

THE NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF METAPSYCHIATRY
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Thomas Hora, M.D., Director

Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

In this issue we begin with the dialogues of the Saturday morning session of our recent Meta-conference. We certainly hope that our readers have saved the previous issue of the Newsletter (as you may have noticed there are punch holes provided in every copy for the purpose of safekeeping them in an album). We believe these issues may become in time collectors' items. We are planning to publish these presentations and dialogues in consecutive order as space will allow.

Here we are reprinting Jim Neafsey's beautiful presentation entitled "Blind Ambition and the Eye of God" in its entirety.

In addition we are very pleased to welcome a new contributor to our Newsletter. She is Phyllis Tribble, professor of Old Testament Studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, author of several books dealing with her area of expertise, and a world-wide lecturer. She offers us a fascinating article entitled: "A Proverb of Holy Vision."

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CONFERENCE DIALOGUES

BLIND AMBITION AND THE EYE OF GOD – by Jim Neafsey

A PROVERB OF HOLY VISION – by Prof. Phyllis Tribble

The New York Institute of Metapsychiatry was founded in 1975 by Dr. Thomas Hora, M.D. for the study and exploration of modes of being-in-the-world, their meanings in terms of qualities of consciousness, cognitive processes, and ways of improving these through educational methods emphasizing prayer, meditation, spiritual values, and existentially valid metaphysical principles.

Metapsychiatry is an epistemological method of truth realization.

The PAGL Foundation is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization which sponsors the Newsletter, as well as other educational and publishing projects.

CONFERENCE DIALOGUES

Part One

Question: It seems that one thing we can do—if indeed we can do something—is to have sincere interest. I wonder if you could define sincere interest for us again?

Susan: As students of Metapsychiatry we are interested in coming to know God. When we love something we don't allow our attention to be distracted from it. Sincerity and commitment grow from that. That is essentially our first principle: "Thou shalt have no other interests before the good of God which is spiritual." It is an unfoldment. We see more of God's good and we become increasingly more interested in it.

Dr. Hora: It is also helpful to differentiate between interest, curiosity, and inquisitiveness.

Question: Dr. Hora, would interest be the only one that really had love in it?

Dr. Hora: Exactly. What do the others "have in them?"

Comment: Self-confirmatory ideation.

Dr. Hora: Curiosity is a hostile form of observation. If we are curious we are unloving and we just want to watch something happen. Inquisitiveness is an intrusive way of exploring something or someone. Interest is really a synonym for love. It is there. One of our favorite jokes in classes on Metapsychiatry is about the fellow who asks, how do you be sincere? Can we do the "sincerity bit?" We have defined existentialism as the study of those elements of life which cannot be done. Most people have difficulty believing that there are things in life which cannot be done. Sincerity and interest are two of those factors which cannot be done, and yet that have to be understood, recognized, and actually appreciated. So the fact that there are things which we cannot do is a great putdown. The only answer is that there must be some power beyond man that can do these things.

Question: In connection with the issue of greed, I am wondering regarding investments. We make investments in our children and their education and hope that they will grow and learn and come to understand. We make investments in the stock market or in other such things. Does it mean that these kinds of investments too are forms of greed? They are looking to the future with expectation.

Emory: Probably the only valid investment that one can make is the purification of one's consciousness. And I do not mean to imply that intelligent investing and preparing for one's later life is not a prudent thing to do, or providing loving care for one's children's future is not a valid thing to do.

Dr. Hora: This example shows how careful we have to be with words. For instance, if we say that we make investments in our children, do we realize what we are saying? We reveal

a profit motive, we are looking for the “bottom line” that sometime in the future our love will bear certain profitable results. Children are not an investment. If we do that our children will be most disappointing and ungrateful. They will resent it. We have no right to invest in our children. The children are not here for us. We are here for God, and “love seeketh not her own.” [1 Corinthians 13-5] Love cannot look for the bottom line for profit or dividends, or return of any kind. When we love with a return in mind we have a conditional form of love which is not love. It is an investment. Real love is non-conditional. We ask nothing in return. Love is its own reward. It is impersonal, non-conditional benevolence. Our semantics can trip us up if we use the wrong words. We have to be careful. Our words will determine our attitudes. In Metapsychiatry we place great emphasis on semantics. This is not just nitpicking, it is vitally important.

Question: Dr. Hora, would you please enumerate the rewards of love?

Dr. Hora: When we love non-conditionally, there is PAGL: peace, assurance, gratitude, love, well-being, and we give our loved ones the freedom to appreciate it or not, to be grateful or not. We cannot make conditions, because conditional love is not love. All the various discontents parents are experiencing with their children come from the assumption that we can place conditions on love. The moment our love is conditional, it is a trade, or an investment, or manipulation, or pressure, or influencing, or a demand, or an expectation, and that is not really love, it is counterfeit love. It is important to understand that love is non-conditional.

Question: I can understand how sincerity and interest are things that cannot be done, but it is hard for me to understand how discipline and commitment are not to be seen as things that cannot be done. Would you please explain that?

Dr. Hora: How do you do commitment?

Comment: I can see commitment as something that you are, but what about discipline?

Dr. Hora: Discipline which is done is not discipline, it is control. What is discipline?

Comment: Following the master out of love, being a disciple.

Dr. Hora: Right, that is correct. We cannot do discipline, we can live it. Similarly with commitment, we cannot do it, we can live it, we can be that way. It is not operational. In Metapsychiatry we are careful about the inclination towards operationalism.

Question: When we say we make a commitment, is that erroneous? Are make and do the same?

Dr. Hora: Yes, this is false semantics. When we are sincerely interested in a certain value, it is there, we are already committed. We don't do it.

Comment: It seems that your comments on marriage would relate to that—it is not so

much a decision as an acknowledgement of a reality that has come about.

Dr. Hora: Yes, many people seem to do it. You know the slogan, “make love, not war.” We have a tendency to pervert things through the inclination towards operational thinking.

Question: I think when you can’t do something—like interest—then you feel helpless that nothing will happen. So how does the interest grow or where does it come from?

Dr. Hora: That’s not helplessness, that is frustration.

Question: But how does the interest—this is an operational question—how do you do it? I don’t understand how it occurs unless you do it.

Dr. Hora: How can anything be without doing it, right? See, it boggles the mind that there are things that we cannot do. Isn’t it frustrating?

Question: But if you are not interested—I can’t get away from “how to do it”—how does this occur if you are not interested; where does it come from?

Dr. Hora: Where does love come from?

Comment: Good question.

Dr. Hora: Did you know that God is love?

Comment: But the problem is to put it into actualization.

Dr. Hora: Yes, how do we put these existential, mysterious factors of life which cannot be done, how do we actualize them? Who can answer this question?

Question: Are we talking about inspired ideas?

Dr. Hora: When we respond to a situation, are we doing something?

Comment: We are just an instrument of this good, is that right?

Dr. Hora: What is the power that drives the instrument? Electricity or gasoline?

Comment: Love-Intelligence.

Dr. Hora: Which is a Metapsychiatric name for God, right? Love impels a positive response which we also call a blessing.

Question: Is aspiration existentially valid?

Joan: I would say no, to aspire would seem to—I don’t know—would that just be a tricky

form of ambition?

Dr. Hora: There is false aspiration and there is genuine, valid aspiration. How can we tell? We have to know the meaning of the word. The etymological analysis of a word frequently helps us to understand things the right way. What is this word aspiration derived from?

Comment: Is it from the Latin to breathe toward or to something?

Dr. Hora: To breathe toward or to something? Not quite. *Aspirare* means to take in breath. Are we doing the breathing? If we do our breathing, we are phony aspirants. We don't do our breathing, breathing is happening as long as we are alive. There are some people who develop a neurosis about breathing. Sometimes it is a result of having studied Oriental forms of meditation. Oriental teachers of meditation often encourage people to count their breaths, to pay attention to their breathing. The interesting thing about breathing is that the moment we pay attention to it, it gets disturbed, labored. The best way to breathe is not to know that we are breathing. When we are healthy and when we are peaceful, we are not aware of our breathing. This is especially important for singers. I understand that there are teachers who teach singing by emphasizing the importance of the diaphragm and of breathing right. The student gets mixed up more and more and the breathing gets out of whack, and the singing suffers from it. So it is a mistake to be mentally preoccupied with the process of breathing. It is a mistake, first of all, because we are introducing an operational idea into something that has to take place spontaneously through the grace of God. Secondly, because paying attention to your heartbeat, to diet or whatever, is a self-confirmatory mental preoccupation, and every self-confirmatory preoccupation disturbs the homeostatic balance of the organism. God requires our complete attention. And if we are more interested in ourselves than in God, then we develop complications. So we say, self-confirmatory ideation is self-destructive, and self-destruction is self-confirmatory. Attention belongs to God, God requires our full attention.

Now we understand the meaning of the word *aspirare* to mean receiving the gift of life from God through inspiration. When we speak of creative ideas, we don't say, I have made a creative idea. We don't produce creativity. I hope you don't think so. Creativity is a gift of God which comes to us through inspiration. When we aspire to inspire then it means we are turning to God for wholesome, intelligent, loving, creative ideas and we lose sight of self, both psychological self and physical self. We speak about being un-self-conscious. It is a great and wonderful thing to lose sight of ourselves, but only if we are anchored in the awareness of God. If we lose sight of ourselves without God, then we have a psychopathological clinical picture called depersonalization. That is not desirable. But the ideal way is to be in complete conscious awareness of our at-one-ment with God. Focusing our attention on our breathing is going to interfere with that. So in Metapsychiatry we do not recommend the Oriental approach to meditation where we are counting our breaths, watching our breath, because then we are just burying ourselves in a sense of personal selfhood.

So the right understanding of aspiration means we aspire to be aware of our oneness with God, which means, we pay attention to our source of being. This is existentially valid, and it

is spiritual. But any other kind of aspiration is just misinterpretation of this word. People, however, may speak about aspiration while actually they mean ambition.

Question: Joan used the term “the timeless now,” and Emory talked about the meaning of the now as the moment in which you have a realization. I am not quite sure how to formulate the question—I guess I would just like to know more about the meaning of “now”—is it only at those moments when we realize the truth that we are in the now? Could you say more about that?

Susan: I am so glad you brought this question up because it is a beautiful idea and it is really one of the building blocks to understanding God. What you said was that we know the now the moment an inspired idea occurs to us. In this process we see what God is, really. And we learn that we are not thinking those inspired thoughts that come to us—as we have learned from Dr. Hora. We are not thinking, we can be receptive to good ideas. When a good idea occurs to us we are in the now then, and that is when we understand that we are in the now. You really answered your own question. What the now is, is clear when it occurs. I could ask Emory to contrast that with the present.

Emory: The concept of now is very difficult to grasp because from the very beginning we are placed in time. The enlightened masters teach that time is, in fact, an invention of man, just like male and female are an invention of man. So we are caught in that bind of the invention of time when we are born. Some analogies that might be helpful on a material level are that Picasso painted his great paintings in the moment they unfolded in the now of his consciousness. That was the unfoldment of that beauty at that point. And that now is still with us even though it happened by our calendar a long time ago.

Dr. Hora: Joan, do you have some now ideas?

Joan: It just struck me how in our work everything pulls us into another time frame, future, deadlines, promotions, what have I done up till now. We are always measuring ourselves by the future and the past, and how hypnotic that can become, and how beautiful it is to know that we can go to that place that is timeless, and how our work would be so much more inspired when we are in that place.

Dr. Hora: I could probably add a few thoughts to this dilemma. The more creative we are, the more it becomes clear to us that in the moment of creativity time and space disappear. For instance, understanding. Understanding is another one of those factors that no one can do. Can we do understanding? No. Some people would argue that they can do it. Understanding is a spontaneous event taking place in consciousness, and in the moment of that event—as the philosopher Minkowsky described it—the temporospatial coordinates of existence are suspended, we are completely out of this world for a split second, and at that moment God touched our consciousness. Only God, the divine Mind, can make it happen; we cannot produce it. So in Metapsychiatry we say, man doesn’t produce thoughts, man only becomes aware of thoughts. And then he can play around with these thoughts, but he doesn’t produce them. Those who are involved in some creative activity—and all of us can be—the very thing of looking for understanding to happen in our consciousness is

the creative process. It is an expectancy of something good to happen. Some people say this is mysticism and wouldn't want any part of it. They say, I want to do my own thinking, don't take away my mind. Well, it "ain't" there anyway. But if we understand the miracle of understanding, we will understand the reality of God, and I think that is what Susan was talking about.

Question: One of the points that Emory suggested as an antidote to ambition was productivity, valid productivity. For those of us in the business world who are constantly involved with the problem—producing and actually elevating and really revering big producers—those who are or give the appearance of producing more and have greater productivity than others, are given awards and ego strokes. What then constitutes valid productivity so that in the business world inadvertently we don't encourage another form of ambition under the veil of saying, "You are a great producer, you are valuable to the company because you produce a great product more efficiently than someone else." And by this create an ambitious, greedy environment.

Emory: Producing a great product is seeing the good of God unfold, so there just isn't anything wrong with producing a great product—no matter what that product is—as long as it is useful and constructive. The theme of the paper was focusing on and developing a certain set of faculties. To the degree that an individual's consciousness is purified and developed, the productivity will in fact be there and the great products will in fact be produced. It is interesting to observe in the business world that the great managers and the great executives are really creative individuals. Great productivity cannot exist except in a spiritually valid context. Now, invalid productivity can exist and appear to flourish greatly for a period of time, but, as we saw in the example of the great evangelists, they crumbled when they had no solid base.

Dr. Hora: We could in general state that valid ideas are productive in a useful and beautiful way, and invalid ideas are also productive, but they are producing trash.

BLIND AMBITION AND THE EYE OF GOD

By Jim Neafsey

There is a Zen koan which puts the following question: "How can you proceed on from the top of a hundred foot pole?" Picture the situation. You have been climbing up a pole inch by inch with great effort. You reach out and suddenly your hand grasps nothing but empty air. You have arrived at the top of the pole. There seems to be nowhere left to go but down, a long way down. You begin to feel dizzy as the pole sways in the wind. Your knuckles turn white as you fearfully grip the pole still tighter. Until this moment the koan had seemed like just an interesting riddle. But now your very life depends on finding the right answer.

No doubt each of us have experienced periods in our life when we have "reached the top of our pole." In Metapsychiatry we call them existential crises. Suddenly or gradually our sense of purpose and direction disappears. We feel like we are hanging in midair with

nothing solid to support us. Gripped by fear we cannot see the way forward. In our panic and despair we may be tempted to blindly jump at pseudo-solutions to our dilemma. The risk of a disastrous fall becomes quite real.

Before we can understand the way to proceed on from the top of the pole it is first necessary to understand what the pole itself means. In Metapsychiatric terms the pole is equivalent to a self-confirmatory belief system, an underlying structure of ideas and values that provides us with an illusory sense of meaning and support. We cling desperately to this pole of invalid beliefs for our sense of identity and direction in life. For some, the pole will represent the ideal of climbing the ladder of financial success. For others it might symbolize social climbing and the quest for prestige and status. Still others might see in it the search for peak experience of an emotional or sensual kind. Even the spiritual path can be turned into a way of confirming the sense of self through seeking spiritual “highs” or priding oneself on attaining an advanced level of spiritual development. For each of us the pole that gives structure, meaning, and direction to the ego will be unique. But there are two features that seem to be common to all pole-climbers: ambition and greed, climbing and clinging.

One Zen master offered the following comment on the koan:

*The man who lacks the third eye of insight
Will cling to the measure of the hundred feet.
Such a man will jump from there and kill himself,
Like a blind man misleading other blind men.*

The Zen master seems to be saying that all poles are essentially yardsticks, ways of calculating and comparing one’s self-worth within certain parameters or according to certain standards of measurement. One can cling to the measure of the hundred foot, the hundred dollars, the hundred years, or the hundred pounds. The standard can be temporal or physical, financial or social, psychological, intellectual or spiritual. It really doesn’t matter *what* is being measured. The issue is “clinging to the measure”: that is, being attached to the *measurement mentality* itself. This is sometimes referred to in Zen as the “gaining mind.” According to the gaining mind, the top of the pole represents what “should be”: the better job, the more fulfilling relationship, financial security, social recognition, or even spiritual enlightenment. At the bottom of the pole lies what “shouldn’t be”: pain and loss, insecurity, loneliness, rejection, being a nobody. Whatever pole we choose for our climb toward heaven, the task is the same, to progress from the bottom to the top of the pole, from what shouldn’t be to what should be. However, no matter where we are on the pole, we tend to feel dissatisfied and restless, ambitions to climb higher and fearful of falling lower. The meaning of this dissatisfaction with climbing becomes clear when we examine the word “ambition” itself. As Dr. Hora notes in *Beyond the Dream*, ambition literally means “to go in two directions.” In terms of the hundred foot pole, this means that we cannot go up without also going down. Cherishing success cannot exist without fear of failure. Being preoccupied with pleasure invites pain. Focusing on the future involves comparison with the past. Climbing toward heaven somehow turns out to be hell. The pole always links us to *both* ends of the spectrum. As long as we view life within the parameters

of the pole we see in terms of the dualistic mental framework of ambition. But, as the Zen master points out, we are not seeing *real* life at all. Blind ambition closes the third eye of insight. Our dualistic gaining mind obscures nondual spiritual perception. We cannot see what doesn't interest us, and as long as we are climbing the pole, our interest lies only in getting to the top.

The second feature which pole-climbers have in common is greed or clinging. You don't last long climbing a hundred foot pole without a good grip! The art of pole-climbing consists of learning to cling to what you've got while reaching for more. It's dangerous business. As the Zen master observed, you can kill yourself in the process. And that is really the key to understanding the meaning of greed. Pole-clingers are hanging on for dear life. The rewards that they expect to receive at the top motivate the climb up the hundred foot pole. But in addition to this ambitious "upward mobility," pole-climbers tend to cling greedily to what they already have out of a fear of loss and emptiness. They are afraid that if they loosened their grip they will slide to the bottom and end up as "low man on the totem pole." The poet William Butler Yeats captured the secret fear of all climbers and clingers when he wrote:

*Now that my ladder's gone
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.*

In other words, if we let go of our pole or ladder we fear that we will have nothing and be nobody. There will be no meaning or structure to our life, no sense of achievement or self-worth. We will end up in the "foul rag and bone shop" of our own sense of emptiness and worthlessness. Climbing the pole may temporarily distract us from these fears, but it does not eliminate them. If we reach the top of the pole by achieving our self-confirmatory goals we may find that we are not satisfied after all. Many an existential crisis begins with the question: Is this all there is? But the same crisis can be triggered by jumping or falling from the pole. Illness, failure, loss of a loved one, or some other reversal can seemingly wipe out our hard-won achievements and land us at the bottom of the pole. Or we can get stuck halfway up the pole and begin to wonder what all this climbing means or whether it's worth all the effort. This is known as the "mid-pole crisis." Perhaps we will experiment with climbing a few different poles for a while. But eventually we may come to the point described by Walter Stace in *Time and Eternity*:

"How do you attain your end by making things bigger, or longer, or wider, or more this or more that? For they will still be *this* and *that*. And it is being this or that which is the disease of things . . . you think that though this thing, this place, this time, this experience is dark, yet that thing, that place, that time, that experience is, or will be, bright. But this is the great illusion. You must see that all things, all places, all times, all experiences are equally dark . . . Only out of the total darkness will the light dawn."

This is the moment when we begin to seriously question our self-confirmatory or "worldly" standards for measuring success and self-worth. We may find ourselves asking: What is the meaning of the gaining mind? And is there a valid alternative to the ambitious climbing and

clinging mentality?

In order to discern the particular ideas, values, and standards that constitute the pole which supports our mode of being, we must develop a faculty which is dormant in most people. This faculty is called phenomenological perception. Through phenomenological perception we become capable of seeing the objects, ambitions, desires, and beliefs which we cling to for a sense of identity. Just as we need an “eye of the flesh” to perceive material phenomena, so we need an “eye of the mind” to perceive this mental world of thoughts, meanings, and values. The basic requirement for awakening the faculty of phenomenological perception is the development of the open mind. The open mind involves bracketing our habitual standards of measurement so that we can confront what reveals itself moment to moment in a fresh, unprejudiced way. If the open mind is attained, a direct, intuitive apprehension of the “pole” which sustains our misdirected mode of being becomes available to us. Such meanings emerge spontaneously when openness and sincere interest are present. They cannot be forced, willed, or calculated. This all sounds simple enough. But if we are under the illusion that we are clinging for our lives one hundred feet in the air, the last thing we want to hear is: “Relax. Let go. The pole is just a thought, a dream you are having.” However, that is precisely what is needed. The philosopher Martin Heidegger used the word *gelassenheit* or “releasement” to describe the quality of openness and detachment needed if we are to move beyond the calculative thinking of the gaining mind to the meditative thinking of phenomenological discernment.

But let’s say that through the faculty of phenomenological perception we do come to see that climbing and clinging to the measure of the hundred feet is a useless, dangerous, and invalid enterprise. Now what? How do we proceed? The Zen master has already given us a hint. What is needed, he says, is to develop the “third eye of insight,” our dormant faculty of spiritual perception. In speaking of the meaning of the “third eye” Dr. Hora notes in *Beyond the Dream*:

Going beyond phenomenology, there is a whole universe of inspiration, inspired thought, creative intelligence . . . received into consciousness from a transcendent source . . . The Oriental religions speak of the process of opening the “third eye,” which corresponds to the Metapsychiatric process of awakening to spiritual consciousness which makes us available to inspired wisdom, spiritual values, and creative intelligence.

The third eye is the eye of God within us which is capable of beholding spiritual reality directly. This kind of perception cannot be achieved by “climbing and clinging.” What is needed is sincere interest in and grateful receptivity to spiritual ideas and qualities. When the third eye or eye of God opens within us we begin to rely on God rather than the pole of human standards for our support. Dr. Hora puts it this way:

To live and work creatively it is necessary to lean on God, and that requires courage. It is somewhat like trying to float on emptiness . . . Sometimes . . . we want to lean on parameters. This would hamper creativity and inspiration because we would have preconceived ideas as to what should be.

To lean on parameters, preconceived ideas of what should be, is equivalent to clinging to the pole. To proceed beyond the pole we need to let go of parameters and lean on God. This is like “floating on emptiness.” It is the eye of God within us that allows us to discern in the apparent emptiness the moment by moment support of “the everlasting arms of Love.” Or, to use another image, it is as if the “rungs” of creative inspiration and Divine grace appear out of thin air as they are needed.

Let me conclude with the Biblical story of Jacob—a beautiful example of what it means to proceed beyond the hundred foot pole through learning to see with the eye of God. Even in the womb, Jacob was apparently a climber and clinger, struggling in competition with his twin brother Esau. At the moment of birth Jacob emerged second, which meant that his brother Esau would receive the inheritance. Perhaps influenced by his mother Rebecca’s ambitions for him, Jacob develops into a greedy and competitive young man. At one point Jacob tricks Esau into giving up his birthright in return for a bowl of soup. Later Jacob and Rebecca conspire to cheat Esau out of his father’s blessing. It appears that climbing the pole of ambition and greed, getting one step ahead of his brother Esau, characterized Jacob’s mode of being-in-the-world. But then an amazing event takes place. Shortly after Jacob leaves home in search of a wife he has a dream. In the dream, “a ladder was there, standing on the ground with its top reaching to heaven; and there were angels of God going up it and coming down. And Yaweh was there . . . saying, ‘I am Yaweh, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. I will give to you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants shall be like the specks of dust on the ground . . . Be sure that I am with you; I will keep you safe wherever you go, and bring you back to this land, for I will not desert you before I have done all that I have promised you.’ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Truly, God is in this place and I never knew it . . . This is nothing less than a house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” (Genesis 28:12-17)

In this dream the eye of God opens within Jacob. He acquires the faculty of spiritual discernment. Jacob sees a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, a symbol of the link between human and Divine consciousness. Moving up and down the ladder are angels representing inspired wisdom and spiritual qualities flowing freely between the Ocean of Divine Love-Intelligence and the spiritual consciousness of Jacob. All the things that Jacob thought that he had to acquire through his own ambitious and manipulative efforts he now realizes are the free gift of God. Even though moments would surely come when leaning on God would appear to be leaning on nothingness, Jacob is given the assurance that God will always be present and never desert him.

This dream marks a revolution in Jacob’s conception of himself. He no longer sees himself as climbing various human ladders to arrive at what should be. Rather, he awakens from the dream of ambition and greed and realizes the good of God which already is. “Truly,” he says, “God is in this place and I never knew it.” Jacob sees with the eye of God that he is nothing less than a house of God, a gate of heaven, a place where Divine Love-Intelligence can become manifest. He realizes that his consciousness is itself a heavenly ladder upon which inspired ideas and Divine grace can flow freely up and down.

A PROVERB OF HOLY VISION

By Phyllis Tribble

Metapsychiatry studies the Bible from the perspective of divine consciousness, seeking to discern the truth of God that yields PAGL. Divine consciousness means holding the divine within consciousness and beholding the divine that transforms consciousness. When this process clarifies scripture, it becomes a resource for healing and enlightenment. To this end, the following paper explores a biblical proverb.

Our text comes from the sages of ancient Israel. We cite it first in the familiar, though inaccurate, translation of the King James Version: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Prov. 29:18) To this translation we shall return, but only after earning our way there.

The ancient sages had certain characteristic ways of teaching. They often spoke through short indicative sentences that observed the world. These sentences stated a truth and then juxtaposed an alternative truth in the pursuit of understanding. So we listen again to the above proverb, this time with a more accurate translation: "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint."

We do not need to know what prompted this observation in ancient Israel in order to hear its truth for our time. "To cast off restraint" is the commentary on our world. Instances are legion, be they public or private: government officials defying the laws of the land, violence erupting throughout the world, mental illness taking its toll on countless individuals, and sexual revolution facing an unrestrained disease oddly named AIDS. With the poet Yeats we see:

*Things fall apart, the center cannot hold.
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.*

Having made this observation, the ancient sage offered an alternative in the form of a beatitude: "But blessed is the one who keeps the law." The alternative moves from society to the individual, from the people who cast off restraint to the one who keeps the law. It seems to counsel, "if you can do nothing about the anarchy loosed upon the world, you can do something about your own life. Be faithful to the instruction of God. Keep torah (the law) and you will be blessed." In other words, the answer to a lack of restraint in society is restraint within the individual.

At this point we begin to question the text, a procedure in keeping with the sapiential tradition of Israel, for the sages considered alternatives as they sought understanding. Through such a process they sought to transcend the limits of their own biases. And so the ancient one who observed, "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint," we counter, "Where there is no vision, the people put on restraint." This truth is as easy to illustrate as its opposite. To put on restraint is also an aspect of our world. People in power disavow the democratic process, subjecting others to the blinders of covert action and deception. Legislation seeks to control our private lives, invading the preserves of the

home. Totalitarian states, be they of the right or left, establish boundaries through apartheid, censorship, imprisonment, exile. Sexism, racism, classism, ageism are all modes of restraint. And restraint also witnesses to destruction. But this time, stern repression, not “mere anarchy,” is loosed upon the world: “Where there is no vision, the people put on restraint.”

If this be the first half of the proverb, what is its concluding alternative? Let us recall that the ancient sage juxtaposed the keeping of the law by the individual to the casting off restraint by society. By analogy, then, we must juxtapose the breaking of the law by the individual to the putting on of restraint by society.

Where there is no vision, the people put on restraint.
But blessed is the one who spurns the law.

Surely we cannot rest here. The mistake of such a perspective is clear. It leads up back to the very anarchy that the law was designed to restrain. So we are trapped, trapped in a circle of thinking. To cast off restraint; to put on restraint; to keep the law; to spurn the law. Round and round go the proverbs and on their circuit the proverbs return. All words are full of wariness. In a world of competing voices we stagger, vacillate, and waver. We argue, seeking an illusive middle path that would yield law without repression and freedom without anarchy. It is a delicate line to walk, this way of two insights, two truths, two masters, each undercutting the other and neither producing a desired end.

Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint.
Where there is no vision, the people put on restraint.

Perhaps now, however, we are able to hear and appreciate the profound summation of the King James version: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

O Lord, O Lord, who will deliver us from the peril of dualistic thinking? From our running to and fro, round and round, first here and then there? The answer is not far off. It is not in the heavens, that we need someone to bring it down. Nor is it beyond the sea, that we need send another to bring it back. No, the answer is near us. The very proverbs with which we wrestle contain the secret of their own resolution. Much as Zen koans, they prod us first to see the folly of the one way and the folly of the other way, and then to perceive the key that unlocks the treasured meaning. That key appears in the opening clause, “Where there is no vision . . .”

In vision lies the answer. But what is vision? Vision is right seeing. It is insight, not sight. It has nothing to do with fantasies, imaginations, dreamland—all the stuff to which we cling to fulfill our wants and desires. Vision is “theophany,” the realization of God. Now, no doubt some of you are thinking, “At this point the sermon takes off into an ethereal realm; it becomes vague and flighty. Vision? Tell me concretely what you mean and how to get it.”

Ah, there’s the rub. You are quite right to see that in citing vision we have left the realm of the familiar, the customary, and the conventional. Restraints and non-restraints we know

about. Keeping and breaking the law we understand. But vision moves us beyond habitual thinking to existential realization. And for many people that movement is a journey into an alien land. It does not accommodate itself to the two truths, to the two insights between which the unenlightened stagger. Vision has nothing to do with the two eyes; it has to do with what Oriental sages call the third eye, the single eye of non-dualistic thinking. "If thy eye be single, thy whole body is full of light." As Meister Eckart said, "Vision is seeing with the eye with which God sees us." "And God saw that it was good." (Gen. 1:21)

Another approach to this unfamiliar terrain of vision shifts the image from eyes to heart—to the will, the intellect, and the volition. Purity of heart, wrote Kierkegaard, is to will one thing. And to will one thing is to have beatific vision: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)