

MARRIAGE AND
FAMILY LIFE

The Possibility of Frictionless Coexistence

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The PAGL Foundation, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hora, M.D., (1914-1995), was a psychiatrist with a passion for seeking spiritual understanding. His search led him beyond psychology to study philosophy, phenomenology, world religions and other existential and metaphysical teachings. The spiritual teachings of Jesus Christ became the cornerstone of his practice that he called Metapsychiatry.

Metapsychiatry offers a unique method of spiritual growth and understanding that manifests in healing of all kinds. It is not a religion. Dr. Hora's patients and students included followers of diverse religions, as well as non-religious individuals.

From 1983 to 1987 a group of his students* led by Jan Linthorst, D. Min., distilled the essence of this wisdom on twelve vital subjects and published them as a series of booklets, of which this is one. These, as well as books of Dr. Hora are available at www.Amazon.com. Audio recordings of classes with Dr. Hora are available through the PAGL Foundation at: www.pagl.org. PAGL is an acronym for Peace, Assurance, Gratitude, and Love. The presence of PAGL in consciousness, as taught in Metapsychiatry, is evidence of the existence of God and can be seen as a way by which to measure individual spiritual progress.

*Ann Linthorst, Joan Taylor, Joan Rubadeau and Gloria Spurgeons

NEITHER TO MARRY NOR TO NOT MARRY

In our modern times, marriage is becoming a controversial issue. Many couples ask themselves the question: "Should we get married or shouldn't we get married?" This is the wrong question. The right question is, "What is marriage?" If we know what marriage is, if we have a clear understanding of what an existentially valid marriage is, then the right action will be easier to follow.

No one could hope to have a good marriage if he approaches it on the basis of a "should." Here we may profitably seek to clarify the difference between making a decision to get married and committing oneself to a mode of being-in-the-world which includes being married. If one is making a decision, then whatever action follows is connected to the ego; we call it self-confirmatory action. But if one is making a commitment, this is connected to a greater idea. This we call God-confirmatory action.

The second metapsychiatric principle states: "Take no thought for what should be or what should not be; seek ye first to know the good of God which already is." When a man and a woman find a great deal of compatibility with each other, they can ask the question, "Is the good of God discernible as present in this situation? Can we find joint participation in the good of God?" If the answer to these questions is "yes," there usually follows a spontaneous

commitment to this participation, which is for all eternity. This constitutes an existentially valid marriage. The details follow as a natural unfoldment of the basic recognition that in this partnership the good of God is discernibly present. Thus, one can get married without having to be pressured into it, or making agonizing decisions about it.

RESPONSIBILITY IN MARRIAGE

The idea of love between persons is an insufficient basis for marriage, but the idea of love as a contextual basis for living with someone is valid. The idea of love between two persons is a narrow-minded way of seeing life, but love can be seen in a broader sense as constituting the spiritual environment in which a marriage can thrive and be securely founded.

It is also helpful to consider the concept of responsibility. On the human level, responsibility has its opposite, namely, irresponsibility. But on the spiritual level, responsibility has no opposite. In divine Reality there are no opposites, everything is nondual. On the human level, responsibility is a burdensome idea of being obligated and ensnared — and is closely associated in our thoughts with blame and guilt. However, the spiritual concept of responsibility is beautiful, because it connotes the “ability to respond” to the good of God. We all have this ability. When two people find the good of God in their lives together, they can respond to this goodness with gratitude, joy, and commitment. They are responding in a responsible way to the will of God.

Whatever we are interested in, we are responsive

to and that is how commitment takes place. Someone asked, “What if one is married to a partner who is not interested in the good of God?” This is a situation where the spiritually minded partner must learn to hear “the sound of one hand clapping.” The sound of one hand clapping is a Zen Buddhist koan (riddle) which stands for the ability to transcend the pressures and the temptations which enter into interaction thinking and behavior. It is based on a constant, conscious awareness of the presence and the power of omniactive Mind, the governing principle of life.

SEPARATE BUT NOT SEPARATED

Recently someone said: “The only thing that is good in our marriage is sex — everything else is rotten. We are both very unhappy, except for short moments in bed.” This is an example of how invalid, preconceived ideas about marriage can result in unhappiness. Without the right concept of marriage, people enter into this covenant with a wide variety of expectations and fantasies. Therefore, it is important to have a clear, existentially valid understanding of marriage and of life in general, because only then is there the possibility of realizing and partaking in the good of God. The ideal marriage is without interaction thinking.

A great deal of suffering and illness in life comes from interaction thinking. So much so that when we get sick, it is a good idea to ask ourselves, “Who am I sick against?” It is helpful to realize that all interaction — even physical — is essentially mental. It is based on the belief of personal mind powers acting against each other.

Interaction is thinking about what another is thinking about what we are thinking. (As one man put it: “I would like to be a male chauvinist pig, but my wife won’t let me.”).

When a marriage is based on joint participation in the good of God, the quality of happiness and well-being is entirely different from moments of pleasure based on ego-gratification. Ego-gratification is “heady,” exciting and pleasurable. This is counterfeit happiness; it is short-lived and has an obverse side of pain and disappointment. If a relationship is pleasurable exciting, then we are on an ego trip. If in a situation there is an awareness of the good of God, which is spiritual blissfulness characterized by peace, assurance, gratitude and love (PAGL), then we are on the right track.

The right understanding of the good of God and the awareness of PAGL is a helpful indicator whereby we can judge whether our happiness is genuine or not. The poet Kahlil Gibran gives us two beautiful symbolic pictures of a healthy marriage when he says, “The pillars of the temple stand apart,” and “The strings of the harp vibrate separately to produce beautiful harmony.” This illustrates the concept of being separate but not separated and of jointly participating in a harmonious marriage.

This also clarifies what a fallacy it is to think that marriage is an interpersonal relationship, or a sexual relationship, or a civil rights movement, or a power struggle, or a legal contract.

These cultural assumptions are existentially invalid and underlie a wide variety of problems and marital discords. “As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee” (Matthew 8:13).

THE MEANING OF SEXUAL ATTRACTION

When it comes to sex, we have to ask ourselves what our motivation is. What is it that really attracts us to someone? If we are radically sincere, we may discover that our attraction is not really sexual, but that there is something we admire about another's body or mind. Admiration, however, is mostly a cover-up for envy. Whatever is based on envy cannot be good. Sooner or later it results in frustration. We can never take away someone's attributes. People who enter into various alliances believing they love someone, or that they are actually attracted to someone, or feel excited by someone, will find that underneath there is mostly envy. We must be radically sincere about our secret thoughts and see whether they are based on envy or whether they are based on spiritual compatibility.' Only on the basis of spiritual compatibility can there be harmonious coexistence of a lasting nature. Otherwise, most of these so-called relationships tend to be stormy and painful and short lived. People don't know what is happening to them and they don't know what moves them, because it is difficult to admit to envy. It's such an ugly thought. And yet, if we look deeply into motivations, we find that men are often driven, for instance, by envy of breasts, and women by envy of men's genitals or minds. There are some unattractive men who have tremendous attractive power over women. A woman may say, "How is it possible that I am attracted to this man who is so ugly?" Often it is the mind she may admire and envy.

Envy is often denied, and instead she may just think she is sexually attracted to this man. This is self-deception. Self-deception makes the so-called relationship very precarious.

SEX AND LOVE

In the context of love, healthy sex is a possibility. It may not be primarily lustful. It may be a pure expression of love and perhaps a joint desire for procreation. On higher levels of enlightenment, one “neither marries nor is given in marriage” (Matthew 22:30). There is just spiritual love where the issue of sex doesn’t even arise. It isn’t a matter of abstinence or refraining. It is just having outgrown the desire.

Sex can occasionally be a holy experience, or it can be a vehicle of the most bizarre fantasies. Thus sex may not be sex at all but just a lustful expression of fantasies people are afflicted by.

When the sex is a purely loving experience, there are minimal fantasies. There is just an awareness of love and that is ultimately joyous and satisfying. In Metapsychiatry we say, “We can have all the sex in the world, as long as we are not unduly interested in it.” Sex is really not a problem, the problem is always the interest in sex. Interest in sex depends on many factors, especially fantasies and emotional balance. Sex is essentially a mental event rather than a physical act — therefore our values determine the quality of it.

PAGL AS COMMUNION

There is no possibility of fulfillment on the level of sexual pleasure-seeking. There is always an unpleasant aftertaste. “Post coitum omne animal triste” — which means that after intercourse, everyone is a little sad. On the spiritual level, of course, the supreme good is PAGL. Someone suggested that two people individually in PAGL are separated. Actually, it is orgasm which always separates.

We cannot really share an orgasm with anyone because in the orgiastic experience one is totally focused on one’s own fantasies and so is the partner. Consequently, there is no real communing. Orgasm is always a private affair, even though on the surface, it looks like a participation of two people in the same experience. But PAGL is truly a shared state of consciousness because we can share in the awareness of PAGL whether we are alone or with others. At our conferences, there are times when the entire audience is participating in PAGL. There is a sense of beautiful peace and assurance, gratitude and love — one can almost touch it.

FEMINIST IDEOLOGY

The feminist ideology seems to have deteriorated into a fashionable chic of women spending time together complaining about their marriages and encouraging one another to take a dim view of men in general and husbands in particular.

Under the title of “consciousness-raising,” many fall into the error of becoming more and more unhappy

and discontented just to keep up with the times. The constant rehearsal of problems and advertising them is just as unhealthy as a medical diagnosis is. In the medical field it often happens that diagnostic evaluations are replacing methods of healing. As a matter of fact, there are doctors who specialize in finding out what is wrong with people. These are called diagnosticians and they are not at all interested in issues of health or wholeness.

Similarly, the fad of griping about one's marriage will in no way facilitate the attainment of harmony and conjugal bliss. Furthermore, the politicizing of marriage and introducing civil rights concepts and legalistic arguments results in the assumption that marriage is an adversary relationship where power balance is the real issue. This, of course, is a complete perversion of the idea of harmonious living in an atmosphere of love and mutual appreciation.

Marriage is neither political, socio-economic, sexual, nor legal; it is primarily an existential situation. What do we mean by that? "Existential" means that the real issue in marriage is living under the most favorable and fulfilling conditions. The institution of marriage is ideally designed to improve the quality of life for both husband and wife, and their offspring, by creating a harmonious unit. Unfortunately, invalid ideologies are invading this institution and creating havoc in many lives.

Marriage is not a place to fight for equal rights, it is not a battleground for ego-gratification, or an arena for power-madness. Marriage is a situation where the beautiful, the good, the harmonious, and intelligent life can be cultivated and realized. It is a joint participation in the good of God.

PARENTHOOD

Spiritual values are of great importance in effective parenthood. Children have a tendency towards self-confirmatory, interactive, and provocative behavior. The enlightened parent will preserve his transcendent perspective and be an inspiration to the children through exemplifying spiritual excellence so that eventually the children will begin to appreciate the upright position in life and be inspired by the parents' ways. If the parents are not sufficiently enlightened, they may have the tendency to mold the children, control them, and impose certain "shoulds" and "should nots" on them. The result of these erroneous ways is the "sound of two hands clapping" — which means collisions, conflict, rebellion, and strife. Here we may very well remind ourselves of the metapsychiatric principle: "Problems are lessons designed for our edification."

Essentially, there are three kinds of parents: (1) teaching parents, (2) daydreaming parents, and (3) learning parents.

The teaching parent tends to be tyrannical and creates resistance in his children. A daydreaming parent is even more damaging, for he rejects his children in favor of his own fantasies, and at times may set impossible conditions for love in nonverbal ways. For instance, there are parents who fantasize about having mentally retarded children or sexually aberrant children, or wish that the child might be of the opposite gender, etc. Children may be aware of these unspoken demands on subliminal levels and have an urge to comply. This,

of course, leads to endless possibilities of suffering and misdirected modes of being-in-the-world. The learning parent is an inspiration to his children and a model for growth. No one can be blamed for these processes, whether conscious or unconscious, because they are manifestations of deep ignorance. In general, we can add that children may help their parents to grow up.

There is a story attributed to Mark Twain, who supposedly said that when he was 17 years old, he was convinced that his parents were the most ignorant people in the world; but when he was 27, he was amazed to find how much his parents were able to learn in just ten years.

It seems vitally important that children have a chance to perceive that the parents' interests are focused on spiritual values. Whatever the parents are interested in will attract the children's interest. Thus, there may follow a spontaneous unfoldment of the Christ consciousness in them, provided the parents do not try to impose these values on them.

We do not indoctrinate, we seek to inspire. To influence is to trespass — it is tyranny. To be influential is good. We seek to be inspiring and influential, models of spiritual maturity.

FAMILY VALUES

In Metapsychiatry, we say that children are extensions of parental consciousness. Children manifest

thoughts of their parents. Children are influenced by three factors in parental consciousness: what the parents cherish, what they hate and what they fear. Therefore, healthy parenthood is impossible just on the basis of good intentions or self-sacrificing love. Parents can be loving, generous and devoted, and move heaven and earth for the sake of a child, but if they don't understand these three elements in consciousness, they may be of little benefit.

Suppose a parent cherishes smoking cigarettes. We see that the children become interested in smoking, too. Suppose a parent doesn't smoke in the house, in front of the children, having been advised not to do this. Will that solve the problem? It will not solve the problem, because health is not a matter of behavior. It is the cherishing of the idea that needs to be healed. In order to be healthy, we must cherish that which is existentially valid and we must be compassionate enough to be free of hate and certainly we must seek to be fearless. How can we become fearless? Isn't the whole world scared? Is there a way to be fearless, especially if we read the newspapers, watch television and talk to our friends? It is possible to be fearless to a large extent. The Bible has the answer:

“Perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him” (1 John 4:18, 16). When we obtain the realization of spiritual love and come to treasure it, then there will be no problem with what we cherish, what we hate or fear.

HARMONY

Someone presented a case of a family with a great many problems. The meaning of all the problems seemed to be rooted in “exciting interactions.” This family was devoted to, among other things, rock music. They loved excitement. This family was unwittingly working together to produce disease, and eventually disintegration. What is the remedy for discordant notes? Harmony. The value of excitement and boredom can be effectively replaced by learning to appreciate harmony and love: love which is not based on self-confirmation, because that is selfishness and egotism, but love which derives satisfaction from unconditional benevolence.

However, we cannot blame these people. We cannot say the members of the family are working against each other. We can say that a false value is destroying the family. The problem is not the members of this family. The problem is the false value. We are treating values. Values have a dynamic impact on our lives, often without our realizing it. As stated earlier, whatever we cherish, hate or fear has an impact on our mode of being-in-the-world. Just as the value of excitement can destroy a family, so the value of harmony and love can heal a family. When the value of harmony and love is fully appreciated and understood by the parents, the family will be healed. When the mental climate changes within the family, symptoms disappear. We cannot help the children until the mental climate in the family has been healed. Once that has been healed, everything will heal spontaneously. The mental climate is determined by the conscious and unconscious values

which the family is seeking to realize. Children do not have the conceptual capacity to alter the value system, but parents have. The children are living in a mental environment determined by the value system of the parents.

CLARIFYING VERSUS INFLUENCING

Most parents would like to have a magical power to influence their children and each other. It is a trespass to try to influence anyone. We shed light on the meanings of problems and invalid ideas.

It is perfectly legitimate to point out the ideas and values that are existentially invalid, not in order to influence anyone but to clarify the issues. In our secret thoughts, we must always endeavor to know that our children are places where God's presence reveals itself as life, as love, as intelligence, as joy, and as perfection. Many mistaken ideas can be corrected by shedding light on invalidities and replacing them.

For instance, certain parents whose children were troublesome, discovered that the meaning of the conflict was their own mode of being-in-the world which was based on the assumption that the most important thing in life is to be successful. The children were being battered between success and failure — two sides of the same coin. In general, people blindly accept the idea that success is good and failure is bad. Metapsychiatry offers a healthy alternative to the idea of success and failure. Enlightened man is not interested in success and he never has to endure failure. The enlightened individual is oriented towards “harmonious prospering.”

CHILD TRAINING

“Train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6). How does Metapsychiatry look at this statement from the Bible? We would say, “Train up your own consciousness and your children will follow the right path.” We train animals; we don’t train people. We inspire people. We set an example. Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” He wasn’t training his disciples. He was showing the way, and that’s how enlightened parents have an effect on bringing up their children. They show the way. Now, some parents show the wrong way. Children who are being “trained” become rebellious and develop behavioral problems. Children who are being shown a certain mode of being-in-the-world will learn either the right way or the wrong way. We are seeking to realize what is perfect. Jesus said, “Be ye therefore perfect.” We are required to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. How can we do that? If we try to train up a child to be perfect, we bring up a neurotic perfectionist. We can show the way by working on ourselves. This means that we have an inherent responsibility to guard the quality of our thoughts and to keep our attention focused in the direction of spiritual values.

LEARNING FROM CHILDREN

Having children may be a tremendous learning experience. That’s the only valid rationale for having children — to grow while they are growing. Without that

realization we are just blindly floundering around from one problem to another. This must not be confused with using children as teachers. We are not using children as teachers. Who are our teachers? Our problems are our teachers. In Metapsychiatry, there is a principle which states: "Problems are lessons designed for our edification." Every problem which emerges in our experience is specifically invited by some form of ignorance siding in our consciousness which needs to be healed. Therefore, we say, "Nothing comes into experience uninvited." Since our problems are our teachers, it is good to welcome them rather than resent them or run away from them. The lessons we fail to learn will keep coming back. But once we learn the meaning of a problem and heal it, it will never come back.

As long as we see ourselves as human personalities, we remain products of parental thinking, and there is no therapeutic system in the world that can set us free. What is required is the discovery of a new sense of identity. Only a spiritual, being, created not by human parents but by divine Mind, can be free. "Ye' shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). As long as we live in this world as physical persons we are really dead because life is God — Spirit. Our parents have not given us life Only God can give life. The apostle Paul said: "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). As long as we believe ourselves to be fleshly creatures, we are dead, but spiritual awareness is life and peace "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14).

FREEDOM FROM FAMILY FIXATIONS

To some people it is very meaningful to know that God loves them, while to others it means nothing. Someone might say, "Well, what good is it if God loves me if my mother doesn't?" This is difficult if there is a mother fixation or a father fixation or a sister or brother fixation. The idea is: "I have no time for God. I must finish this unfinished business. I have to succeed in making my mother love me. I have to make my sister respect me. First I have to finish this business and then, maybe, I will turn to God afterwards. First things first." More often that not, it is a parent and occasionally a sibling who is the focus of unfinished business.

It is necessary to realize that nobody will ever succeed in changing his mother, father, sister or brother. It is a hopeless project to try to get them to apologize or to correct the mistakes of childhood or to really admit to something. All this effort to change someone is a waste of energy. We have to come to see this before we can be free of them. We must stop blaming them and stop trying to force them to change their opinion about us. That's what Jesus said: "I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law" (Matthew 10:35). All these past accounts must be forgiven. No one can succeed in undoing the past. It cannot be done. Therefore we give up, stop thinking about the past and turn our attention to God and realize that God is our creator, not our parents, and that we are here for God. We have to learn how to live our lives with that awareness, with that God-centered consciousness,

God-conscious living. Then we have reached a point of sincere commitment to a new mode of being-in-the-world. Suddenly, we find peace and a new self-esteem, which is spiritual.

MANIFESTERS OF LOVE

In family situations, we have a great many preconceived notions of how people should behave towards us. We have all sorts of expectations. A student once mentioned getting an upset stomach from eating iceberg lettuce. She realized that this only happened when she was with her parents. Then it occurred to her that maybe it was not the lettuce.

There are only two things that can hurt us: what we want and what we don't want. In this case, this woman wanted to be loved and approved of. Everyone seems to want something, and the result is emotional stress. Metapsychiatry helps us to understand that we are not love seekers, we are love manifesters and we will never be free in this life until we stop seeking to get love and understand ourselves as manifestations of divine Love-Intelligence. When we become love manifesters, then we will be comfortable and nothing will hurt us — not even iceberg lettuce. Jesus said: "Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy and nothing shall, by any means, hurt you" (Luke 10:19). "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (Mark 16:18).

SPIRITUAL SELF-ESTEEM

Sometimes the unfinished business with parents is unwittingly transferred onto other people in our current experience. In psychoanalysis this is called “transference.” We transfer our problems from childhood onto present day figures and we live in that dream, in that confusion. We expect people to compensate us for what our parents failed to do, or did.

Human self-esteem is always an aspect of pride. Spiritual self-esteem is always an aspect of humility. When we have found spiritual self-esteem, we have, at the same time, become humble.

Spiritual growth takes place when we study and meditate and aspire to a realization of the fact that God is our creator and not our human parents. We learn that God is infinite Love-Intelligence and that we have been created for a purpose. As we consider this very carefully, we may come to know that God loves us and that’s wonderful. The daily study of the eleven metapsychiatric principles can help us grow in that direction.

PARENTAL FANTASIES

Many of our problems stem from the fact that our parents; without even knowing it, unconsciously believe that they are gods and they have created us. Whatever they want us to be, we are going to be. They impose their fantasies upon us. Actually, they become miscreators. The child looks to his parents to see what they want. The parents are fantasizing; the child picks it up and tries to please the parents in order to get love.

We then have a crazy scenario. Many people live out their parents' fantasies without being aware of it. They think they really want certain things but they are just accepting their parents' fantasies. There is an irresistible urge to fulfill what the father or mother is dreaming about. Most people are not really living. They are just dreaming a life which they were handed. It is mostly a dream. Some people have nice dreams, and live out beautiful fantasies. Some people live out dreadful fantasies. But even the beautiful fantasies are not real.

How do we know what our parents' fantasies are? It's easy to know what our parents' fantasies are. They are whatever pleases or displeases them. Sometimes there is resistance to facing up to them. When someone becomes aware of his or her parents' fantasies, a great deal of hatred can be released. It is difficult to cope with hidden resentments of many years' duration. It does not help to be vindictive. That just hurts us. In some cases it takes years to release that hostility and allow it to dissolve, so that one can forgive and turn to God.

THE CATERPILLAR AND THE BUTTERFLY

Much time and effort is spent on endeavors to undo parental conditioning, but in vain. A caterpillar will never fly. It must become a butterfly in order to be free and fly. The caterpillar does not know it is really a butterfly. We are taught by Jesus Christ that we are not miserable worms. We are sons and daughters of the

living God. We are spiritual beings and live in divine consciousness, the Kingdom of Heaven.

The process of transformation entails becoming increasingly aware of the dynamism of the past and its hypnotic nature. We must recognize that it is not relevant to our true reality as spiritual beings. This is not synonymous with repressing the past, but neither is it a matter of expressing it. It is somewhat like playing a tape recording, listening to it, then erasing it and afterwards discarding it altogether. The butterfly leaves behind the caterpillar and soars toward heaven. Man can transcend the human illusion, rise above it and live in spiritual consciousness.

Now the question can be asked: How does one attain a clear realization of self-identity as divine consciousness? Under ordinary circumstances, we either repress our childhood experiences or we are told by psychologists to express them. If we repress them, we are not listening to the tape recording; if we express them, we are listening to it over and over again in the hope that it will wear out. But it doesn't wear out. Instead, we get worn out. Under spiritual guidance we become aware of the fact that the tape recording does not represent our reality. It is no part of our true being since our true mind is God.

Some psychologists would object to this, calling it alienation and depersonalization. In fact, it is liberation and awakening to a higher level of consciousness. It is the realization that we live and move and have our being in a timeless infinitude of divine Love-Intelligence, and we manifest it. This realization comes to us by grace as a result of study, prayer, meditation and healing.

THE PROCESS OF TRANSCENDENCE

The human person's main preoccupation is with thoughts of "I want" and "I don't want." The enlightened man's interest revolves around the question, "What does God want?" And he knows that God wants to be manifested in the world. Man was created to be an image and likeness of God. He is therefore here for God.

He is not here for himself or for others but to manifest the spiritual qualities of God. This commitment brings him into harmony with the Fundamental Order of Existence and he is free. He becomes a beneficial presence in the world.

It is a fascinating realization that the more clearly we can perceive ourselves as spiritual, the healthier we become as human beings. We transcend all the misconceptions and all the attachments and all the fears which we have accumulated since childhood. The aim is to attain the faculty of cognition which reveals to us that we are spiritual beings. This is a progressive process. It doesn't happen overnight, but we can make progress. That is what we aim for in Metapsychiatry: the transcendence of the human condition.

For instance, a student of Metapsychiatry spoke some time ago about her 15-year-old daughter who manifested certain symptoms and the symptoms were getting worse. After the mother had been helped to see that she was dominating and controlling, she said that she had released her concerns about her daughter but still the girl was getting worse. The mother discovered that she had made the mistake of thinking that letting go was something she could "do." Possessiveness is not

something we can change through behavior. The issue is not behavior. It is a radical transformation in consciousness. It is not an attitude and it's not behavior, but a reorientation towards being a beneficial presence in the world through being here for God.

TOUCHING

A student asked: “What is the meaning of touching — not just touching that may lead to a sexual act, but touching in the context of being with somebody?” What is the metapsychiatric meaning of this phenomenon, which is rather widespread, of holding hands or touching parts of the body? What does it mean to fondle, to handle or to be touched by somebody?

The emphasis is on the word “somebody.” It is the desire to confirm the reality of the physical body. It is comforting to touch and be touched. It relieves existential anxiety. We are forever afraid that perhaps the body is not real and we are afraid to become aware of the fact that the body is just an externalization of thoughts. And if we can touch each other we reassure ourselves that we are here. Sometimes people say, “Pinch me, I think I’m dreaming.” What are we asking for when we ask to be **<p 29>** pinched? We want to be reassured that we are not dreaming, that we are in contact with “reality.” So the desire, which is often spoken of as a need to touch and be touched, is a desire for reassurance that our physical bodies constitute primary reality. This is very comforting to us because we are apparently in doubt about it. For someone who is

seeking to realize a higher reality, touching may not be appropriate.

We are reminded here of the scene described in the Bible, where Jesus came out of the tomb and met Mary, who was looking for him. Mary wanted to embrace him but he said, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended" (John 21:17). We understand this to mean, "Don't touch me because that will delay my ascension. I would derive physical comfort from being embraced by you, and that would tempt me to remain a physical person. But I am on my way towards ascension, where I have to realize that the physical is mental and I am not a material, corporeal personality, but a Living Soul."

POSITIVE REGARD

The question often comes up about nudity in the home. Some parents and children like to be naked around one another. This has been recommended by some psychologists and rationalized as encouraging naturalness about the body. It is really of no value whatsoever. Nudity has a tendency to stimulate prurient interests. Natural man is fascinated by the body and, whether he admits it or not, he is always stimulated erotically by watching nude bodies. If we learn to deny these interests, we are hurting ourselves; if we indulge in these prurient interests, we are overstimulating ourselves. On the other hand, wearing clothes can have a similar effect. Some clothes are designed to stimulate this interest. So then, to practice nudity is of no value, but just wearing clothes is not enough.

What is important is to be interested in having positive regard for one another as spiritual beings. Therein lies mental health and therein lies the secret of harmonious coexistence in families.

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