovered that when the alcoholic encounters God in a personal way through a spiritual experience, he/she is changed. The change experience is based solely on God who heals by using their very own self-imposed estrangement as a vehicle. The alcoholic knows with all of his being that he/she is not the "sole master in his own house,"⁷⁸ having experienced the gift of healing from a Power greater than self. When A.A. says that the only authority in A.A. is God, they know that God did for them what they could not do for themselves — in 'wholeness' they have experienced sobriety and serenity. Bill Wilson, acknowledging that he had no personal power to overcome

⁷⁷ As Bill Sees It, p. 109.

⁷⁸ C. J. Jung, The Undiscovered Self, New York: New American Library, 1958, p. 98.

alcoholism, admitted, "I would have to be still and know that He, not I, was God."⁷⁹ A method to cure alcoholism is not encapsulated but rather, A.A. members have as individuals, experienced the gift of salvation which originates in the power of being and not in man.

Suffering, is the cornerstone upon which A.A. is built. Reflecting upon what had been learned from William James, A.A. realized it mirrored their personal experience.

Spiritual experiences, James thought could have objective reality; almost like gifts from the blue, they could transform people....But nearly all have the same common denominators of pain, suffering, calamity. Complete hopelessness and deflation at depth were almost always required to make the recipient ready.⁸⁰

So then, it is under the canopy of human suffering, that the phenomenon found in A.A. Tillich and Jung merge into a single rhythm found in the process of moving from the centre and returning to the centre. A.A. call their process experience, deflation at depth. The alcoholic acknowledges being powerless over alcohol — he/she hits bottom. The alcoholic, addicted, no longer experiences the bliss from ingesting but rather encounters the stark pain of aloneness that alcoholism brings. Tillich speaks of the fall into existence from essence resulting in the experience of estrangement from the ground of one's being. Jung refers to the growth of the conscious through the unconscious which results in the ego. With the growth of consciousness the ego presumes that it is all there is to the psyche. The ego then experiences alienation, learning that it must die to the self. In the death experience the ego painfully encounters the shadow side.

Alcohol for the alcoholic offers an illusive promise of ecstasy and the experience of harmony. In time the imbiber forgets that it is the substance that is in control of the felt

⁷⁹ As Bill Sees It, p. 114.

⁸⁰ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 64.

experience of harmony rather than the imbibor. Alcohol for the alcoholic takes him/her to the greatest heights where he/she felt "identification with the cosmos"⁸¹ and then one day the promise is broken and the alcoholic comes to know the very orphean depths. Encompassed within the experience of despair and of being totally powerless, the alcoholic, 'glass in hand', is defeated. It is from the midst of this death experience — the experience of being drowned in alcohol — that the alcoholic has the possibility of rebirth, for he/she has drunk from the 'waters of life'. According to A.A. it was to be alcohol that would humble the alcoholic, allowing the grace of God to enter, thus freeing from the obsession to drink. A.A. members discovered that it would be their very own alcoholism that would lay the foundation for their spiritual experience because, through the experience of pain and suffering in alcoholism, the alcoholic comes to know separation. He has come to know finitude and the existence of the Other.

We found that we were totally unable to be rid of the alcohol obsession until we first admitted that we were powerless over it. In Step Two we saw that since we could not restore ourselves to sanity, some higher Power must necessarily do so if we were to survive. Consequently, in Step Three we turned our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.⁸²

It is through the experience of pain and suffering that the alcoholic acknowledges powerlessness. Recognizing the value of humility results in the alcoholic calling himself/herself anonymous, thereby acknowledging finitude and total dependence on God for sobriety and serenity. The alcoholic, forgetting anonymity, simultaneously forgets

⁸¹ As Bill Sees It, p. 323.

⁸² Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 110.

powerlessness. In A.A. experience, this results in the resumption of drinking. The alcoholic has a physical reminder that God and not man is at the centre.

Suffering, according to Jung, initiates the individuation process. The suffering experienced is the sacrificing of the ego as the unconscious comes into consciousness. It is in the individuation process that the ego recognizes that a Power greater than self is at the centre, rather than the ego. In this acknowledgement of being limited and not at the centre, one is free to become aware of the infinite.

Only consciousness of our narrow confinement in the self forms the link to the limitlessness of the unconscious. In such awareness we experience ourselves concurrently as limited and eternal, as both the one and the other. In knowing ourselves to be unique in our personal combination — that is, ultimately limited — we possess also the capacity for becoming conscious of the infinite.⁸³

Tillich too, says that when we can accept our finitude we can 'glimpse at the Eternal'.⁸⁴ It is this glimpse that transforms, or as Tillich so concisely puts it, "finitude of the finite points to the infinity of the infinite."⁸⁵ To A.A. the admission of being powerless over alcohol, and therefore alcoholic, means acknowledging limitation and finitude. In this acknowledgement, the alcoholic recognizes that there is a Power greater than self. As he/she surrenders to this higher Power the alcoholic is placed in a position to experience sobriety and serenity — not as the result of willpower but rather resulting from transformation because he/she has glimpsed the Eternal.

⁸³ C. J. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, New York: Random House, 1965, p. 325.

⁸⁴ Paul Tillich, "Psychology and Counselling," in The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 120.

⁸⁵ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 8.

Crisis, according to Jung, is the initiation of the individuation process whereby "the ego will submit to God's will"⁸⁶ acknowledging that there is no other place to turn. The ego in this state no longer 'feels to be' superior, thus forcing the individual to rely on an act of God — in Jungian terms, he/she is driven to experience the self.⁸⁷ Bill Wilson recognized the process of individuation and referred to it as a spiritual experience.

Your own alcoholism and the immense deflation that finally resulted are indeed the foundation upon which your spiritual experience rests.⁸⁸

Tillich says of this process of essentialization that there must be a separation from the creative ground, resulting in a break between essence and existence, which produces the experience of estrangement.

There is no easy way to make them aware of their predicament. God, certainly, has His ways of doing so. He shakes the complacency of those who consider themselves healthy by hurling them, both externally and internally, into darkness and despair. He reveals to them what they are by splitting the foundations of their self-assurance. He reveals their blindness towards themselves.⁸⁹

In the experience of defeat by alcoholism the alcoholic surrenders to, and acknowledges, a Power greater than ego and in the experience of alienation produced by it, the ego succumbs, so falling back upon the collective unconscious.⁹⁰ The ground of being

⁸⁶ Gerhard Adler, ed. in Collaboration with Aniela Jaffé, Translated from German, R. F. Hall, Letter, 15 June 1955 in C. G. Jung Letters, Vol. 2:1951-1961, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975.

⁸⁷ Marie-Louise Von Franz, An Introduction to the Interpretation of Fairy Tales, New York: Spring Publications, 1970, V.1-4.

⁸⁸ As Bill Sees It, p. 168.

⁸⁹ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 59

⁹⁰ C. G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1953, C.W. Vol. 17, par. 254.

for the alcoholic is experienced through grace in the darkest moments of estrangement. In the knowledge acquired through experience, the alcoholic learns what it means to be separate from the centre. This frees him/her to begin the return journey to the centre. A.A. discovered the process of individuation and essentialization through its own lived experience and called it a spiritual experience which results in serenity, that balance which wholeness nurtures.

The alcoholic within A.A. has learned to 'let go and let God', recognizing that in letting go the alcoholic has moved by guidance from God.⁹¹ A.A. learned that in weakness, produced by their alcoholism, they experience strength. In the experience of human failure, in the pathological imbibing of alcohol, the opposite is experienced by the act of letting go. The sense of peace and direction flowing into them, A.A. calls guidance from God.

With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.

Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it "God-consciousness."⁹²

The alcoholic learned through the experience of estrangement, produced by alcoholism, that to be powerless is the only way to experience sobriety and serenity. God does for the alcoholics what they could not do for themselves⁹³ — He makes them whole and heals them.

The balance unconsciously intuited is now consciously affirmed.

⁹¹ A.A. Comes of Age, p. 48.

⁹² Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 569.

⁹³ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 25.

In letting go in a hopeless situation, the will collapses, falling under the guidance of the unconscious⁹⁴ whereby the self takes over the leadership. Therefore, the crisis or one-sidedness produced by alcoholism, viewed in the light of Jungian psychology, can become the basis for religious experience when it is seen as an invitation from God.⁹⁵

The act of letting things happen, action through non-action, letting go of one's self as taught by Meister Eckhart became for me the key that opens the door to the way. We must be able to let things happen in the psyche.⁹⁶

A.A. experiences serenity in 'letting go and letting God' — the experience of action through non-action. Aniela Jaffé says, that in individuation, "he voluntarily submits to the self — in religious language, he submits to the will of God."⁹⁷ One might say then that in letting go the alcoholic participates in the flow of the individuation process, thereby touching the source of both religious experience and healing — the psyche.⁹⁸

In the experience of existential estrangement brought about by imbibing alcohol the alcoholic experiences despair, "a boundary line beyond which man cannot go....man has come to the end of his possibilities."⁹⁹ The person encounters finitude or as A.A. coins it, the alcoholic has experienced 'deflation at depth'; he/she has 'hit bottom'. It is in the experience of hitting bottom that the alcoholic experiences limitation — in acknowledging alcoholism one simultaneously acknowledges finitude. In A.A. Steps Two and Three, it is recognized that

⁹⁴ C. G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, C.W. Vol. 17, par. 252.

⁹⁵ John Welsh, Spiritual Pilgrims, New York: Paulist Press, 1982, p. 160.

⁹⁶ C. G. Jung, Alchemical Studies, C.W., Vol. 13, par. 20.

⁹⁷ Aniela Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, p. 91.

⁹⁸ John P. Dourley, The Illness That We Are, Toronto: Inner City Books, 1984, p. 14.

⁹⁹ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 75.

"God alone acts and man only receives."¹⁰⁰ In the act of surrender the alcoholic experiences the courage to accept acceptance and the courage of confidence. The alcoholic 'in spite of' being alcoholic is accepted.

Such receiving, of course, is not possible in an attitude of passivity, but it demands the highest courage, namely the courage to accept the paradox that "the sinner is justified," that it is man in anxiety, guilt, and despair who is the object of God's unconditional acceptance.¹⁰¹

This ability to accept acceptance that the anonymous alcoholic experiences is, to paraphrase Tillich, the paradox of salvation for the alternative to salvation would be despair.¹⁰²

What it means to be alcoholic changes because of the birth of New Being out of the nonbeing of alcoholism. When participating in infinity in an unambiguous though fragmentary way, the individual remembers that he/she is finite. Though the disease (alcoholism) is within, New Being is experienced through serenity. Alcoholics came to realize through their lived experience that they would only be freed from the compulsion to drink through participation and not because of personal willpower.

Our whole trouble has been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us.¹⁰³

Man, in relation to God, cannot do anything without Him. He must receive in order to act. New Being precedes new action. The tree produces the fruits, not the fruits the tree. Man cannot control his compulsions except by the power of that which happens to him in the root of these compulsions. The

¹⁰⁰ Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 68.

¹⁰¹ Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 68.

¹⁰² Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 179.

¹⁰³ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 42.

psychological truth is also a religious truth, the truth of the "bondage of the will." ...Only a New Being can produce a new action.¹⁰⁴

The alcoholic changes when he/she has been taken into infinity through the experience of sobriety and serenity. He knows 'in his bones' that God has acted and that he has been a recipient of that action. He/she becomes confident though alcoholic, because no longer is confidence based on self but rather on the higher Power. "He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves."¹⁰⁵

For the alcoholic, *aqua viva* becomes a living symbol in that it partakes in the activity of both the conscious and unconscious.¹⁰⁶ Alcohol allows the illusion of centredness. Through the self-same process of imbibing, alcohol produces the pain of one-sidedness whereby the alcoholic comes to know what it means to be powerless. If he/she acknowledges powerlessness over alcohol, he/she has a glimpse at the centre. Bill Wilson so aptly describes this experience in symbolic language.

How he does cherish the thought that man, risen so majestically from a single cell in the primordial ooze, is the spearhead of evolution and therefore the only god that his universe knows! Must he renounce all this to save himself?¹⁰⁷

The primordial ooze might be likened unto the unconscious whereby man's ego coming into consciousness stands at the centre of consciousness rather than the self — the God-image.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 79.

¹⁰⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 25.

¹⁰⁶ John Welsh, Spiritual Pilgrims, New York: Paulist Press, 1982, p. 153.

¹⁰⁷ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 25.

The only way for the alcoholic to come to terms with lost wholeness is to acknowledge that he/she does not control but rather is controlled.¹⁰⁸ The living symbol of alcohol allowed the alcoholic to experience powerlessness which resulted in the healing knowledge that the self and not the ego is at the centre. The "experience of the self is always defeat for the ego."¹⁰⁹

In the individuation process one becomes increasingly aware that there is a flow — a current that carries the individual in the direction toward wholeness. The alcoholic within A.A. calls this current guidance from God. 'Let go and let God'.¹¹⁰

The outcome of an individuation process to which a man has devoted himself with all his powers is an attitude that one can rightly call "religious" in the proper sense of the word. For this process leads him to the knowledge that he is at the mercy of an irrational power which transcends his consciousness and which he has to accept humbly.¹¹¹

Through the process of individuation, one comes to realize that the ego's place is not at the centre but rather a transcendent authority is. A.A. calls this authority a Power greater than self. When the alcoholic humbly acknowledges this transcendent authority, the realization is that God was within all the time. This realization is the result of the individuation process.

For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that Power in human lives are facts as old as man himself....We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Charles Bartuff Hanna, The Face of the Deep: The Religious Ideas of C. J. Jung, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ C. G. Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960, C.W. Vol. 14, par. 78.

¹¹⁰ Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 48.

¹¹¹ Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, p. 106.

¹¹² Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 55.

To put it in religious language, individuation has to be understood as the realization of the "divine" in man.¹¹³

Alcoholism pushes the alcoholics up against the wall. So situated, total powerlessness over the substance is acknowledged. This in turn allows the unconscious to influence and take over.

It is as though, at the climax of the illness, the destructive powers were converted into healing forces. This is brought about by the archetype's awakening to independent life and taking over the guidance of the psychic personality, thus supplanting the ego with its futile willing and striving. As a religious-minded person would say: guidance has come from God....it is nothing less than a revelation when something altogether strange rises up to confront him from the hidden depths of the psyche — something that is not his ego and is therefore beyond the reach of his personal will. He has gained access to the source of psychic life, and this marks the beginning of the cure.¹¹⁴

The alcoholic's path takes him from the centre but the path, Jung says, is only circumambulatory of the self¹¹⁵ — the path of alcoholism was from the centre and return to centre; i.e., the process of individuation. The alcoholic would only experience the peace that sobriety and serenity brings, the result of wholeness, when acknowledging that he/she was not the controller but rather that a Power greater than self was in control. Alcohol would take the alcoholic on a journey from the centre and a return to the centre in the experience of being totally powerless.

Buried within alcohol is the symbol of wholeness — water;¹¹⁶ whiskey comes from *uisge beatha* (water of life) not *uisge bháis* (water of death). Alcohol symbolically washes

¹¹³ Aniela Jaffé, The Myth of Meaning, p. 79.

¹¹⁴ C. G. Jung, Psychology and Religion, C.W. Vol. 11, par. 534.

¹¹⁵ C. G. Jung, Memories Dreams, Reflections, p. 196.

¹¹⁶ C. G. Jung, Alchemical Studies, C.W. Vol. 13, par. 371.

the person in the water of life and so it is that alcoholism takes the alcoholic through the experience of death and rebirth.

Since the long sought water, as we have shown, represents the cycle of birth and death, every process that consists of death and rebirth is naturally a symbol of the Divine water.¹¹⁷

Alcoholism for the A.A. member becomes a manifestation of the journey to the centre. The alcoholic has found the secret to wholeness — the pathology has become the foundation of their spiritual experience. The change experience as expressed within Alcoholics Anonymous becomes one example of the living reality of the individuation process as outlined by Jung.

In the terrible experience of alcoholism, one is grasped by "the Spiritual Presence and open to the transcendent unity of the unambiguous life."¹¹⁸ It is when the alcoholic acknowledges being powerless over alcohol and surrenders to a higher Power that self-transcendence is experienced. The alcoholic's response within A.A. to being grasped is surrender, which is, writes Tillich, an act of faith. The estrangement produced by alcoholism becomes the point of reunion with the ground of being (Tillich): this would be the point at which the unconscious takes over (Jung). The power of alcoholism is broken because of participation in the unambiguous. When the alcoholic acknowledges weakness in being powerless over alcohol, he/she experiences the paradox of being empowered — a strength not from willpower but rather from a higher Power.

¹¹⁷ C. G. Jung, Alchemical Studies, C.W. Vol. 13, par. 135.

¹¹⁸ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 3, p. 131.

The principle that we shall find no enduring strength until we first admit complete defeat is the main tap-root from which our whole society has sprung and flowered.¹¹⁹

Love reunites what is separated; it accepts what is judged; it participates in what is weak, as God participates in our weakness and gives us strength by His participation.¹²⁰

The New Being is born out of the death and rebirth experience of alcoholism.

New Being puts a new mark over the old one. Out of disintegration and death something is born of eternal significance. That which is immersed in dissolution emerges in a New Creation.¹²¹

In the emergence of the New Being there is simultaneously the experience of healing "reuniting that which is estranged giving a centre to what is split"¹²² — the experience of this for the alcoholic is realized in sobriety and serenity.

In the admission of being alcoholic the essential shines through the existential, transforming what it means to be alcoholic. Alcoholism as seen through the A.A. experience, moves the alcoholic from essence through existence back to essence, engaging him in the flow of essentialization. Saying that one is alcoholic and therefore separate (A.A.), opens the imbiber to the possibility of the merging of essence and existence (Tillich), the result of which is wholeness (Jung). The serene 'alcoholic' experiences salvific essentialization and individuation coterminously. The terms for all essential purposes become interchangeable. The alcoholic moves from the centre and returns to the centre as transformed alcoholic. A.A.

¹¹⁹ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 22.

¹²⁰ Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, p. 154.

¹²¹ Paul Tillich, The New Being, p. 24.

¹²² Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Vol. 2, p. 166.

calls this transformation serenity. The encounter with a Power greater than self changes the individual.

Brought to their knees by alcohol the alcoholic sees God. The alcoholic, in acknowledging alcoholism discovers God participating in his/her weakness as alcoholic. A.A. discovered that when alcoholics find God woven into their experience of fragmentation a peace flows into them and the compulsion to drink is removed.

Hence in the depths of his humanity man discovers the power of divine life offering to him the salvatory reintegration balance and growth which he universally lacks and for which he universally searches.¹²³

The alcoholic within A.A. comes to know wholeness, not perfection. Reminded of finitude, healing becomes a 'one day at a time' experience of salvation.

Tillich and Jung elucidate the change process experienced within Alcoholics Anonymous. Through them the alcoholic's Canterbury tale, his pilgrim process, is better understood. Like Job the alcoholic comes to understand the purpose behind suffering for it is out of its darkness that the light is seen. Alcoholism takes the alcoholic on a journey from the centre and opens the possibility of returning to the centre. A.A. calls this journey guidance from God, Jung calls it individuation, and Tillich calls it essentialization.

A.A. works! God, not man, is considered its author, and Bill Wilson, its evangelist. Its processes may be considered paradigms for Tillichian and Jungian thought. However, as A.A. sees it, God works through them, using them as He chooses: the process is of mystery and thus evasive of models.

¹²³ John P. Dourley, "Trinitarian Models and Human Integration," Journal of Analytical Psychology, Vol. 19, 197, p. 134.

What is most important is that the light shone through the darkness of alcoholism and the anonymous alcoholic apprehended it.

Summary

In the process found within Alcoholics Anonymous, a 'conversion experience' occurs, whereby, an individual goes from a drinking to a non-drinking state. This process has been viewed from both a psychological (Jung) and theological (Tillich) perspective, concluding that because of the phenomenological nature of the 'change experience', the erstwhile imbibor has in fact engaged in the process that Tillich refers to as essentialization and to which Jung refers as individuation.

This reflection in the light of the notions of individuation and essentialization, offers the possibility of articulating the A.A. experience and thereby, apprehending the process. The paradox is, that because of the nature of individuation and essentialization, the process may be apprehended but not influenced. Jung, at least, has identified psychological growth which he calls individuation and Tillich has identified religious maturity which he calls essentialization, the twain transposed to what A.A. calls sobriety.

A.A. experienced the process, but dared not explain nor fully understand in humility. They knew that they had tapped into a healing process over which they had no control because the only way that they could tap into this process was by 'letting go'. They discovered that in the letting go they attained sobriety.

In the light of individuation and essentialization, after society no longer considers the individual to be alcoholic, the meaning behind the identification as both alcoholic and anonymous becomes intelligible. To be anonymous is to surrender one's ego, thereby recognizing finitude and acknowledging a Power greater than self. To be alcoholic is to proclaim the awareness that one 'is not master in one's own house'.

A.A. becomes a living paradigm for what Jung calls individuation and Tillich, essentialization. The alcoholics had only experience to guide them to wholeness. The alcoholics knew that they had not created wholeness but they had discovered how to participate in the process which leads to wholeness. Those within A.A. come to realize that it is not ego, but rather God, which heals. This, they come to know with their entire beings, because with all their will and might they have attempted to attain sobriety and failed, heretofore.

Recognizing that it is only in acknowledging powerlessness over alcohol and in surrender to a higher Power than themselves, they are able to abstain from drinking and attain sobriety. They come to know through experience that they are not God but rather that God works through them as alcoholics.

They are participators in a spiritual programme that is a life-long process. Jung refers to this process as individuation and Tillich calls it essentialization — the return journey to the centre and the experience of wholeness and salvation. It is in the existential experience of pain induced by alcoholism that the alcoholic is taught that it is not man but God who is master. When the alcoholic relinquishes control, the power of being (Tillich) or the self (Jung) impacts upon the alcoholic within the experience of sobriety. The only way to initiate the return journey to the centre was for them, to acknowledge alcoholism first.

For them, then, the experience of alcoholism becomes intertwined with the experience of salvific wholeness. For the recovering alcoholic, this very alcoholism becomes a symbol of the unity of wholeness and salvation: encapsulated within alcoholism, the alcoholic has come to know the power of good and the power of evil, allowing the unconscious to emerge to consciousness. One might say, regarding the alcoholic, that from the depths of suffering,

is experienced the power of the unconscious. Pain in context, is the process through which the unconscious becomes conscious; the New Being results from the experience of transformation.

Quo Vadis

Within the 'self-help' movements which have grown out of the A.A. Twelve Step programme, mostly in North America, it becomes evident that pathology need not necessarily be alcohol-related. Rather, any pathology can become a catalyst for the experience of healing wholeness. What is important is that because of the catalyst there is a recognition of being separate from the centre. The catalysts, for example alcoholism, may transform into blessings. A.A. is not a religious programme; rather, A.A. is a spiritual programme — control rests not with a formula but with a higher Power. It would be productive to look at other self-help groups in light of Jung's understanding of 'self'. Benefit would accrue to ascertaining if one could also find in other self-help groups, fashioned after the A.A. Twelve Step programme, a similar process of individuation and essentialization.

There is, too, a growing movement, Adult Children of Alcoholics, wherein it might be interesting to see if these adult children may engage in a similar healing process to their alcoholic parent. Can they, too, participate in a similar salvific healing? Within the process of essentialization and individuation one engages the entire being. Instead of looking at what alcoholism has done to make the adult child suffer so terribly maybe (through the insights of Jung and Tillich) adult children may see the genie in the bottle too, — may see the blessings that alcoholism can ultimately be. They too may see light shining through their darkness. It might just be, that the potential of healing in '*spiritus contra spiritum*' is passed on 'from father to child'. It just might be that the alcoholic's spiritual thirst which he/she attempted to quench in the bottle can be seen as a legacy of light instead of a legacy of darkness.

What about the blessings of the 'father' being visited on the children as a counterbalance to the sins being visited?

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APPENDIX A

The Twelve Steps

Step One

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable."

Step Two

"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Step Three

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

Step Four

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Step Five

"Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs."

Step Six

"Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

Step Seven

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

Step Eight

"Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."

Step Nine

"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

Step Ten

"Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

Step Eleven

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Step Twelve

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

The Twelve Traditions**Tradition One**

"Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity."

Tradition Two

"Four our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

Tradition Three

"The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking."

Tradition Four

"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups of A.A. as a whole."

Tradition Five

"Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Tradition Six

"An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

Tradition Seven

"Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

Tradition Eight

"Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers."

Tradition Nine

"A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

Tradition Ten

"Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

Tradition Eleven

"Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films."

Tradition Twelve

"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

APPENDIX B

Bill's letter to Jung, dated January 23, 1961.

"...I doubt if you are aware that a certain conversation you once had with one of your patients, a Mr. Roland [sic]H——, back in the early 1930's, did play a critical role in the founding of our Fellowship.

"...Our remembrance of Roland H——'s statements about his experience with you is as follows:

"Having exhausted other means of recovery from his alcoholism, it was about 1931 that he became your patient. I believe he remained under your care for perhaps a year. His admiration for you was boundless, and he left you with a feeling of much confidence.

"To his great consternation, he soon relapsed into intoxication. Certain that you were his 'court of last resort,' he again returned to your care. Then followed the conversation between you that was to become the first link in the chain of events that led to the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous.

"...First of all, you frankly told him of his hopelessness, so far as any further medical or psychiatric treatment might be concerned. This candid and humble statement of yours was beyond doubt the first foundation stone upon which our Society has since been built.

"Coming from you, one he so trusted and admired, the impact upon him was immense.

"When he then asked you if there was any other hope, you told him that there might be, provided he could become the subject of a spiritual or religious experience — in short, a genuine conversion. You pointed out how such an experience, if brought about, might remotivate him when nothing else could. But you did caution, though, that while such experiences had sometimes brought recovery to alcoholics, they were, nevertheless, comparatively rare. You recommended that he place himself in a religious atmosphere and hope for the best. This I believe was the substance of your advice.

"Shortly thereafter, Mr. H—— joined the Oxford Group, and evangelical movement then at the height of its success in Europe, and one with which you are doubtless familiar. You will remember their large emphasis upon the principles of self-survey, confession, restitution, and the giving of oneself in service to others. They strongly stressed meditation and prayer. In these surroundings, Roland H—— did find a conversion experience that released him for the time being from his compulsion to drink."

"...As you will now clearly see, this astonishing chain of events actually started long ago in your consulting room, and it was directly founded upon your own humility and deep perception.

"Very many thoughtful A.A.'s are students of your writings. Because of your conviction that man is something more than intellect, emotion, and two dollars' worth of chemicals, you have especially endeared yourself to us....

"Please be certain that your place in the affection, and in the history, of our Fellowship is like no other's. Gratefully yours,"

Jung's reply, datelined Kusnacht-Zurich, January 30, 1961.

"Dear Mr. Wilson,

"Your letter has been very welcome indeed.

"I had no news from Rowland H. anymore and often wondered what has been his fate. Our conversation which he has adequately reported to you had an aspect of which he did not know. The reason that I could not tell him everything was that those days I had to be exceedingly careful of what I said. I found out that I was misunderstood in every possible way. Thus I was very careful when I talked to Rowland H. But what I really thought about was the result of many experiences with men of his kind.

"His craving for alcohol was the equivalent on a low level of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with God*

"How could one formulate such an insight in a language that is not misunderstood in our days?

"The only right and legitimate way to such an experience is that it happens to you in reality, and it can only happen to you when you walk on a path which leads you to higher understanding. You might be led to that goal by an act of grace or through a personal and honest contact with friends, or through a higher education of the mind beyond the confines of mere rationalism. I see from your letter that Rowland H. has chosen the second way, which was, under the circumstances, obviously the best.

"I am strongly convinced that the evil principle prevailing in this world leads the unrecognized spiritual need into perdition, if it is not counteracted either by a real religious insight or by the protective wall of human community. An ordinary man, not protected by an action from above and isolated in society, cannot resist the power of evil, which is called very aptly the Devil. But the use of such words

arouse[s] so many mistakes that one can only keep aloof from them as much as possible.

"These are the reasons why I could not give a full and sufficient explanation to Rowland H., but [I] am risking it with you because I conclude from your very decent and honest letter that you have acquired a point of view about the misleading platitudes one usually hears about alcoholism.

"Alcohol in Latin is *spiritus*, and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: *spiritus contra spiritum*.

"Thanking you again for your kind letter, I remain yours sincerely, C. G. Jung

"*'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God,' Psalm 42, 1"

Bill's reply to Dr. Jung's letter is dated March 20, 1961.

"Your observation that drinking motivations often include that of a quest for spiritual values caught our special interest. I am sure that, on reflection, thousands of our members could testify that this had been true of them, despite the fact that they often drank for oblivion, for grandiosity, and for other undesirable motives. Sometimes, it seems unfortunate that alcohol, used in excess, turns out to be a deformer of consciousness, as well as an addictive poison.

"Years ago, some of us read with great benefit your book entitled 'Modern Man in Search of a Soul.' You observed, in effect, that most persons having arrived at age 40 and having acquired no conclusions or faith as to who they were, or where they were, or where they were going next in the cosmos, would be bound to encounter increasing neurotic difficulties; and that this would be likely to occur whether their youthful aspirations for sex union, security, and a satisfactory place in society had been satisfied or not. In short, they could not continue to fly blind toward no destination at all, in a universe seemingly having little purpose or meaning. Neither could any amount of resolution, philosophical speculation, or superficial religious conditioning save them from the dilemma in which they found themselves. So long as they lacked any direct spiritual awakening and therefore awareness, their conflict simply had to increase.

"These views of yours, doctor, had an immense impact upon some of the early members of our A.A. Fellowship. We saw that you had perfectly described the impasse in which we had once been, but from which we had been delivered through our several spiritual awakenings. This 'spiritual experience' had to be our key to survival and growth. We saw that the alcoholic's helplessness could be

turned to vital advantage. By the admission of this, he could be deflated at depth, thus fulfilling the first condition of a remotivating conversion experience.

"So the foregoing is still another example of your great helpfulness to us of A.A. in our formative period. Your words really carried authority, because you seemed to be neither wholly a theologian nor a pure scientist. Therefore, you seemed to stand with us in that no-man's-land that lies between the two — the very place that many of us had found ourselves. Your identification with us was therefore deep and convincing. You spoke a language of the heart that we could understand."

(Alcoholics Anonymous, Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1984, p. 381-386.)

ABSTRACT

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

Thesis abstract for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. 15-XII-90

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A Periscope of the Change Experience in Alcoholics Anonymous From the Triune Perspective of Jung, Tillich and A.A.

Within the Alcoholics Anonymous' experience of change referred to as a spiritual experience, a transformation occurs. The compulsion to drink dissipates resulting in an experience of sobriety and serenity. The alcoholic discovers something within the phenomenon of the A.A. experience which results in a transformation. A.A. seems to interpret and elucidate a healing process not operant in theology nor psychology severally.

The purpose of this dissertation is a study of the change experience referred to by A.A. as a spiritual experience — a quickening or awakening which results in sobriety and serenity. From a theological (Paul Tillich) and a psychological (Carl G. Jung) perspective, this research attempts to unravel the process encapsulated by the phenomenon, where, the common meeting ground of psychology and religion, forms as it were, a new synthesis together with an elusive catalyst.

Methodologically, material is drawn from numerous sources — literature written by Alcoholics Anonymous — research addressing alcoholism — most specifically the impact of Alcoholics Anonymous in the treatment of alcoholics. A historical dimension views the impact of the Religion and Health Movement and the influence it might have had on the formation of A.A. The writings of Carl G. Jung and Paul Tillich are used as periscopes to view the change process within A.A. Jung addresses the human experience of *Imago Dei* and Paul Tillich in his theology decries dichotomizing of the human experience of God. A.A. writings articulate wholeness in assuring the permanency of serenity — all aspects of a person's being must be healed. Within this presentation, integration rather than dichotomy occurs. The parts become whole within the very experience of alcoholism.

The conclusions reached in this research elucidate what A.A. had only intuited within their spiritual experience of change. In suffering through alcoholism something new is born. Standing in a 'no-man's-land' between psychology and theology, is where the alcoholic finds comfortable manoeuvring space. The domains of theology and psychology, felicitously, neither challenge, capitulate nor captivate therein. The contrary is also evident. Out of an abyss of nothingness a spiritual experience occurs. Alcoholics discover that their very alcoholism is a source of healing.

The process of change apprehended within A.A. experience, is comprehended when the experience is viewed through individuation (Jung) and essentialization (Tillich). The process, made clear in the A.A. experience, seems to parallel individuation and essentialization but though paralleling it, do not unravel the mystery. The paradox is that it is in letting go that healing change comes about; i.e., 'letting go and letting God'.

In the depths of the A.A. experience, is perceived a paradigm for what Jung calls 'individuation' and Tillich 'essentialization'. Alcoholics only had their experience to guide them to wholeness. They knew that they had not created wholeness but they had discovered how to participate in the process which leads to wholeness. Those within A.A. came to realize that it is not self, but rather God, who heals. They followed their journey to wholeness, through suffering in alcoholism; their experience is a living paradigm of essentialization and individuation.

Quo Vadis

If A.A. members can find a 'balance' to set aright their lives — in an almost alchemic way to change pathology to health, surely in their experience and process, lies direction and hope for the myriads with parallel negative direction consuming their being — their very lives. For them '*Spes in Deo*' and '*Lux in Tenebre*' are inseparable.