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# Mental Health as Viewed by Medics and Mystics

Vincent V. Herr

In taking up this difficult question, we must first define our terms very exactly. We do this in the interest of clarity in spite of the fact that many readers will take issue with our definitions.

In discussing the meaning of mental health, as opposed to mental illness, much heated argument has occurred. This seems somehow to be related to the general debate medical men have

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*Father Vincent V. Herr received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in psychology from the University of Bonn in 1939. A Master of Science degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree was awarded him by St. Louis University. He studied socialism in Germany during the 1930's. From 1940 to 1965 Father Herr was chairman of the Department of Psychology at Loyola University. He has authored books on psychology of the religious and the screening of candidates for the religious life and the priesthood. His new book entitled "The Personality of Seminarians" will appear in the next few months.*

carried on down the ages regarding the precise nature of disease. Historically, disease has been thought to be anything from an obsession or a possession by a demon, to a germ or bacterially initiated decay process. Much of this debate might well have been avoided, had the persons concerned agreed on the fundamental concepts of the nature of life.

For the present writer, life means organization from within of variously complex and self-sustaining processes. It involves of necessity a continuously self-perfecting activity, in order that the living being may be able to restore itself when its existence is threatened from outside, as well as to repair itself when subjected to the ordinary and extraordinary stress of daily living.

With this essentially vitalistic concept of life in mind we have described health in general as the state in which a living organism is functioning properly at all levels of its existence. It has the various systems and part processes harmoniously geared toward each other so that it can sustain itself in its normal environment, exercise its functions of growing and maturing; in a word, living beings serve one another by their contributions, and man, who himself shares life with all of them, makes use of them in whatever way he chooses in order to further his own ends. Man alone is master of his environment, both the living and non-living elements of the same.

With this non-mechanistic concept of life in mind it will not be too difficult to get a clear notion of what

health means. It signifies the proper functioning of all the organs and organ-systems, so that they enable the individual to sustain itself for a time and to make some contribution to the larger sphere in which he exists. Illness is the failure of one or the other part to contribute its share to the whole self-sustaining process, or even it may mean that one part-process is actually hindering the carrying out of another; one single inner action, or only a few, are blocking another or several others. If disease is not removed, death may result prematurely. The gradual, slowly progressing, inner changes that lead inevitably to general deterioration are labelled aging rather than illness. In a word, from the moment of birth onward, the living organism is slowly but surely dying. As biologists have been wont to say from time immemorial, when dissimilative processes get predominance over assimilative ones, the organism approaches death. When the latter predominates, he is maturing. During a large part of the organism's existence it is in a kind of balance (homeostatic condition) as regards all its complex processes; it is a healthy adult.

All this round about way of speaking merely amounts to the following: healthy organisms live in a condition in which all the complicated organ systems function in the way in which they are expected to function, for the well-being of the whole. Digestive organs prepare the food for assimilation, excretory organs remove accumulated waste materials, the circulatory system transmits food to all organs and also removes the waste materials.

Why this long discourse on health? Simply because the meaning of illness cannot be made clear without it. Much less can the meaning of MENTAL health and illness.

One may go on now to state with precision and clarity that mental health means that those activities and habit systems called mental are functioning in the manner that is expected, for those species of life which have minds. They not only achieve their individual goals — he sense power responds to its proper stimulus, etc.; they also contribute to the well-being of the whole — the sentient organism experiences sensation. If the organism belongs to a species that is expected to act rationally, it does so. Its rational powers, moreover, integrated with the others. It performs as a whole efficiently, and without lapsing for long into the state from which NO rational action can be evoked. It acts now with full awareness (mental life), and again, without this quality. When healthy, it can always be aroused to this level; when ill, it lacks arousability (when dead, or in deep coma, it lacks it terminally).

To summarize, the mentally healthy person functions in an efficient manner, utilizing all his functions in a way that contributes to the good of the whole. In complex society, they function, when up to the social norms, in a way that benefits the group also. Man being by nature social this is the least that can be expected.

The mentally ill person is, first of all, unable to do these things; but in addition actually harms, or even does permanent harm, to the group in which he lives, and also at times to his very own self. Not only do his powers fail to function as expected, they develop trends (symptoms) which make it impossible even to live with others, or with oneself. This is the briefest way, it would seem, in which all kinds of mental illness can be described. Let the reader compare this description with that of other author-

ities in the mental health sciences. Experts in mental health, from five of the largest states in the Union, agree with us in stressing the efficiency element of mental health, but they follow the traditional medical view regarding illness, namely to categorize the symptoms. Reading between the lines, however, it is easy to see how each one of these categories of symptoms points to one or the other kind of loss of functions expected. The paranoid is unduly suspicious, the schizoid is confused emotionally, the parietic lacks brain function, the neurotic is unduly anxious and sensitive, etc., etc. One of the main findings of our national health research organization in five different states was that the medical profession of the present date is totally inadequate to cope with the vast increment in mental illness and that ancillary disciplines, such as clergy and educators generally, must share the burden and come to the rescue. As a matter of fact at the present time, the investigators assert, educators and psychologists are doing the vast majority of that thing which the community in general would likely call preventive mental health training. Subsequent action following upon this national survey has resulted in the establishment of numerous out-patient mental health centers, as well as a special commission in the American Medical Association called that on religion and mental health and another on religion and psychiatry. (See J.R. Ewalt, M.D., Second Annual Report, Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health, 1957, Cambridge 39, Massachusetts.)

It is to be expected that in the future more collaboration between all these professions will be forthcoming. Clergymen have for a long time been trying to train their seminarians better in the rules and principles of mental

health. Only very recently have members of the medical professions asked for and received some special training in the relationship between religion and mental health. This improved liaison can only lead to more efficient treatment of the general public, by members of both professions.

Some probable reason for the former lack of collaboration was the clergyman's doubts about the psychiatrists' point of view concerning morality. For example, if a certain action of man would be called wicked by the clergyman, it might be deemed only a symptom by the psychiatrist. It is agreed today that the clergyman's function of making moral judgments does not preclude the kind of treatment of illness which is really best for the patient. Actually, however, most clergymen look upon morality as something having divine sanctions, whereas psychiatrists often approach the problem without need for divine authority and this may be a cause of poor communication between the two professions.

By means of countless prayers and self-denials, mystics have reached a state called heroic virtue. They have carried the process of self-perfection to such an extent that they can be designated as mystics. Our aim here will be to show that, in spite of almost unbelievable amounts of self-inflicted penance and prayer, the mystics are still living healthy, normal human lives from the mental health point of view. In other words, they are relatively free from conflicts; they are characters who often go forth into the world and carry civilization to the farthest and most deserted places; they sometimes receive the special favors from God which single them out as living totally and continually in the presence of God, and in communion with Him;

but still they are such as can be described by a simple appeal to the "eight beatitudes" of Christ, those famous ideals of human perfection given us by the divine master. As examples one might mention a St. Francis of Assisi, a Catherine of Sienna, or St. John Vianney or finally the as yet uncanonized Saint of the Sahara Desert. But each reader will probably have his own "favorite" model, and it cannot be doubted that all such are blessed and at peace, with the world as well as with themselves; they suffer, weep, hunger for justice; they are poor in spirit, pure, merciful, meek, and try to make peace.

After confession the Catholic believes his sins are forgiven; he fulfills the token-penance imposed, believes that, however great his sins, he is restored to the friendship of God, provided of course his intentions are sincere to do his best to avoid dangers of serious sin in the future. By communion he gains additional strength to continue his efforts, to practice all the Christian virtues, as far as is possible for him with the aid of God's grace, which he constantly implores.

Mystical experience refers to contemplation, visions, raptures, ecstasies and the like. These are far from the daily experiences of the ordinary religious person, for they are the result of special gifts and aids, coming directly from God to his creatures — they are not the mere resultant of intense prayerful activity of the one who prays or strives for perfection. In a very true sense, every grace, actual as well as sanctifying, is a gift of God. When it is stated that the supernatural life of the soul is a gift, it is surely implied that the mystical experiences of certain persons are special gifts, not needed for gaining heaven, not possible to be merited in any true

sense of the word. Ecstasy is a mystical experience, and it is the main one discussed by the writers on the subject; and it is the experience which is most often ridiculed and belittled by scientists hostile to religion. They claim it is nothing else than an abnormal psychological phenomenon that indicates neuroses or even psychoses, obsessions and the like on the part of the possessor. To summarize, when God is known, loved and invoked through the medium of images, concepts and the many other conscious concomitants of religious experiences, there is the action known as ordinary prayer or asceticism. But when God is known and loved in addition, by some direct psychic process, by an immediate realization of the Divine, then this is mystical experience; there is a difference in intensity between the two experiences, but there is also a difference in the quality of the experience which is felt in consciousness, but more of this later.

A thorough perusal of the literature of mystical theology has not resulted in our finding of a very frequent use of the word "peace" by the mystics when they are attempting to describe their own experiences. This might be a reason why medical men take the stance that they do. There seems to be a reason for this omission. It cannot without further study be taken to mean that the mystics are not at peace. It would seem that the researchers, who have catalogued their experiences, have gleaned mostly from those aspects of mystical life which show "suffering"; this may have been due to the fact that the "dark night of the soul" or the "mastery of the senses" seems to the writers to be the most significant departure, on the part of the mystics, from the normal everyday way of living of Christian ascetics.

As we go along it will be apparent, however, that when the writers do come to that phase of mystical growth and development called mystical "union," they at least implicitly attribute to the "sufferers" a kind of "peace" that is beyond human and even medical understanding. Actually, in all the books which were consulted, and that were written in English about the mystics, the word "peace" is not even listed in the index of titles.

Since mystics are moved and carried along by divine inspiration, and are experiencing things which no other normal human being could experience by his own power, perhaps they can never be able to report such experience in terms which the normal, ordinary individual could understand. Aumman (1962) is an authority who holds that even if one could secure the first-hand empirical evidences descriptive of thoughts and motives possessed by the mystics during their unusual mystical experiences, one could not be allowed to use such evidence in the same manner in which he might use introspective reports of other individuals. This point will be hard to grasp by the medical man, usually a rigid unbeliever in the possibility of such phenomena from the very start of the investigation. By definition, in the terminology which is being followed here, mystical experience is a supernatural gift from on high, an activity of the human soul brought about by a special indwelling of the diety and a special super-human activity of the soul. Hence the self-made reports of these experiences, though couched in human language, must be interpreted cautiously, to say the least. They are always only analogous to the reports of normals. This means that they are partly the same and partly different. Even this statement needs elucidation. The case is similar to that whereby the

normal person knows God one way and the mystic knows him that way and more. For the normal person the idea of God is said to be analogous and not univocal. It is negatively-positive. This means that when a normal human being contemplates nature, he sees that creatures possess qualities, such as truth, goodness, beauty, and justice, by showing certain qualities in their behavior. If God is the creator of all these creatures, He must possess these same attributes in a more perfect manner than do the creatures. But He really does possess them, and our expression for the manner in which we come to know them is by way of "affirmation and negation"; affirmation of the quality and denial of any limitation. Hence our knowledge of God and his attributes is normally by way of negation, that is, by affirming a positive attribute and by denying any possible limitation. That is, we say justice, truth, and goodness are found in God in a negatively infinite degree, only because of the manner in which they are known by us normal human beings.

The case for the mystic is similar but radically different: he knows God directly and without the mediation of creatures nor of sensations, images, and phantasms. God is vividly present to him by a single act, not by a series of reasoning processes. God is known as He is in Himself, not by way of negation of limitations. He is not compared to creatures and then seen to be superior. He is at once present through the intellect and the will of the mystic. This means that he felt, loved, and known in one and the same act. This is as close to a description of the mental process of the mystic as one can get, by comparing the notes of one mystic with those of another, and by comparing both with the reports of other normal non-mystical experiences of human beings.

This seems like a terrible contradiction — that God could reveal Himself to creatures while they are still in the state of “probation,” — *in via ad*, that is, in preparation for, salvation — as theologians are wont to say. Rather than *a priori* saying such a thing is impossible, we should give the mystic a chance to try at least, to express what he is feeling when he thinks and talks about God. The nearest we can come clearly and truthfully telling ourselves what their peculiar experience actually are, is to say that God is almost present to them on earth in the same way that He will be present to them after this earthly existence is over. Such being the case, the manner in which they experience God and other supernatural realities is precisely the thing which distinguishes them from “normals”.

If this difference in the manner of experiencing God characterizes the mystic, then it seems to follow that the description which mystics give of their other “elevated” experiences would seem to need careful and critical interpretation, before it is repeated in language that can be understood only in a limited way by non-mystics. Normal language is only SYMBOLIC and never UNIVOCAL and capable of identifying an object immediately. It involves abstractions and comparison, generalization and interpretation. God’s word to mystics does not require any of these things.

We stress these points in order to answer the charge sometimes made against writers like John of the Cross, Theresa of Avila, — that their language is ambiguous, unclear, unintelligible, and an expression of pure fancy, etc. . . . Their biographers have to contend with one another in order to come to some kind of agreement as to the real meaning. Hence even the

biographers seem to speak a strange and impossible language, in which the rules of logic seem inapplicable. Those who read Freudian literature, and find that normals too, when subject to pressures from the unconscious, speak a weird and foreign sort of language, unintelligible to the persons themselves when it comes to consciousness, will get a glimpse of what we mean. The language of the normal human unconscious if full of the rarest form of symbolism. Even after years of analysis and interpretation the meanings are not always certainly clear to the ones being psychoanalyzed. The mystic, in speaking of his supernatural experiences, describes fully conscious states, and facts of experience in terms unintelligible to other normal human beings. Instead of calling him abnormal, it would seem to be more proper to designate him as supernatural. His words and sentences express reality immediately and directly, whereas those of us normals may possibly express it firstly symbolically by one form of sign, then subconsciously by another form of rationally unconscious erotic and repressed symbolism. Readers who would like a further treatment of this important topic from the Catholic point of view will do well to read D’Albiez (1941) who is a practicing psychiatrist with thorough training in his own religion, as well as in the various theories of modern psychoanalysis.

### THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES THEMSELVES

We shall preface the description with a kind of guide-line or first principle: mystics express themselves oddly, in strange symbols, and were they to

describe experiences shared in common with us, we would certainly believe them. If we believe them as to the FACT that they are having an unusual experience, it seems illogical to deny the content of their descriptions of these experiences. That is to say, they are generally quite sure whether or not they are having or feeling the immediate contact with God. If we trust them as to the fact, we must also rightly trust them as to the manner of the factual experience. Either reject the whole process, or take it for what it appears to be, with the aid of our poor insight into their modes of thought; all this with our humble acceptance of the limitations of our own processes of knowledge and of expression.

Let us now hear from the mystics themselves. St. John of the Cross:

For if the will can in any way comprehend God and be united with Him, it cannot be through any capacity of the desire, but only by love; and as all delight, sweetness and joy, of which the will is sensible, is not love, it follows that none of these pleasing impressions can be the adequate means of uniting the will to God; the means are an act of the will. And because an act of the will is united with God, and rests in Him; that act is love. This union is never wrought by feeling, or exertions of the desire, for these remain in the soul as aims and ends.

St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame*, London, Baker, 1912, Letter X, p. 161, quoted by Howley (1920).

This one text shows the difficult language used by the mystics.

Let us hear Theresa:

O my daughters! Their value (the mystical experiences) cannot be overrated, for though the recipient is incapable of describing them, they are deeply imprinted in the center of

the soul and are never forgotten . . . I, too do not understand this, but I know that certain truths of the greatness of God remain so impressed on the spirit by this favor, that, did not faith teach it Who He is and that it is bound to believe He is God, it would henceforth worship Him as such, as Jacob did when he saw the ladder.

St. Theresa, *Interior Castle*, Mansion VI, Chapter IV, paragraph 6, quoted by Howley.

This text is particularly pertinent in that it shows how the reader, not prepared for the ineffable mode of expression of the mystics, could hardly gather that this sufferer, passing from the third purgation into the state of Union with God, would be at the pinnacle of peaceful experiences. Some writers say that in order to understand the quotation better it would be well to remember that the union involves a total annihilation of the self, and a new creation of the human person now totally immersed in the Divine; he lives, now not by himself but God lives in him, with a new celestial life, experienced almost first hand as it were.

J. Marechal (1927), a learned writer on mystical phenomena, gives us the following quotation in his *Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics*, Page 34.

...let us interrogate the subject (mystic) on his spontaneous convictions. In so far as he lives an interior life of medium intensity he will tell us of his conviction of a constant compenetration of his action by the Divine action: this persuasion constitutes the greater part of his confidence in his moral future and of his firmness of conduct; when he prays he does not doubt, in practice that God answers his prayer by the gift of more peace, light, and courage; when he acts, when he struggles to maintain his moral ideal, he believes himself to be leaning on a powerful arm which sustains him . . . The

humbler phenomena of which we are here thinking are the direct and normal manifestations of sincere religious feeling: . . . SERENITY and force under trials; the specifically Christian humility of mind and heart.

The ordinary Christian has probably learned at a fairly early age to live the mystery and apparent contradiction of the Gospel, when it tells him that the last shall be first, and that it is good for him when insulted without cause to turn the other cheek. This saving precept is not restricted to followers of the Christian denomination either; rather it is one of the broadest of all universally valid principles of humanitarianism and harmonious living.

It will be relevant here to quote one of our most renowned non-Catholic writers also on this question of mysticism. William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) p. 225, describes peace as "Equanimity, Resignation, Fortitude, and Patience which it brings." Then he quotes that remarkable English poet, himself no stranger to spiritual struggles, Gerard Manley Hopkins, as coming close to the same idea in his sonnet, *Peace*, in the last quatrain of which the poet says: "The Lord leaves patience in lieu of Peace, and Patience 'plumes to Peace thereafter'. And when Peace does come, she comes with work to do, she does not come to coo." So Patience is still present, along with Fortitude and Resignation, as James says in a vein very similar to that of the great Thomas Aquinas in speaking of the same subject. One really must read Hopkins' sonnet for the thrill of the Muse.

The point of all this is that peace, the absence of disabling conflict is not

won without a continual brave enduring, a long-suffering, the true meaning of Patience.

Turning from the great psychologist of our time to a few of the modern mystics, let us read a line or two from each. In all of them we shall see a great and burning desire to abandon self in the service of God and humanity. Here is the scientist-ascetic and mystic Teilhard de Chardin:

May the Lord only preserve in me burning love for the world and great gentleness; and may he help me persevere to the end in the fullness of humanity!

The English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins speaks in language which savors of mysticism, as William James, the psychologist, could not fail to notice. We quote in part:

When will you ever, Peace, wild wood dove, shy wings shut. Your round neck roaming end, and under be my boughs? When, when, Peace, will you come? I'll not play hypocrite To own my heart: I yield. You do come sometimes; but That piecemeal peace is poor peace. What pure peace allows Alarms of wars, the daunting wars, the death of it? O surely, leaving Peace, my Lord should leave in lieu Some good! And so he does leave Patience exquisite, That plumes to Peace thereafter. And when Peace here does house He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo. He comes to brood and sit.

In conclusion one must not overlook that elegant lover saint of the people, the seraphic Saint Francis of Assisi with those memorable words:

Lord, make him (the priest) an instrument of peace. Where there is hatred, let him sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

## MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES AND NEUROTIC COMPARED

Many behavior samples of the higher level mystics are apt to appear odd to the ordinary observer. Not a few "myths" have developed with regard to their existence and one must read "lives of the saints" most cautiously in order to discriminate the actual from the exaggerated and even purely mythical phenomena. The latest book by Aumann and Roye (1962) gives one of the clearest, authentic accounts by a Catholic expert. This is not the place to discuss them but since many psychology books have compared a few such phenomena to similar ones among neurotics, we may give a brief summary of the cases.

Let us take ecstasy for an example. This term identifies a mystical experience in full stage of union, of such intensity that the normal sense relation of the soul with the outside world is completely suspended. The subject perceives nothing of the surrounding environment, is frequently incapable of movement, and cannot terminate the ecstasy at will. This state has a positive as well as a negative aspect; the positive is the union of intellect and will with God, and the negative is the deficit of sensori-motor experience. When the state is over, the subject feels great reserves of new moral energy and is stimulated to greater and greater efforts in the spiritual life. Thus the tenseness and apparent strain under which the person seems to have passed during the trance do not deter him from carrying on his ordinary activities after the experience is over.

When this phenomenon is compared to hypnosis and certain levels of drug-

addiction, certain likeness and differences appear. In both hypnosis and ecstasy the person is able to speak; in both there is, however, some dissociation from the immediate environment. But here the similarity ceases. In both states there is heightened suggestibility, but of an entirely different sort. The hypnotist needs "rapport" but the mystic knows no such bond to another human being. The hypnotic state becomes "amnesic" without certain very special precautions; no such limitation attaches to the mystic experience, but usually it is quite intensely retained though vaguely as to unimportant details. Habits changed through hypnotic suggestion (and even through the influence of the so-called psychedelic drugs) are not found to be lasting. Not so the ecstatic renewal. The one who experiences these very real vivifying trances and elevations is always improved by the experience, in the sense that he has more decisiveness and resolution, more energy and perseverance in keeping his desired way of life. He does not become enslaved or dependent upon any other person except that of his divine master and Lord. He becomes more united to God, the source of his new strength and wants more and more to serve Him alone. During ecstasy the subject is far from passive; he may even speak in a blurred and confused fashion but he is in fair contact with reality throughout; when the experience is over there will be no full description in conventional terms, but the experiences will be so deeply imprinted in the depths of the soul, that they will never be forgotten; they may even be talked about with recurring and almost monotonous frequency, as most mystics are wont to report after the events.

In levitation the person avers that he is in a gravitationless world, and only recently have we accurate descriptions of such a state from the astronauts. We have yet to ascertain whether or not the mystic experiences the physiological changes as do the outer-space experts. One expert physician of the author's acquaintance described a mystical state that he witnessed as being very similar to coma, as far as physiological changes are concerned. That is, bodily temperature drops, breathing slows and almost ceases, and life almost ceases. Nevertheless psychic life is superabundantly increased, and this shows itself in greater energy, and progress in virtue after the trance. During the trance there may be experienced visions and revelations, distinct in character, as the subjects realized, from images had by another type of contemplative who is subject to illusions and hallucinations. Hence one sees at once that spiritual directors often have their utmost difficulty in discriminating the true from the "fake" mystic or imposter. The one criterion which has stood the test of ages is this: Do these unusual and God-given privileged experiences result in a change toward a better life on the part of the experiencer? If not, then they are at best suspect and in need of much deeper interpretation and treatment.

In summary the mystical experiences start with the prayer of simplicity, melting into the prayer of quiet, which deepens toward union, and this flames into ecstasy passing into transforming union. The distinctions are rather subjective but they vary from person to person; they are all in the order of faith and thus transcend our feeble intelligence to grasp them in their entirety.

Readers may do well to follow the advice of the mystics themselves; let

no one seek to attain such experience by his own efforts. Such experiences could be harmful, especially if one is not adequately prepared for them.

### PATHOLOGY AND THE VIRTUES

We have felt the need of this last section to round out the notions concerning the relationship between religion as practiced by Catholics and mental health. A few of the notions used here may appear rather technical to the lay reader but this is because of the manner of speech which characterizes the theologian, even in modern time. We shall try as we go along to bring the terms somewhat up to date, but all the same, we shall probably find that there is no really adequate set of words or phrases which bring out the meaning of such concepts as virtue, potency, habit in a manner intelligible to the majority of English-speaking persons.

Much pathological behavior comes from spiritual unrest, and this in turn is comparable to sadness, the opposite of happiness or peace in human beings. Sadness may follow from hopes predoomed to disappointment. When there is no proper balance between humility and self-confidence, there is not likely to be enough of self-acceptance. Psychotherapy aims at reshaping character through what might be called the essentially human virtues, and these are nothing more than dynamic habit patterns, inculcated in all the human powers, especially those known by philosophers as the rational intellect and rational will or appetite. Thus psychotherapy has much in common with religious education. Virtues are by definition enduring expressions of reason, in and through the other powers of man. Misguided notions of virtue, such as that of Puritanism and Victorianism, lead to

abnormal behavior. This idea can be found in Terruwe (1958) who is a fully trained practicing psychiatrist. Virtue consists in sublimating, that is to say, transforming other energies, not merely in expressing the lower through the higher forms. It consists in the higher powers taking up and changing most radically, the energy from the lower, and thus giving it a new form and determination. This new form implies a new direction and proportion to a higher end or goal. Virtue makes one's lower nature share more fully in the nature of reason.

For example, the virtue of continence or chastity keeps the sexual passions in restraint and moderation. If passions were to be compared to wild animals, as St. Paul sometimes seems to do, one would say that they might become wilder and more ferocious, when they are locked up or restrained. But if passions are normal human emotions and can be conditioned, trained and guided, then they can become powerful tools for achievement, through reinforcement of healthy habit patterns. After all, passions, in the strictest sense of the term, are nothing more than powerful and persistent emotions.

In the process of acquiring virtues, both moral and theological, all the higher powers of man are channeled into courses of action which lead to the actuation of the self and its fulfillment. And this means the whole self, with all its powers. Man's spiritual, that is supernatural life has often been compared to his natural life with powers or functions on every level of complexity, from the simplest vegetative growth process to the highest inductive-deductive intellectual creative processes. Through divine aids and graces this whole set of powers will be transformed into a kind of

divine life, even before one passes to the eternal life that is to come after death. One participates in this divine life both in this and in the next life, in proportion to the degree to which he chooses to cooperate with God's plan for him on earth. Notice we say that God chooses to help in accordance with man's cooperation, but this does not mean that man merits this help in any real sense; it is a free gift of the Almighty just as it is freely accepted by the decisive acts of men.

The virtues are conferred by sanctifying grace and aid man in all his strivings and they are called infused, which means supplied gratuitously by God. Other virtues acquired more directly for specific occasions in the life of man, the so-called moral virtues regulate his dealings with one another and life situations. These latter are called prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. The former are those which deal mostly with man's relation to God, and they are faith, hope and charity, the theological virtues. But even the roots of the moral virtues are laid down through the aid of God, and are therefore infused.

Nevertheless, in spite of a certain passivity which might be implied in the word "infused" the teaching of the church from time immemorial has been that human efforts and decisions count largely in the plan which divine providence has for each one of us. It is by diligently trying to follow this divine plan (shown in his laws and counsels) that each person perfects his whole self, actuates as many as possible of his potentialities, in any one time and place. The relative efficacy of the human efforts compared to that of divine intervention has been the subject of much discussion between theologians from the earliest days of Christianity. They still are — but we now choose to call them *Dialogues*.

During the process of growth in virtue, man perfects and fulfills himself in a way unique to himself, but virtue, from the angle of the Christian commitment, is really the incarnation of the spirit of Jesus Christ, who assumed into his human person a nature which became the instrument of expression of his divine personality and will. By means of virtues, which really are facilitators or activators of good deeds, we gain a relish and thirst for spiritual things, with which the virtuous will of man shares itself with sensory appetites. Thus the appetites also becomes sources of energy, real drives toward acquisition and accomplishment, as is attested by the examples of many saints and apostles of God. Virtues follow from repetition of acts, knowingly of course, since "pure" mechanisms of behavior have no real voluntariness about them. By deliberately practicing bringing the passions under control of reason and volition one gains better integration as well as facilitation of effort. Thus even though the drag downward of passion be felt at times, the person endowed with the virtues and the gifts of the Spirit, goes onward, knowing that he will resist and infallibly succeed. This is the connection between virtue and the healthy self-confidence and cheerfulness of the truly practicing Christian.

Now to connect the notions of virtue with those of the appetites or instincts. The virtue of hope is a modification of the appetitive apprehensions, in the same way that love is a modification of desire, and joy is that of striving to accomplish. During life human beings need something to love (someone); also some assurance of gaining it, otherwise they succumb to torpor and depression. Persistent deep

anxiety may be an intermediate state, it can be handled in a sick person if the therapist can show him a way out, and reinforce his efforts to go that way. When the anxious and depressed person finds no way out, good effects may come from teaching patience by which the sufferer is strengthened NOT to succumb to dejection, depression and despair. So long as desire and striving are made active and active in the sufferer, attempts at suicide are less likely to follow.

The purpose of this last section has been to point out some likenesses and differences between the experiences of the mystics, and also of other zealous and scrupulous seekers after the kingdom of God on the one hand, and psychic deviates on the other. Our second purpose was, obviously to make clear the views of a certain subsection of psychotherapists, that certain therapeutic measures resemble in large part the educational methods of religionists.

This may or may not be the place to deal with the problem often raised by well-meaning scientists; it is actually as old as Aristotle, who at the same time gave us a partial solution. It is the problem which when stated bluntly comes to this: All ye seekers after salvation for your own souls are but egocentric selfish egotists — and here again volumes are written on the dilemma of altruism versus egocentrism. Even the great St. Thomas Aquinas never quite decided the issue as to whether or not there could be a totally unselfish human act. We shall suggest a very simple solution, based on the true theology of God and the purpose of creating human beings. The solution to the problem of selfishness lies in admitting that we are all creatures of God, sons of God and heirs to the kingdom, brothers in Christ; we cannot possibly save our-

selves (or damage our hopes for salvation) without in some way influencing others. God wants all to be saved and to help each other in the process. He gains no additional power or help from us; our salvation IS HIS EXTERNAL GLORY. His plan is what we and He and they all want. This is what life means to the Deist and Christian.

The higher mystical experiences are different from our own, by means of God's special favors. Think of St. John of the Cross or of St. Theresa of Avila. Their experiences are upward and forward looking, and fulfilling the basic needs of human nature, giving satisfaction to human striving. The experiences of sick persons, while possible means to desirable ends, are in themselves emaciating, damaging, ravaging, deteriorating, even death-dealing at times. May it be said in conclusion that God gives us saints who in every era are living examples of how people ought to live. The doctrine of the Little Flower might be summarized in the two ideas of confidence and surrender. In our own case we need the former in these disturbing times, to help get rid of or to diminish the anxiety of living. We need the latter since it implies a realization of the meaning of life than which there is no higher — a devotion to a cause and the dedication of self thereto; a worthy cause, that of self-annihilation and self-abdication in pursuit of a worthwhile and true lifetime goal.

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