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Thomas Hora, M.D., Director

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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.

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IS AMBITION HARMFUL?

By Ruth Robins

“There’s nothing wrong with ambition, is there?” the student asked in a voice that reflected his uncertainty. As a successful businessman, he knew that hard work and a driving ambition to succeed had paid off by rewarding him with the fruits of his labor. He also knew that the opposite of ambition, which is passivity, doing nothing, would not help solve his problems, but he did not see the flip side, the failure side, of success. He did not know,

apparently, how to evaluate values. He did not know that ambition is an existentially invalid concept, as Dr. Hora wrote in Dialogues some years ago. Hardly anyone else in the world seems to know it either.

Ambition seems to be okay, but when we see what it can do to us we have to conclude that ambition is not good after all. Ambition can destroy the quality of our life and health, it can lead to the breakup of a marriage, the failure of a career, the loss of financial stability, uproot us from our homes and hurt our loved ones in the process. Some people even risk going to jail, as did a man in my community who refuses to pay his income tax, seemingly without regard for the effect his action will have on his family.

Yet it doesn't take much awareness to see what ambition is doing to others, and to the world. The daily news is filled with stories of the ambitious who have fallen from high places; and of ambitious governments at war with each other, destroying the quality of life and land. Talking about it tends to keep the issue away from us, out there, in other people.

We are meeting here to learn what is the most loving and intelligent way to live, which is the purpose for which we are created by God. So we have to ask: What is my ambition? What is it doing to me? What effect does it have on others? Metapsychiatry helps us to become aware that we are hurting ourselves and others all the time in ways that we are not aware of.

We are offered a unique and helpful principle which enables us to evaluate values to know what is most intelligent and loving. The principle says that it is by the fruits of a value that we can judge its worth. We don't have to take someone's word for it, or follow what the culture dictates, we just observe the effects which a value has on our own health, and the quality of our own life and ask: Is this really good? Is this working? Is this life-enhancing? Does it improve the quality of life? That's all we do. Then we will know what is valid and what is invalid.

I never knew that ambition was hurting me, or knew the right way to live, until I took up the study of Metapsychiatry, and began to meditate and pray rightly. As I observed ambition operating, certain characteristics became apparent. It is helpful to know what they are so that they can be overcome.

Here are a few of them:

1. Self-promotion. When we try to get work for ourselves through promoting our own career, we may find that that's when the door closes, and nothing seems to work out. Dr. Hora reminds us that self-promotion is self-demotion. If you have ever promoted yourself you know it is embarrassing and degrading. Networking seems to be a 'new age' way to promote yourself, using people to get what you want. But this too had its drawbacks. One big networker was quoted as saying, "I'm tired. I feel old. But what would I do if I stopped? You wouldn't believe how quickly the phones would stop ringing and the invitations stop coming. Without it I'm nothing and life has no purpose." When we don't know there is a higher purpose to life, we can't see our way out of our dilemmas.

2. Personal effort. When we think we have to do the work, we have to do the thinking, we have to rack our brains and figure everything out, study, get lots of opinions, weigh the pros and cons, it is exhausting. If we don't know who we are, there seems to be no alternative.

3. Too much talking. Bragging about ourselves and showing off what we think we know invites envy and rejection. And who can listen while he is talking?

4. Seriousness. How sad to be serious. Taking yourself, your work, and your life with such seriousness makes you grim – and grimace. It puts a frown on your face and wrinkles on your brow where there could be a lovely smile . . . and laughter.

5. Deviousness. When we deviate from what is simple, straightforward and direct, and become secretive and deceitful, it complicates our life, creates confusion, and hampers our work. We also lose self-respect.

6. Comparison thinking. This quickly can turn into malicious rivalry and hate, but we wind up hurting ourselves when we hurt others. The karmic law is “as you sow so shall you reap.”

7. Fantasizing. When thoughts become pictures in our minds we are taken on a “trip,” but the trip will trip us up. For example, a student noticed that when a job had been offered in her career, after months of being out of work, immediately she began to picture the rewards it would give her—the bills that could be paid, and the work it would lead to. When the job failed to materialize, she was left with grand delusions and great disappointments. Nothing had happened except in her mind. We have to be very careful not to slip into fantasy land and learn to rest in PAGL land.

8. Hurrying. Rushing ahead to go somewhere or get something done, living in the future when we achieve our ambitions, we fail to be attentive. When we are in a hurry, mistakes occur, and accidents take place. This hurts us and can create problems for others.

9. Pride. A desire for admiration goeth before a fall. One man in need of work to support his family declined one good job offer after another. They were not good enough. He did not see what this was doing to his family, or how it contributed to the breakup of his marriage. Another individual, in the same situation, recognized it and realized that instead of being a “snob” she could say “yes” graciously to a job offer with appreciation for the opportunity to earn money and be useful; and she soon found her salary being increased.

10. Greed. The dictionary defines greed as an excessive, rapacious desire, especially for wealth. It makes us ask: When will there ever be enough? What will it take to satisfy me? Greed makes us possessive, mean, hard-hearted and cruel.

These, then, are some of the ways in which we hurt ourselves, and others.

If we would like to be healed of ambition, we have to be more interested in God than in personal achievement. We have to meditate to become aware of our thoughts, our habits and our motivations, and we have to learn to see life in the context of God.

CONFERENCE DIALOGUE

Part Four

Question: Is it good for parents to encourage their children to be ambitious? Is this good parenting?

Dr. Hora: If you would take a poll, the vast majority of people would say, "Sure, certainly, that's why we send them to football games, and the baseball games, and we teach them to be ambitious and to win. If we are not winning, we are losing, and a third possibility does not seem to exist." This is of course what our culture believes. Ambition is good, and certainly parents are ambitious for their children; they want them to be successful in life and not to fail. So we cannot think any other way, either we have successful children or we have failures. Now the question is: Is there a third alternative?

Comment: I hope so.

Dr. Hora: Could you tell us what it is? Have you learned something?

Comment: I should have kept my mouth shut.

Dr. Hora: According to Metapsychiatry it is not beneficial to encourage children to be ambitious. Does it mean that we have to reconcile ourselves that they will be failures in life because there is no other choice? Either we are encouraging them to be ambitious or they will fail, right? Most people will say: "That's all, that's common sense, what else could there be?" It is like the young lady who said, "Who in his right mind would want to be healed of ambition, if you heal my ambition I will be a lazy bum." Now, there are parents here, what are you going to say to your children? Go out and win? There was a baseball coach who said, "Winning is everything," and a recent movie which proclaimed, "Greed is good." That's the normal way to think, but we are not interested in the normal and the conventional.

Comment: Good parenting can be measured by teaching values. Teaching an appreciation of a valid value system that comes about not so much by telling children what to do, but by example. When we show by example how we live our lives in terms of what we value, hopefully the children will learn that. I think that is a more meaningful success system for them in the long run, and it doesn't mean that they won't bear the fruits of whatever material advantage, but it is on a different scale and from a different perspective.

Dr. Hora: If parents are encouraging their children to be ambitious, aren't they teaching them values? They are, but existentially invalid values. That is what we have been talking about all day.

Comment: Dr. Hora, I had this experience with my son who happens to be ambitious—he was getting after me because I wasn't ambitious for him. He said, "I think you'd be happy no matter what I was, or what occupation I chose." And of course I would be. My husband happens to be ambitious for the children.

Dr. Hora: Yes, well most parents are ambitious for their children. There is no majority rule here. Just because most parents are ambitious for their children, it does not necessarily prove that this is a valid value. That is what we were trying to understand today. Yes?

Comment: I just wanted to say that I thought in Emory's talk we saw values laid out for us: being issue oriented, and productivity oriented. On the other side of the scale we saw from Ruth's paper what pain ambition leads to. I found the set of values very helpfully laid out—so we have a real helpful contrast there in terms of orientation.

Dr. Hora: Right. In general it is a little difficult for people to rise above dualistic thinking. Ambition—success and failure, winning and losing—was brought out by the Neafseys so very nicely. These are conventional ways of thinking. In Metapsychiatry we seek to elevate consciousness to the level of nondual value systems, so we rise above conventional ways of thinking and discover the "pearl of great price" which makes it possible to coexist in the world harmoniously, and to prosper in it without ambition, greed, and failure.

Question: Would you talk a little bit more about money being the shadow of love and how that would tie in with greed and ambition?

Jim: Well, I know that in *Beyond The Dream* you speak about income being related to our receptivity or a sense of God's abundance. If there is a receptivity to spiritual ideas it is often mirrored in material abundance, and I think it has come out several times today to not latch onto this in an operational way. It is very easy to do that.

Dr. Hora: There are all kinds of moneys. We have to distinguish between drug money, and political bribery money, and crime money. But the real money, the good money, is the shadow of love. The more loving we are the more we shall prosper—when we are enlightened we are not interested in being rich, we are interested in the affluence of divine grace. Affluence is in proportion to effluence: the more love is flowing out from our heart into the world, the more prosperity will flow into our life without ever getting stuck on it. The moment we are stuck on it the whole thing can dissipate itself. There has to be a harmonious flow of the good of God. Under those circumstances money is the shadow of love. So if we are interested in being affluent, we learn to let the love flow out of our hearts with no strings attached—non-conditional goodwill.

Question: We have heard today that ambition is invalid, and yet we seem to see where ambition and invalid thoughts and modes can bring forth some wonderful things. What comes to mind are the recent Olympics where the athletes were totally self-centered, dedicated, committed and the premise was, "Thou shalt have no other interests before figure skating." The final performance seemed to be divinely inspired with perfect grace

and harmony. My question is can the divine process manifest through ignorance and invalid modes of being?

Dr. Hora: There is some confusion here about the Olympics. Can we clarify this issue? Are the Olympic athletes ambitious?

Comment: Aren't they interested in perfecting a skill?

Dr. Hora: That's right.

Comment: What about being interested in "being number one?"

Dr. Hora: Some may be, but there must be more or less enlightened athletes—athletes who are interested in just perfecting their skills rather than "making a killing" at the Olympics.

Jim: I think that would relate to what Emory was describing this morning with productivity— that there can be an authentic sense of productivity in athletics or aesthetic values of beauty that are cherished perhaps by them as well. But I don't think that any of us are saying that there couldn't also be other kinds of ambition there or anywhere.

Dr. Hora: It is important to understand the difference between competition and rivalry. What's the difference?

Comment: Rivalry is interpersonal.

Dr. Hora: Right, rivalry is interactional, and healthy competition is concerned with perfecting skills. There is nothing interpersonal in that. Rivalry is always malicious and interpersonal; beating the next guy. So it is possible to compete in the Olympics in a healthy way.

BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT A Dialogue

Question: I would like to ask a question about meditation. I find that when I meditate there are just a lot of garbage thoughts. All that I know so far is that if you are aware that you are fantasizing then that is good, and if you can be aware during the day, catching yourself in a fantasy, that's also good. But I am not really clear about more than that. I don't know what God sounds like. I thought maybe you could tell me.

Dr. Hora: You don't know what God sounds like?

Question: Yes, what does God sound like? Sometimes in meditation it is like a bad movie.

Dr. Hora: Perhaps you are switching from one fantasy to another.

Question: That happens, one after the other, a lot of channels. So is that right—that the first step is to at least be aware when one is fantasizing?

Dr. Hora: Yes.

Comment: And that is like a little bit of waking up?

Dr. Hora: Of course, if you are fantasizing and you don't realize you are fantasizing, you can go on that way for years. We have to nip it in the bud.

Question: But once we are aware that we are fantasizing, what then?

Dr. Hora: Then we switch to channel "G" . . .

Comment: Okay, do you mean being open to what channel "G" is saying?

Dr. Hora: Yes on channel "G" we contemplate what God is. We start with God, and remind ourselves what God is. What is God? The Bible says, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace thereby good shall come unto thee." (Job 22:21) So instead of fantasizing, we turn our attention to the questions: What is God? Who am I? and, What does God want? God wants us to be interested in him so that we may better manifest his perfection. The Bible says, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) Now, when we fantasize we aren't interested in being perfect, what are we interested in?

Comment: Feeling good.

Dr. Hora: That's all. You could say, "If I will feel good, I will be perfect." Right? It's not necessarily true. There is a commandment in the Bible which demands of us perfection. Now is that reasonable? Can we do this? No? What happens to us if we take this commandment seriously?

Comment: We try to do it.

Dr. Hora: How would you go about trying to do it?

Comment: Never get mad at anyone.

Dr. Hora: Okay, then we repress our emotions and get sick, right? And if we get mad at someone, then we get punched in the nose. It's no good.

Comment: We also try to imagine God.

Dr. Hora: Imagine God, is that possible?

Comment: Not really, no. Or affirm that God is good, and get stuck there.

Dr. Hora: How can we then fulfill this commandment? Is it an unreasonable commandment?

Comment: No, it is not an unreasonable commandment. It doesn't say, "You should be perfect."

Dr. Hora: What does it say?

Comment: It is very comforting to know that we are perfect, and that we can work towards realizing this perfection. By working towards realizing this, life becomes better and better.

Dr. Hora: How do we work towards realizing perfection?

Comment: By becoming aware—awareness is one avenue, and gratefulness is another. Aware of where we are involved with ourselves and not God, grateful to realize that there is a higher form of life than that which is troubling us when we are involved with ourselves.

Dr. Hora: A higher standard. Yes. Now, the commandment says, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Therefore, if we would like to take this commandment to heart, we have to start by asking ourselves, "In what way is my Father in heaven perfect?" We start with God, and contemplate God, and what is this perfection of God. We remind ourselves that God is perfect life, God is perfect intelligence, God is perfect peace, God is perfect love, God is perfect harmony, perfect health, perfect beauty, perfect goodness, perfect joy, perfect freedom. This is what God's perfection consists of. Then we have to match this perfection in ourselves. Is that difficult?

Comment: Well, the idea that there is an example of this perfection leads to being grateful.

Dr. Hora: Right.

Comment: So the important thing is to become aware of this perfection, not merely saying God is this, God is that. We work towards becoming aware that this really exists, and that we can be part of this Reality.

Dr. Hora: Yes, right. We then fulfill the commandment. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." So we learn about the perfection of God, we remind ourselves that we are created by this God, that we are controlled by this God, supported and sustained by this God, and we are inseparable from this God, and we are here for this God. We get so involved in this commandment that everything else fades out of consciousness. So that is a good way to be healed of any problem, if we can immerse ourselves in this commandment about being perfect as God is perfect. When we say we have to be here for God and not for ourselves or others, then we are beginning to see the actualization of this commandment. We work on that all the time, and then the "sea of mental garbage" has no access to our consciousness anymore. The valid mode of being-in-the-world is that of "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." When we are perfect our mode of being-in-the-world is perfect. And that is a situation

which is called spiritual blessedness when all things work together for good because we are “on the beam.” We cherish spiritual values.

Question: So do we manifest these areas of perfection, like intelligence?

Dr. Hora: Yes.

Comment: But yet we said that nothing in the material world can ever be perfect.

Dr. Hora: Right, but our intelligence is spiritual, therefore it is perfect, even while we seem to be in the material world.

Question: What about perfect beauty? It doesn't seem quite clear how that could be manifested.

Dr. Hora: Jesus said, “We are in this world, but not of it,” So even while we are in this world, God is expressing his own perfection through us. And then we are amazed at the intelligent ideas which come; we solve certain challenging problems, and we can see God acting in us and through us in this world. So we are in this world, but we are not of it.

Question: Is there any kind of perfection on the material level?

Dr. Hora: Perfection is always spiritual, always divine. Suppose we need to make a call to a company, and before we make the call, they call us, isn't that divine perfection? “Before you ask, I shall answer,” says the Bible, “Your Father knoweth what ye have need of, before ye ask him.” (Matthew 6:8). These are signs of perfection. We couldn't do this right? It is happening.

Comment: But it seems no matter how spiritually minded we are, say while we are cleaning the house, it is never perfect, there is always some dog hair around or some dust. It seems like it can never be perfect.

Dr. Hora: Yes, but we can clean the house effortlessly, efficiently, and effectively, and whistle a happy tune at the same time!

Comment: That's enough to be grateful for.

Question: But what if the dust bothers us, what if we say, “I am not perfect, here is my dusty house.” What is that?

Dr. Hora: We don't judge perfection by the material situations. Perfection is in consciousness.

Comment: It seems like one is trying to make the material world perfect.

Dr. Hora: Yes, that is called perfectionism. And this is a psychological disease.

Comment: It is operationalism isn't it?

Dr. Hora: Yes.

Question: How can one be healed of perfectionism?

Dr. Hora: Recognition that on our own self we can do nothing. When we are perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect, we don't do this. It happens to us by virtue of having been attentive to the attributes of God. We cannot make ourselves perfect. But we can be receptive of this perfection if we are sincere about it. Anybody who would try to produce perfection through his own effort either in himself or in somebody else would be a perfectionist. If we misunderstand these spiritual principles we can get pretty confused, like the man who was wearing a toga and sandals because Jesus was dressed like that two thousand years ago. This man wanted to be Christlike and make himself appear Christlike. So he grew a beard, and wore a toga and sandals. What does that do?

Comment: I hope he was in a warm climate.

Question: You said the healing of perfectionism is knowing of mine own self I can do nothing. Is that also the healing of operationalism?

Dr. Hora: Yes, of course. "All things were made by him, and without him nothing is made that seems to be made." (John 1:3) What is the main problem with operators?

Comment: They see themselves as persons.

Comment: They are doers.

Comment: It is like the cart before the horse. We could contrast doing with being, and you are helping us to see that our doing is really coming from our being, and not the other way around.

Dr. Hora: Yes, that's a good way of putting it. Being precedes doing. Being is expressive of our thoughts. When our thoughts are in line with divine reality, then our being is perfect.

THE RHYTHM OF THE SOUL

By Patty Hanson

There is such a desire when life seems at its worst;
To read and write, all I see and hear, in tides of rhyming verse.

The music that always plays softly in my mind;
Becomes much louder when life looks most unkind.

Ah – It is the Soul in Its Infinite knowing:

The changeless One, Eternal and ongoing.

The Soul sings Its songs in wholeness of Being;
Saying, "It's not so what the mortal is seeing."

Stop paying attention to the illusive point of view;
And hear the song that is really you.

Let all the thoughts of a mortal life go;
And listen to the harmony of the Immortal Soul.

You are the song that sings Its Truth and Love;
And sees the view from up above.

The peace be still that hears the calm;
The lullaby, the poem, the Psalm.

The Life that sings two part harmony;
Is the One Voice throughout eternity.