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PSYCHOTHERAPY AND SPIRITUALITY

Maria Imelda Pastrana Nabor, Ph.D¹

¹Aklan State University, Banga, Aklan, Philippines

ABSTRACT

“Psychotherapy” is an effective alternative for healing especially to people facing different trials and tribulations. Is there a psychotherapy at least implicit in Christian revelation? Modern and contemporary insights into the areas of psychotherapy and human maturation can greatly enrich us in our attempt to understand more profoundly the meaning, scope and implications of doctrines regarding the healing mission of Jesus Christ, as it is operative in the Church and in the world today.

Jesus has established the reputation as the effective witness to man of a total and complete eschatological healing as well as an ultimate or trans-temporal one. Thus, Jesus healing mission includes the healing of the whole person: the psyche and body of man as well as his spirit. Jesus, through the gift of his Spirit and the Sacraments brings eschatological and spiritual healing including the psychic and somatic dimensions of man.

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KEYWORDS: *Psychotherapy, Spirituality, Logotherapy, Religious, Conversion*

Psychotherapy

What is Psychotherapy? In his book *Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy*,¹ Robert Harper defines Psychotherapy as the use of any psychological technique in the treatment of mental disorder or social and emotional maladjustment. In my understanding, Psychotherapy is a process of inner healing wherein a patient suffering from a psychic or emotional (traumatic) or psychosomatic disturbance has the energy or will to empower to let go and be revived by transcending the disturbance in question and live in a more personalized, integrated and an intensified manifestation of loving concern and acceptance.

I am convinced that Jesus employed a variety of means to heal patients suffering from mental or emotional disturbances. It is possible to argue on the

perspective that there are implicit psychotherapeutic elements present in the teachings of Jesus and in his sacramental manifestations and acting in the Church and in the Christian revelational event.

Victor Frankl’s Logotherapy²

Frankl depicts man as basically influence by a desire to find and fulfill meaning and value in his life. Man is called to a self-transcendence by giving them space to be themselves, encouraging and stimulating them to be themselves and so finally supporting and empowering them beyond their external privations and internal inhibitions to flower in their own being. This is possible when man goes beyond himself. These are not mere subjective phenomena but something objective founded from a sphere beyond and over man. For Frankl, the frustration of the will to memory leads to noogenic neurosis e.g.,

depression, aggression, addiction etc. Aids disease could lead also to noogenic neurosis, dementia etc. The healing of existential frustration, noogenic neurosis and psychogenic or conventional neuroses is through the application of the dynamics of “*Logotherapy*”, If this perspective is correct, then, Jesus is elevated as the Logotherapist par excellence possessing psychotherapeutic power to heal noogenic neuroses etc. To patients who open themselves to him as the truth who sets them free.

William Glasser’s Reality Therapy³

Glasser envisages the human being as one who must fulfill certain natural exigencies if he is to be whole and mature. The human person has two basic psychological needs: the need to love and be loved and the need to feel that we are worthwhile to ourselves and to others. The failure to fulfill their needs is grounded on mental or emotional disturbance would result to various forms of irresponsible action and either a partial or total denial of reality. If this reality principle or technique of healing is correct then a human being suffering from neuroses and psychoses etc. can be liberated through a loving acceptance and firm guidance to fulfill their basic psychological needs in a responsible fashion and in accord with reality. Jesus himself exercised the true creativity of Christian love of neighbor on personal and social form may thus be revealed. This God is at once creative and responsive in relation to human beings as he sustains the originating creative act in enabling human beings develop to their fullness (value recognition or value bestowal). God’s creative – responsive love is matched then by humanity’s responsive – creative love in regard to human beings. Jesus responsive love had creative, liberating effects of the law, sin and death. Thus reality therapy is a true therapy.

Albert Ellis’s Rational – Emotive Psychotherapy⁴

In Ellis’ general principles, man’s emotional and psychological disturbances are largely a result of his illogical or irrational thought. The patient suffering will gain relief of most of his mental or emotional disturbances by learning to minimize his irrationality and maximize his rationale thinking. He must empower himself to counteract a particular event in his mind i.e., when he is mentally reiterating negative, illogical, self-defeating unrealistic thoughts and ideas to themselves brought about by A.I.D.S. etc. What are these irrational ideas? Ellis’ in his book *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy* provides us examples of irrational ideas.

1. It is a necessity for an adult human being to be loved and approved by virtually significant other person in his community.

2. One should be thoroughly competent, adequate and achieving in all possible respects if one is to consider oneself worthwhile.
3. It is awful and catastrophic when things are not the way one would very much like to be.
4. If something is or may be dangerous or fearsome one should be terribly concerned about it and should keep dwelling on the possibility of it’s occurring.
5. It is easier to avoid than to face certain life difficulties and self – responsibilities.
6. One’s past history is an all – important determinant of one’s present behavior and because something once strongly affected one’s life, it should indefinitely have a similar effect.

In Ellis’ line of reasoning, Psychotherapist must help the patient unmask his irrational ideas and self – defeating beliefs. He must show him how these illogical ideas are at the basis of his emotional disturbance. He must also endeavor to bring him to internalize more realistic, rational ideas to engage in positive reflections and self – talk.

If Ellis’ is correct in saying that internalizing irrational ideas are the prime source of neuroses and psychoses then the Scriptures could be envisaged as containing certain healing principles of rational – emotive psychotherapeutic nature. Jesus himself preached the need for a conversion of mind and heart and clarifies how certain beliefs and ideas are a source of suffering and death. Scripture adds an enrichment, a corrective to Ellis’ articulation of the various irrational ideas and their rational alternatives. Actually, the Biblical injunction to conversion reveals 3 important facts about the divine – human relationship. First, sinful humanity is alienated from God and is in need of reunion. Second, conversion is primarily God’s work towards humanity, since it is God who offers mercy and salvation. The call to conversion is a message of good news, joy, peace and life. Finally, conversion requires a response on the part of humanity – forgiveness, and a joyful desire to love God and neighbor in word and action. Thus, it is necessary for the patient to put off the old self with its experience of disorientation, false and illusory ideas and desires and to put on the mind of Christ and the attitude of mind and heart which properly belong to Christ – consciousness.

Thomas Hora’s Existential Psychotherapy⁵

Hora started as a strict Freudian analyst. His dream to become an effective Psychotherapist led him to borrow the thoughts of Carl Jung, Ludwig Binwanger, Martin Heidegger, and other European existential thinkers and the various Eastern “existential” approaches and finally to the teachings of Jesus.

Hora's existential psychotherapy comprises a basic view of man. His understanding of man is explicitly religious. He envisions man as an image and likeness of God. As the image of God, the Christian must know what God is like. Personhood accentuates the conative dimension of human being over the cognitive. Will, freedom, and history constitute the vocabulary of personhood thus the self as person are called to freedom by their personal God while intellect, knowledge and nature describes anthropology. Thus, the axial emergence of the individual is described in terms of the self as reason. The existence of the human person in the world is one who bears attestation to existence or the love – intelligence that is God by understanding the truth and manifesting love. For Hora, man is whole and holy insofar as he is authentically living in harmony with the highest level of human existence in the world, a loving state of consciousness and a high level of self transcendence e.g., feeling, doing flowing from an authentic being-in-the-world as a loving beneficent presence.

Illness for Hora results when man is in disharmony in some sense with existence. Illness or disease results when the lower levels of consciousness are in conflict with authentic self-transcendence or when the individual's mode of being-in-the-world is fragmented by misdirected concerns, false beliefs, values, assumptions, and attitude. Hora holds that an individual person must learn to overcome his inauthentic mode of thinking and desiring in the world once he becomes cognizant of it as inauthentic. Hora's existential psychotherapeutic process includes various stages of self-transcendence and enlightenment. The modes of self-transcendence and enlightenment range from the understanding and consequent rejection of the inauthentic as inauthentic to a certain experience of God as love – intelligence; an experience which is beyond the subject object distinction.

The existential possibility for receiving the gift of enlightenment involves the need for attitudes of openness, wakeful receptivity, and letting be. The most interesting part of Hora's existential psychotherapy is his emphasis in "mind – fasting." He borrowed this perspective from the Taoist, Chuang Tzu. Hora envisages the process of mind – fasting as a form of cognitive prayer through which the devils of negativity and inauthenticity e.g., false thoughts, beliefs, desire, images. Assumptions are discerned for what they really are cast out and a cognitive integration or loving mode of consciousness is realized.

The existential psychotherapeutic process culminates in existential "ceaseless worship." It is a reverential, responsive, loving abiding in the God who is love – intelligence. The individual whose

state of consciousness is that of existential worship manifests himself in the world as a loving, intelligent, beneficent, and creative presence. Hora alludes to his existential approach as "epistemological in its focus, which means that it seeks to benefit man through the optional unfolding of his cognitive capacities." In the process of his existential psychotherapeutic, the casual, the historical, the genetic, and the teleological aspects of human existence "tend to emerge into consciousness spontaneously and be cognized implicitly rather than explicitly. In this epistemological prayer, the individual is freed from inauthentic thoughts and desires and turned toward existentially wholesome concerns. Healing takes place in a form of conversion to the loving mode of being-in-the-world and participation in existence as a beneficial presence. I think Hora's perspective of illness is not in accord within the horizon of the Roman Catholic Church. But if the basic thrust of his existential psychotherapy is valid then his powerful psychotherapeutic dimension (could be or is acceptable in the Roman Catholic Church) is present in Christian revelation.

Bernard Lonergan and his Psycho Religious Conversion⁶

Conversion involves fundamental healing in one or other dimension of human consciousness. It follows that the conversions of foundations and psychotherapeutic process shares a common goal: the healing of the individual in one or other aspect of his being. Since healing on one level of the human person has an impact in all the other levels, there is necessarily an existential connection between the healing effected through religious, moral and intellectual conversion and the healing of the psyche, which takes place in the psychotherapeutic process.

In his article "the subject" in a book entitled *A Second Collection*, Lonergan raises the notion of praxis as an effect of conversion. "It is a matter of conversion, of personal philosophical experience, of moving out of a world of sense and of arriving into a universe of being." Conversion is the rational judgment and transvaluation of all one's values. In Lonergan's context, there are 4 kinds of conversion: Moral, Intellectual, Religious and Psychic. Moral Conversion is an illuminating decision making to rationally act and be responsible of being governed by the criterion of evaluated values. In short, it goes beyond the general values and truth. From cognitional to moral self –transcendence, it places the person to a new level of consciousness. The necessity of truth prompts him to respond to a new value. This risky shift is vulnerable and therefore can be abuse. "Intellectual conversion" occurs in the individual subject as a fundamental orientation grounding all his knowing." Thus, one can

reflectively understand what he conceives in his knowing structure as opposed to non-comprehension of experiential data, insights, hypothesis and discerned evaluated values or judgment. It is knowing what knowing is, understanding what understanding is. Religious conversion goes beyond moral. It is a falling in love through realization in one's fullest capability for moral and bringing forth the vision of the seeds of values discerned by the eye of love. It involves not only an inward trans-cultural aspect but also an outward counterpart in the revelational events culminating in Jesus Christ through which God disclosed to the world his love for all mankind and his definitive saving action. Religious conversion alone provides the efficacious grounds for a deep and lasting moral conversion. It is only the morally converted individual who can love others in a perduring, self-sacrificing and deep fashion. Thus, religious conversion must be present or become present in an individual who can only be healed deeply in his psyche to the extent that he shifts from a basically self-centered to a fundamentally loving mode of being-in-the-world. "To be in love without qualifications or conditions or reservations or limits is to be in love with someone transcendent who is my beloved, he is in my heart, real to me from within me."

Thus, for Lonergan, the unrestricted desire to know and to love is fixed to someone transcendent and not just based on concept, ideas, or judgment. It is a practice of *metanoia* or Christian conversion, the total conscious relationship or self-surrender or turning to God. This directs us to boldly go beyond the irrationality of sin and biases. There is more to life in which the heart has reason which reason does not know. We can only discover this through prayer. Thus prayer for People living with A.I.D.S. is indispensable. "Prayer is the primordial word which links inner and outer expression the inner word spoken to the lover and the word or response." One is filled with love. Love is the center of one's life. Integrating it demands transformation. God is continuously flooding our hearts with love. We continuously experience the indwelling of God's acceptance and favor. Psychological conversion enables us to find the transformed role of psychology. It depends heavily on intellectual conversion. It directs his gaze that penetrates the depths of his psyche. It involves the necessity of enrichment, guards one's thoughts and judgments, and reinforces decision-making. "Religious, moral and intellectual conversion is not a set of proposition but a fundamental and momentous change in the human reality."

Thus, for Lonergan, the above notions of conversion are evidence that humans are intelligent, attentive, reasonable and responsible. They have

eyes to see, ears to hear. Insight teaches a person to pay attention to what he is doing. A person doesn't just experience. How, what, when can a person know? A person reflects on the images, symbols or data he conceives in his knowing process. What does this refer to? How can a person explain this within the present context of *sitz em leben*? Basically a person must come to a new sense of self. Understanding can be developed methodically e.g., good artist developed skills. He may search for meaning (faith seeking understanding). Human knowing is the place to begin, experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding.

Thus, the fundamental reality of religious, moral and intellectual conversion is intrinsic to the total event of psycho-religious conversion. The notion of psycho-religious conversion is the process of psycho-religious self appropriation, adds to religious and moral conversion a self understanding or self-objectification which is analogous to the performance involved in intellectual conversion in the full sense of this term. The self understanding involves in psycho-religious conversion takes place within an ambience of love and demands for its existential fulfillment the free decision to live one's life in the light of the gift of new self understanding. If the basic thrust of Lonergan's perspective on conversion is correct i.e.,

1. Religious conversion involves the overcoming of radical lovelessness then, the conversion from lovelessness to love is central to psychotherapy.
2. Moral conversion involves the overcoming of the distortions of bias then, a conversion from a subjective and biased optic to the rational and the real is basic to psychotherapy.
3. Intellectual conversion enables an individual to negate false philosophies of life then, a certain intellectual conversion is a case concern of psychotherapy.

It follows that there is a connection between conversion and psychotherapeutic process.

Kazimierz Dabrowski and Psychological Orientation⁷

Dabrowski formulated the theory of mental growth through positive disintegration. In his line of reasoning, high level, psychic integration is the ultimate object of endeavor of the process of psychological healing and maturation. This high level integration is a dynamic integration of all mental functions – cognitive, moral, social, aesthetic etc. Into a hierarchy corresponding to one's own authentic ideal of personality. It is also composed of a self-chosen, self-confirmed, and self-educating

mental structure. It comprises a cohesive integration of the emotional and instinctive functions in a harmonious accord with the highest mental functions. It is the fruit of a penetrating and profound self – understanding in a critical and objective sense including the acceptance of an authentic hierarchy of values after critical examination and autonomous preference. To be elevated to the ideal of high level integration one must undergo a disintegration of a more primitive integration had been carried out precedingly. The affirmative disintegration of the lower level, primitive integration i.e., characterized by biological determinism, automatism, rigidity, stereotype and a lack on low degree of consciousness. It is effected through psychic dynamism of growing insight into oneself and grasping of oneself and others merged with a conscious and deliberate preference based on multi-level, multisided, highly integrating insights. In terms of his theory of personality shaping through affirmative disintegration, Dabrowski sees psycho-neuroses not as disease but rather as an expressions of the need for an individual to abandon his primitive integration and to move toward high-level secondary integration.

Dabrowski's presupposition in the goal of psychotherapeutic process as a permeating personality integration gained in a large measure through a high degree of personal integrating insights and consequent decisions concerning authentic values upholds the perspective that the highest and most integral form psychotherapy would be one which would explicitly take into account informed governing religious values and meanings and in a Christian context, specifically Christian values and meanings. Dabrowski's theory tends to strengthen the view that psychological concern or psycho – religious conversion, involves religious, moral and seminal intellectual concern but that it also includes a very high level of reflections, critical and evaluative self – understanding.

Dabrowski's stress on the crucial role of self-examination, self understanding and decision in the psychotherapeutic process is harmoniously penetrating the stress of Jesus in the Gospels on the primacy of thought and desire in the conversion process. It is likewise in accord with the Pauline stress on the need to dispel illusions, ignorant and false desires, and to put on a new mind and heart. Dabrowski's position upholds the insights of the various contemporary psychotherapies and thus makes explicit the psychotherapeutic principles which are at least implicit in Christian revelation

Psychotherapist must work out its basic categories, techniques and goals both through foundational reflections and actions through which it either derives psychotherapeutic healing principles from revelation by envisaging the latter in the light of

diverse contemporary therapies in the critical light of revelation. In this presupposition, a Christian psychotherapy is inconceivable. If there is psychotherapy capable of coming to grips in an adequate fashion with the troubled human psyche, as it actually exists and functions in the triple existential spheres of nature, sin and grace. Indeed, only an explicit chosen psychotherapy can be fully existential in dealing with man as he truly is in the present scheme of things.

Spirituality

The Latin term “Spiritualitas” is an abstract word deduced from the noun *spiritus* and the adjective *spiritualis*. In Latin translations of Pauline letters *spiritus* and *spiritualis* are translations of *pneuma* and *pneumatikos* respectively. In Pauline perspective *pneuma* or *spiritus* are set over against *sarx* or *caro* not in opposition to *soma* or *corpus*. *Pneumatikos* or *spiritualis* are contrasted with *sarkikos* or *carnalis* and not with *somatikos* or *corporalis*⁸

Paul uses the term “spirit” when he alludes the human person that is ordered, led, or influenced by the *Pneuma Theou* or *Spiritus Dei*, whereas *sarx* or *caro* or flesh is everything in a person that is opposed to this influence with the Spirit of God. Thus, “caro or flesh” could be the person's mind or will or heart resists the influence of the Spirit.

In Paul's line of reasoning, the opposition is not between the incorporeal or non-material and the corporeal or material, but between two ways of life. The “spiritual” person (*pneumatikos*, *spiritualis*) is one whose life is guided by the Spirit of God; the “carnal person” (*sarkikos*, *carnalis*) is one whose life is opposed to the working and guidance of the Spirit of God.⁹

This general Pauline meaning of “spiritualitas” is found in Dionysius Exiguus' translation of Gregory of Nyssa, in Avitus. In the 13th century Thomas' texts of “spiritualitas” is related to the Pauline notion of life according to the Holy Spirit or life according to what is highest in the human person. In a number of his texts, it is set in opposition to corporeality or to matter.

In our contemporary Christian society, there has been a renewed interest in spirituality. A number of articles reaches with particular urgency in our own time that attempt to describe or define the meaning of spirituality in general, and Christian spirituality in particular.

Spirituality is a lifestyle that permeates the very being of the person involved in attempting to move one out of the self towards the other. The person is determined to entangle himself into the process of bringing together all elements of life in relationship to something or someone transcending

the self that he/she experiences concretely. This process of integration and encounter with the other in the life of the person who consciously pursues the other suffuses life with new meaning.

Spirituality does not reiterate the ethereal or disincarnate. It includes bodiliness, the person realizing that he or she is more than spirit, strives toward wholeness. To become whole involves the person's incarnate spirit reality. As Leonard Drohan would put it: Spirituality is centered more on the person and on vital needs. In the very heart of one's own bodily existence, one is called to strive toward the transcendent other and to gather all elements of life in the pursuit of this wholeness.¹⁰

Within this framework, we can now proceed to add a qualifier to the process that we call "Christian spirituality." In his book "Spirituality for Mission," Michael Collins Reilly enunciates:

Christian spirituality can be described as the daily lifestyle of the believing Christian. It is the way a person lives in a definite historical situation according to his vision of faith, that is, according to his personal assimilation of the mystery of Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit.¹¹

Thus, the very core of what we call Christian spirituality is a lifestyle in faith. It is an aura around all of our lives that gives what we do meaning, the human striving toward meaning, and the search for a sense of belonging. It is a complete surrender in Jesus Christ. Thus, no one is a *tabula rasa*. Everybody consciously strives for self-transcendence. From the very moment of birth, our experience of God and our spirituality must emerge from our concrete, historical, psychological, anthropological, philosophical, linguistic, cultural, socio-political, economic and traditions, theological and religious situation and must return to that situation to feed it and enliven it. Here God challenges persons to live and to love in the Christian dimension because it is love that breaks us out of our silence, self-absorption and isolation.

Elements of a Spirituality

A.I.D.S. and S.A.R.S. is a complex phenomenon. It produces despair and chaos. People living with aids and other dreadful diseases such as S.A.R.S. ask: Why A.I.D.S.? Why me? Why now? Persons with S.A.R.S. suffer not only the collapse of body and mind caused by the opportunistic infections and tumors but also the psychological and moral anguish resulting from rejection, social stigma, and discrimination.

The "Why me?" questions express bewilderment and disorientation. Families and friends of loved ones with debilitating illness also share deeply in the psychological, moral and spiritual

suffering and pain. If A.I.D.S. as a disease raises questions about the meaning of humankind as a biological species and reminds us of the limits of biomedical science on the other, A.I.D.S. as an illness confronts people with questions about the meaning of their own suffering and more often, it leads to such a devastating number of premature deaths and has brought these realities to the forefront of public consciousness. As an epidemic, A.I.D.S. shows the fragile nature of the security provided by social institutions, while at the same time underscoring the interdependence and relatedness of all human beings. Although people are surviving longer today, the spectre of death, darkness, and meaninglessness connotes the experience of chaos and powerlessness. The realization that there is no cure adds an oppressive feeling of claustrophobia to the bewilderment and malaise surrounding A.I.D.S. Circumstances like this, the person cannot readily call upon God.

This is the experience of "impasse" which Constance Fitzgerald conveys:

By impasse, I mean there is no way out, no way around, no rational

escape from, what imprisons one, no possibilities in the situation.

In a true impasse every normal manner of acting is brought to a

standstill, and ironically, impasse is experienced not only in the

problem itself but also in any solution rationally attempted. Any

movement out, any next step, is cancelled, and the most dangerous

temptation is to give up, to quit, to surrender to cynicism and despair,

in the face of the disappointment, disenchantment, hopelessness, and

loss of meaning that encompass one.¹²

Impasse is where a person is when he cannot change things. Any solution he attempts leads to further impasse. Every solution he envisages simply creates the narrowing of possibilities. There is no way out. The experience of a possibility is a dead end. It is the negative image. The experience of impasse is experience of abandonment. The God of love that Jesus proclaimed is now on the cross seems terribly absent. What is left? Horrible darkness, fear, isolation.

Fitzgerald borrowed her remarks on impasse from St. John of the Cross and his idea of the dark night of the spirit. John of the Cross sees life's journey to full humanity as a **movement from sunset through midnight to dawn**. Full humanity is achieved in a total union with God, the transcendent yet immanent other who remains with the human person in all that happens. The journey

begins when we take God seriously. Here, we begin to engage in religious practices such as praying/meditating more. We begin to really love God. We love helping maybe a great period of time. This sunset is a delightful, beautiful time. As time goes on, we don't anymore feel the presence of God. As night deepens little by little, the person is called upon to let go of all that is not God – the delight, the feeling of wonder in prayer, and God's apparent closeness. Then the individual arrives at the darkest part of a night - midnight. We have lost sight of everything, which used to furnish us with meaning and joy. Darkness surrounds us and fills us with anxiety. Fear of the unknown forms part of the risk-taking our quest for authenticity demands of us. Here even God disappears. Light is fading where God is totally non-existent. It is very frightening. We sense we are dreadfully alone in a hostile surroundings. All is dark and apparently hopeless.

In this obscurity hope seems heedless. This journey becomes insignificant; we question the existence of God. Here, pain, loss or suffering is God's punishment. What we thought was God seems but the figment of our imagination. Death is simply a big dark void. John of the Cross poignantly described this part of journey as the

Dark Night of the spirit:

At this stage a person suffers from sharp trials in his intellect, severe

dryness and distress in his will, and from the burdensome knowledge

of his own miseries in his memory, for his spiritual eye gives a very

clear picture of himself. In the substance of his soul he suffers

abandonment, supreme poverty, dryness, cold and sometimes heat. He

finds relief in nothing, nor is this a thought that consoles him, nor can

he even raise his heart to God, so oppressed is he by this flame. This

purgation resembles what Job said God did to him: You are changed

to be cruel toward me (Jb 30:21). For when the soul suffers all these

things jointly, it truly seems that God has become displeased with it and

cruel. A person's suffering at this time cannot be exaggerated.¹³

This is an incredibly accurate representation of what people living with A.I.D.S. go through during and even after diagnosis. The fears, the confusion, the anxiety, the anger, the absence of God, the physical and psychological suffering – all are part of the "dark night." The dark night can also be a growth-producing experience, a possibility for an

integration and transcending transformation into full human life. There is no other way a person can unlock the potential of impasse, the potential for authentic spirituality and transcendence.

This surrender is not fatalistic. It is a passive surrender allowing the impasse to control and direct us. An impasse transforms us only when our yielding is an active surrender with all the risk, which that entails. This surrender is a "Fiat" to God. It is a decisive moment to live out whatever it will hold in the future. It is a yes to God who loves and who desires wholeness and authenticity for the person. It is a resolution to live, not just to subsist, with A.I.D.S. In the brokenness, powerlessness, and poverty of the experience, the person can penetrate and be permeated by the loving God in this dark mystery. How is this possible? How can someone discover a God of love in this ugly situation? According to Fitzgerald, the scriptures are filled with references to a God of unconditional and unmitigated love. With the people living with A.I.D.S., God lives with them and suffers the rejection of family and friends, the ostracizing by society, the physical deterioration and pain.

John of the Cross delineates the movement from a desire, or love, that is possessive, entangled, complex, selfish, and unfree to a desire that is fulfilled with union with Jesus Christ and others. In the process of affective redemption, desire is not suppressed or destroyed but gradually transferred, purified, transformed, set on fire. We go through the struggles and ambiguities of human desire to integration and personal wholeness. There is a dark side to human desire, and the experience of dark night is the way that desire is purified and freed. In the very experience of darkness and joylessness, in the suffering and withdrawal of accustomed pleasure, that this process engenders transformation. We are not educated for darkness. We see this experience, because of the shape it takes as a sign of death. Dark night is instead a sign of life, the very core of growth, of development in our relationship with God, in our best human relationship, in a societal life. This pathetic sign in hope arouses a new vision, a new experience of the incarnation of potentiality.

The movement from *twilight to midnight to dawn* is the progressive purification and transformation of the human person through what we cherish or desire darkness because we are deeply involved and committed in what we love and care for most. Love makes us vulnerable, and it is love itself and its development that precipitate darkness in oneself and in the other.

This experience of rage, anger, depression, abandonment and rejection is a constitutive part of the purification of the dark night. This is a progression, a redemption, an actualizing and

affirmation of the human person in love that is not understood at the time. Its symbolic expression is dispossession and death. For John, one leaves the world of rejection and worthlessness by giving away one's powerlessness and poverty to the inspiration of the Spirit and one moves into a world of self esteem, affirmative compassion and solidarity. This affirmation and reception of the loving God is the first element of spirituality of people living with aids. Only this kind of soul's experience of night can engender the kind of solidarity and compassion that transforms the "I" into a "we," empowering one to say, "we poor," "we oppressed," "we exploited," This kind of identification with God's people, with the "other," is the fruit of the dark night.

Person living with A.I.D.S. and or S.A.R.S. is now living more consciously of all englobing reality. This is the crowning point of the whole reality of the person i.e., the deepest sense of reality. According to John of the Cross, in mystical marriage the soul experiences, through grace, a certain participation in the dynamics of God. In some mystical states the soul enjoys a sublime experience of God "in one of His attributes (His omnipotence, fortitude, goodness and sweetness, etc.)," an assertion which Christian orthodoxy certainly does not require, and one which again he would presumably be less likely to make if in fact these experiences had no content. John of the Cross regards it as crucial that the contemplative states he describes have a phenomenal object which is generally experienced as personal and loving. Indeed, according to John the whole pattern of developing contemplative awareness is experienced as a deepening relationship of love with a divine partner. This "felt character" of contemplation and the mystical life, rather than any lack of analytical ability, is the ultimate explanation for John's dualistic account of mystical union.

Intimacy with this God of unconditional and unmitigated love impels the people living with aids into a deeper level of communication with God. John simply suggests that the contemplative must be willing to relinquish particular "sensations, images, thoughts, and acts of will" when the divine communication supervenes. As I have already pointed out, the result of this voluntary surrender "can only be an undifferentiated unity." This advanced state of "spiritual marriage" is marked by certain sublime "awakenings" in which "it seems to the soul that God indeed moves" within, even though in fact "God is immovable," thereby clearly differentiating the "felt character" of such experiences from their orthodox interpretation.

Non-Theist Spirituality¹⁴

Non-theist spirituality is a fully humanist spirituality. It exemplifies a spirituality

conceived apart from, though not in opposition to, belief in God. It exemplifies the possibility of treating spirituality within a fully psychological – that is, non-religious context.

Tibetan and Zen Buddhism stand as incontrovertible evidence of the possibility of non-theist spirituality. These venerable traditions teach a profound spirituality grounded on an inherent aspect of humanity. Focus is not on God or any Supreme Being. Unlike Hindu and the related "perennial philosophy" where Atman is Brahman. Buddhism does not even speculate about the claimed identity of the self and the divine.

For Buddhism, theorizing about God distracts from the task of mindful living. Buddhism is fully non-theist not atheist, denying God, but non-theist (or agnostic), bracketing the question of God. Focus is on the self, on the human mind and its capacities.

The standard model of the human is body and mind or, in the parallel religious conception, body and soul. There are two aspects of human mind: *psyche and spirit*. Further refinement of this terminology, a tripartite model of the human results: *organism, psyche, and spirit*. If there is an aspect of human mind that can be called "spirit," spiritual concern is grounded in humanity as such, and in western categories there emerges a parallel to the non-theist spirituality of Buddhism.

The tripartite model of the human could be further elucidated. In our vocabulary, organism is simply the physiological system of systems that is the object of study in physics, chemistry, biology and medicine. Psyche entails emotions, imagery, and memory and resultant pattern of response and behavior, personality. This aspect of mind humans share in common with other animals. Spirit is an aspect of mind distinctive to humans. It is essentially self-awareness, and this peculiar self-awareness results in under, marvel, question, the desire to understand, and the ability to ponder, to judge, to make decisions, and so the capacity to determine one's life and one's world. The hallmarks of spirit are meaning and value or what Erich Fromm calls "Orientation and Devotion": It is our nature as humans to need some understanding, a cognitive road map of life that guides our living, and as humans we need commitment to that living as we understand it. Orientation and Devotion seems to intermingle psyche and spirit. Devotion, for example, is a matter of value commitment, a matter of spirit, yet devotion is hardly without emotion, space and time, ubiquitous and eternal. It anticipates the unity of all things wherein I would become all that is. So mystery is also at stake here, and even mysticism: living in reverence, awe, wonder, and being caught up in something bigger than myself. In the sense of

spontaneous and unexpected giftedness, even the religious word “grace” could accurately apply to this accord of human spirit. In sum, the core of spirituality is basic human integrity; the option to affirm oneself rather than societal and religious expectations is pivotal to all spiritual development.

The heart of the spiritual crisis surrounding people living with aids is the torture of slow debilitation, painful decline, and inevitable death. People living with aids grapple with the meaning of life, with the purpose of their being here. They struggle with their own individuality, which they are and what they can pretend to be. Deciding to trust their own experience, understanding, and judgment, they are in fact engaging their spiritual capacity. They affirm the validity of their own selves and without a road map they launch out in individualizing a life’s course. Trusting in themselves and in the mixed wisdom of their companions, they live by faith. Only the longings of their heart and soul provide a compass for the journey.

In light of the monotheist spirituality, people living with aids are indeed in a journey of a spiritual quest. In the symbolic language of the spiritual traditions, it is in search for the Holy Grail. It is the adventure of a heart. It is the pilgrimage of a saint.

Community Life

One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith, which many profess, and the practice of their daily lives. The root causes that continue to alienate man from himself and from the other are poverty, underdevelopment, gap between the rich and the poor, injustice, graft and corruption, class selfishness and domination, ideological divisions and conflicts, an international network of domination etc.

Pope John Paul II exhorts us to replace the culture of death with the civilization of love. *Gaudium et Spes* pinpoints this need powerfully and succinctly when it says: “For by his innermost nature man is a social being and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.” Community can help us develop concerning our relationship with others.

The thrust toward community grows from the heart of Jesus Christ and from our basic need for one another. As a Christian, community is the texture of the fabric of my life. What is the role of community in our religious experience?

Lash responded that redemptive community is a necessary condition of the possibility of prayer and a kind of a religious activity, which does not deepen the eclipse of God. To develop his notion of community, he borrowed Lonergan’s thought who equated community as an achievement of common meaning wherein the concept of human nature has

not only biological, but also ethical, political and eschatological components.

A community is a union of various unifying bonds such as *ontological, teleological, affective, moral, organizational, and communicative*. The *ontological bonds* are dealt through its end or purpose, affection, obligation, authority and communication. The necessity of the community to exist and to fulfill its functions depends on the larger and political community of the neighborhood. *Friendship* is the most significant form of community.

The radical form of love (*the affective bond*) in a community is itself identical with universal charity. Members of a community have moral responsibilities toward one another as well as toward the community as a whole. The organizational bond is twofold. It is spatial which is essential for the family, ethnic and the political community. Authority is indispensable because the more moral the bonds that are operative in the community, the more the bond of authority is needed. Unifying bonds are also effective through the medium of language, tradition etc.

Thus, in a community spatial proximity, shared goals and values, an acceptance of significant interdependence, some structure of governance or authority, and a degree of permanence are essential. In addition, the Scriptures tells us that in A2:42 through the Last Supper, a new community is born – the communion of blood and life between God and man. The elements of the early Christian community such as the teachings of the apostles, common life, prayer and the Eucharist teaches us to live the social dimensions of the community. Its role is in the transformation of peoples and communities. It involves new structures of sharing, co-responsibility, and participation. It re-activates the priestly, kingly, and prophetic functions of every member of the church. The communitarian dimension of the struggle for a full life is also vital. Building the just and loving community is a constitutive dimension of the “breaking of the bread.”

Looking back to what Pope John Paul II says about the civilization of love is a dynamic view concerning building a community in memory of Jesus. Jesus said: “Do this in memory of me.”

As a response, being a member of a *servant community*: serving, sharing, renewing, giving itself to others must be one of our priorities. We must be immersed in life struggles, immersed in the Eucharistic Jesus and involved even unto death.

In short, we must seek the kingdom of God first. Thus, the role of the community is to help us grow in our way of doing, of following, of becoming the memory of Jesus as a person-for-others.

The magna carta of the kingdom of God is the Beatitudes wherein a preferential option for the poor is accentuated as criteria for entry into the kingdom (the last judgment). It is a transformation of the world's values. A kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness, a kingdom of justice, wherein love and peace prevails. Jesus and the Eucharist embody the beatitudes. We are worth dying for (human dignity). Self-emptying is also essential, that is, to be poor that we might become rich (solidarity towards the kingdom).

Thus, eschatological dimension is significant, that is, the role of the community in our religious experience is a vital force that shapes us to work in harmony, to renew the temporal order and make it increasingly more perfect. Such is God's design for the world. We must always seek the justice of the kingdom of God and to struggle for integral liberation.

These move us from dualism to integration of life and faith, from ritualism to conviction, from sacramentalism to celebration of life and participation in its struggles, from individualism to community.

This movement occurred not through the logic of reason so much as through the poetry of root metaphors. The root metaphor of Christian community arises from Jesus' own experience of self as God's child. Jesus draws out the full implication of God's universal parenthood. A further implication is on our fundamental option whether to live the relationship redemptively or destructively. There will always be in Christian community some structured way that power and leadership function.

The steward image tells us that the community does not belong to the leader but God's people. The leader's responsibility is only temporary. The Shepherd metaphor deals with inclusivity and care for the stray. It discloses why the sinner can sit and eat with Jesus. The shepherd leaves the 99 sheep and goes after one who is led astray. It is a particular concern for the outcast, the marginalized. The stray commands the attention of the leader and the resources of a Christian community.

The servant metaphor reminds the community leader that his / her agenda comes from the community and is not imposed by the designated leader. A servant's agenda is fashioned out what the servant receives from the community. Power is to be a relational, interactive function, never a unilateral, dominating function.

This Christian community is also an intentional community. It is a deliberate choice. It is not just an activity; rather, it is an environment for the life of faith and the faith of life. Every community of Jesus Christ not only comes from its own but also directs its social energies beyond itself

to the challenges of our larger life upon the earth. The relational dynamics that begin identity formation never stop being the matrix for our continual becoming. Our spirituality, like our identity, emerges from relationships, of which community is a major, enduring, and necessary form.

The bishops in *The Plenary Council of the Philippines 11* made the following synthesis:

1. **Kerygma** – Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again (*Proclamation of the Paschal Mystery in the Eucharist*) It is a communion of blood and life between God and us, through the Paschal Mystery. As the memorial of the Paschal Mystery, the Eucharist is the point of departure (the source) and the point of arrival (summit) of Christian life.

- in the offering of Jesus and ourselves, in the communion of life with God, we arrive at what Christian life is all about.

- The peak of discipleship: the doing of what Christ did – the way we came to understand love was that he laid down his life for us; we too must lay down our lives for others.

This is possible in the sense that *koinonia* enables them to create bonds of love through sharing in the one bread and table, to create mutual esteem through a baptismal dignity and equality and to do the mission of Christ through an ecclesial mediation of salvation

The radical witness to the faith, their sharing and their solidarity with the poor would not be simple to eliminate the thorn in the flesh of our churches and communities of the rich and their delegated charity. Poor churches challenges the churches of the rich that have become dead as far as *diakonia* is concerned. Christian love must be inseparably bound to the community.

Koinonia – The Eucharist as fellowship – one body around Christ united by

The bond of charity = sharing and solidarity

Diakonia – bread broken and shared; blood being shed for the many. (to

the feet of others: “as I have done, so you must do” =

Service).

Everyone who has participated in the Mass should be eager to do

good works, to please God, and to live honestly, devoted to the church, putting into practice what he has learned, and growing in piety. Gaudium et Spes # 43 advises us to fill the world with the Spirit of Christ and in all things, in the very midst of human affairs to become a witness to Christ.

- a. It is sharing, self-offering, sacrifice, preferential option for the poor, powerlessness and active non-violence, the courage to die that others might live. We need also to reflect on the contemporary situation of greed, ambition, divisions, conflicts and let the peace of Christ come in. "It is he who is out peace, and who made the two of us by breaking down the barrier of hostility that kept us apart." (Eph. 2:14)

Gaudium et Spes # 69 teaches us also concerning disparities "God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of all men and people, so created goods should flow fairly to all regulated by justice and charity. Men are bound to come to the aid of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods.

Gaudium et Spes # 29 – excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and mutilates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as the social and international peace.

- b. The necessity of conversion, transformation (metanoia). The first requirement of the kingdom is to repent. Bread and wine are transformed into Christ, so we need to be converted into the mind of Christ so that creation may be renewed and consecrated to God, so that Jesus, as in the Eucharistic bread and wine, may be in all. Thus, diakonia is kenotic or self-emptying of power as domination. It is a means of liberation of one another. Its eschatological reality transforms poverty, distress, sadness and death through the power of love. It is serving Christ who is himself directly in need of help of the poor. Christ is clothed in the poor, visited in the sick, fed in the hungry and given shelter. All the individual suffering of many people is

gathered together in Christ and Christ bears all suffering at the same time. The whole pressure of suffering of the world is Christ's passion and Christ is the sum total of all the poor. The image of heaven on earth pictures diakonia trying to end the hell that the earth is for many people.

2. The Eucharistic Community: by its word and work, by its life and witness, it proclaims the kingdom, struggles toward the kingdom, and anticipates the kingdom is a sign of the kingdom that is now and still to come. As Augustine would put it in his Sermon 179.

"If you are the body of Christ and his members, then it is your mystery that is laid on the altar. You receive your mystery...be what you are and receive what you are."

Based on the above notions of community, I suggest that the world community could be saved from the disruption and corruption of false individualism and collectivism only by uniting the already existing communities of men into higher communities to form the great community of all mankind. This ideal community provides an admirable solution to the individual's deepest ethical problems because it includes not only individual self realization through the carrying out of some concrete duty, but it unites persons beyond divine tensions and conflicts in common loyalty to a cause which transcends them. It follows that active participation in the cause of the great community is the highest and broadest moral commitment the loyal, reasonable individual can make.

Notes

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²Victor Frankl, "Logotherapy and Existence" in *Psychotherapy and Existentialism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967).

³William Glasser, *Reality Therapy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

⁴Albert Ellis, *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1971).

⁵Thomas Hora, *In Quest of Wholeness* (Garden Grove: Christian counseling Service, 1972).

⁶Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972; Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957); Bernard Lonergan, *A Second collection eds. Bernard Tyrell and William Ryan* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974).

⁷Kazimierz Dabrowski, *Mental Growth through Positive Disintegration* (London: Gryf Publications, 1970).

⁸Xavier Leon-Dufour ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, trans. P. Joseph Cahill et al. 2nd ed. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973).

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Michael Collins Reilly, *Spirituality for Mission (Mary knoll*, New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 25.

¹²Constance Fitzgerald, "Impasse and Dark Night," in *Women's Spirituality*, 288, 297.

¹³John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publication, 1979), 587; See also John of the Cross, *Assent of Mount Carmel, Book 1*, ch. 13, no. 3; ch. 14, no. 2: Poem, "The Dark Night," 296; Poem, "The Spiritual Canticle," 410-415; *The Dark Night, Book 11*, ch. 9, no. 1; *The Living Flame*, stanza 3, nos. 1,3,7; John of the Cross, *Collected Works*, "The Dark Night," book 1 ch. 1-8, ch.9, no. 7, ch 16 no. 2.

¹⁴Daniel Helminiak, "The Quest for Spiritual Works," *Pastoral Psychology* vol. 38 (2), winter 1989 Human Science press.

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