

Spiritus contra spiritum
**Spirituality and
recovery from alcohol
use disorder**

**The Lampeter Alister Hardy Lecture
16th July 2017**

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The Higher Power Project

Department of Theology and Religious Studies

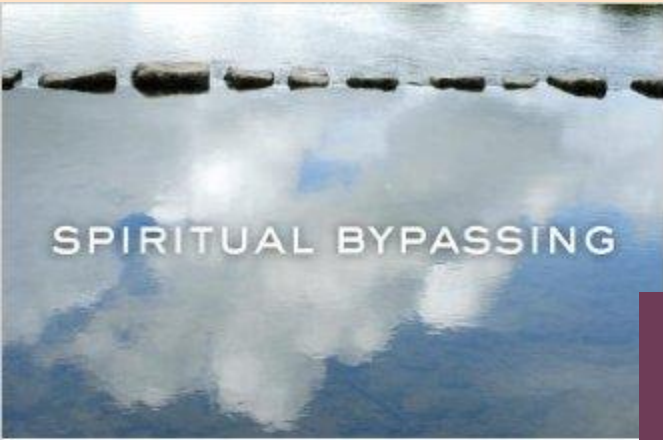
@WEDossett

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Alcoholics
Anonymity

Spirituality

- Spiritual Malady
- Spiritual Programme
- Spiritual But Not Religious (SBNR)
- Spiritual Experience(s)
- Spiritual Discipline
- Spiritual Bypassing



SPIRITUAL BYPASSING

When Spirituality Disconnects Us
from What Really Matters

LEARNING TO RECOGNIZE AND TRANSFORM THE
OBSTACLES THAT KEEP US FROM LIVING LIFE FULLY

ROBERT AUGUSTUS MASTERS, PHD

"This is a wonderfully significant and important book . . . truly mandatory for this day and age."
KEN WILBER, author of *The Integral Vision*

zero
books

DAVID WEBSTER

DISPIRITED

HOW CONTEMPORARY
SPIRITUALITY MAKES US
STUPID, SELFISH AND UNHAPPY



SELLING SPIRITUALITY

THE SILENT TAKEOVER OF RELIGION

JEREMY CARRETTE AND RICHARD KING



Slavoj Žižek

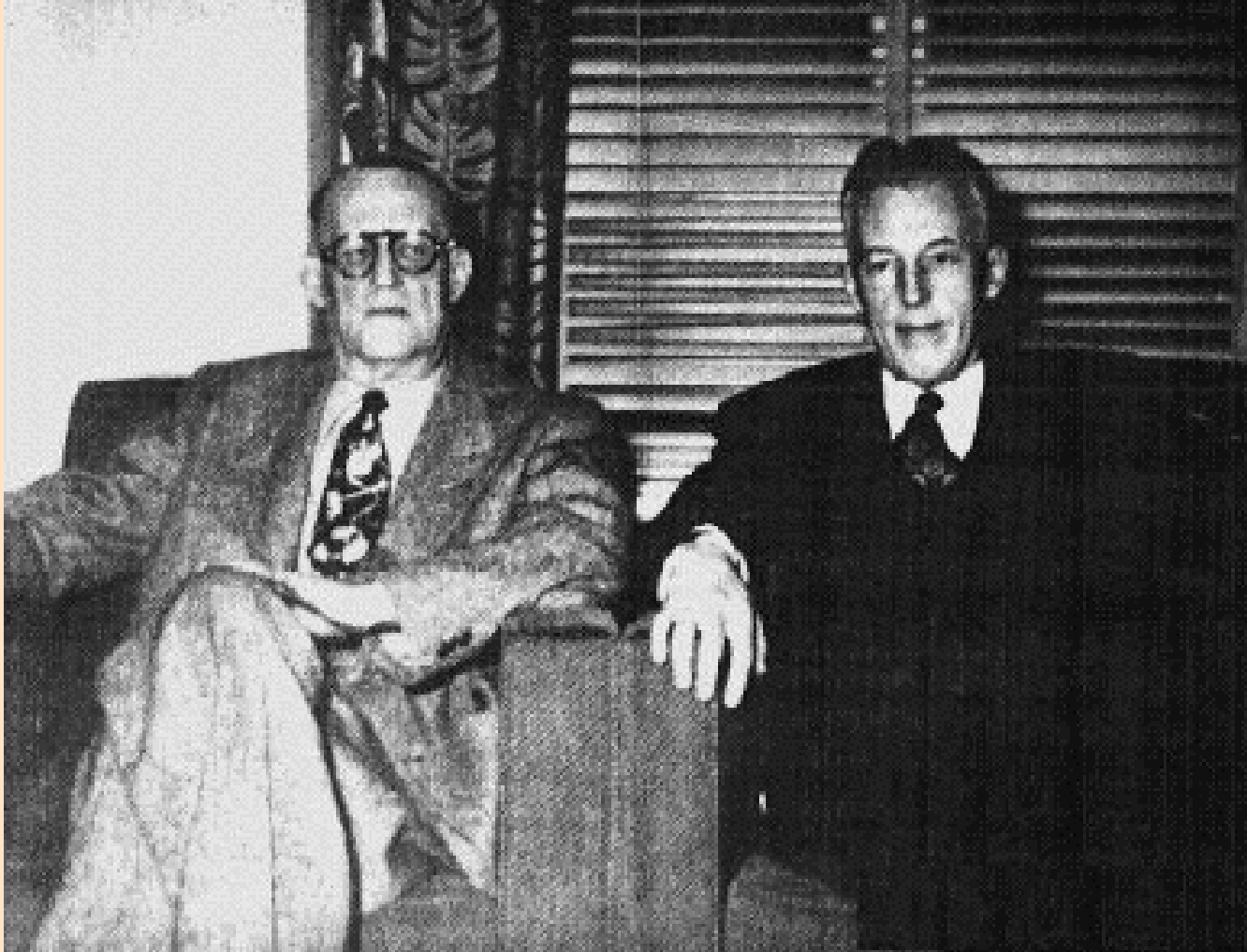
‘ideological supplement to capitalism’

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

AUD is a form of SUD

Dr Robert Smith and Bill Wilson (1940)



Suddenly the room lit up with a great white light. I was caught up into an ecstasy which there are no words to describe. It seemed to me, in my mind's eye, that I was on a mountain and that a wind not of air but of spirit was blowing. And then it burst upon me that I was a free man. Slowly the ecstasy subsided. I lay on the bed, but now for a time I was in another world, a new world of consciousness. All about me and through me there was a wonderful feeling of Presence, and I thought to myself, 'So this is the God of the preachers!' A great peace stole over me and I thought, 'No matter how wrong things seem to be, they are still all right. Things are all right with God and His world.'"

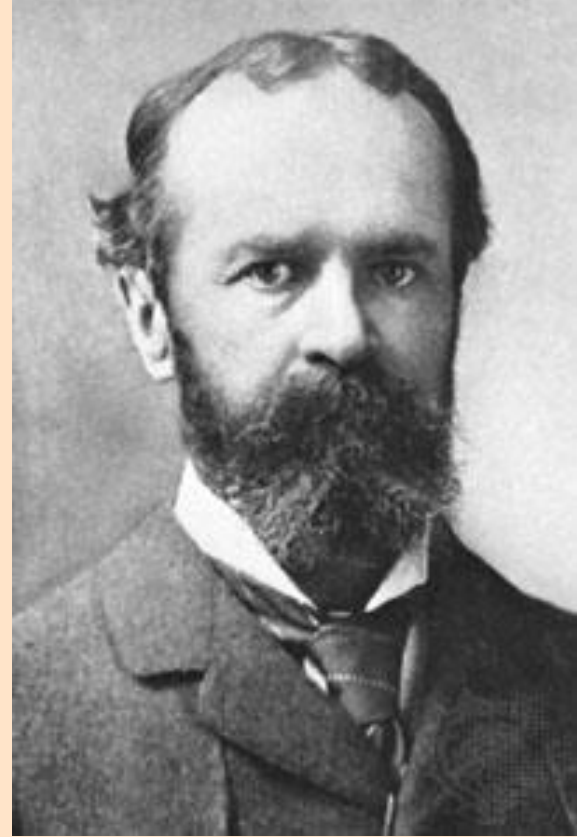
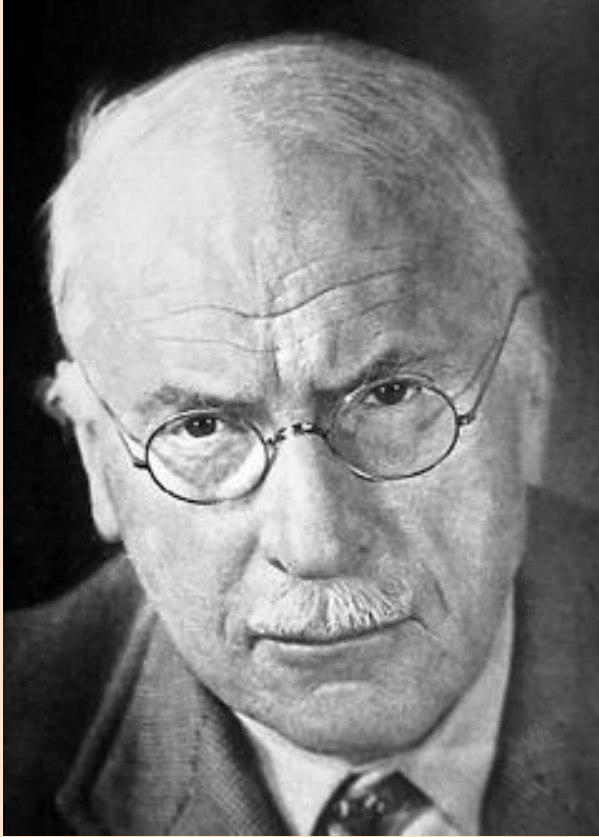
1957 *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. New York:
Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. p63

Oxford Group Meeting in Nova Scotia 1935



Four Absolutes: Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love
Later to become **MORAL RE-ARMAMENT**

Influential on early AA



Carl Jung & William James

Powerlessness: The primary experiential condition of addiction

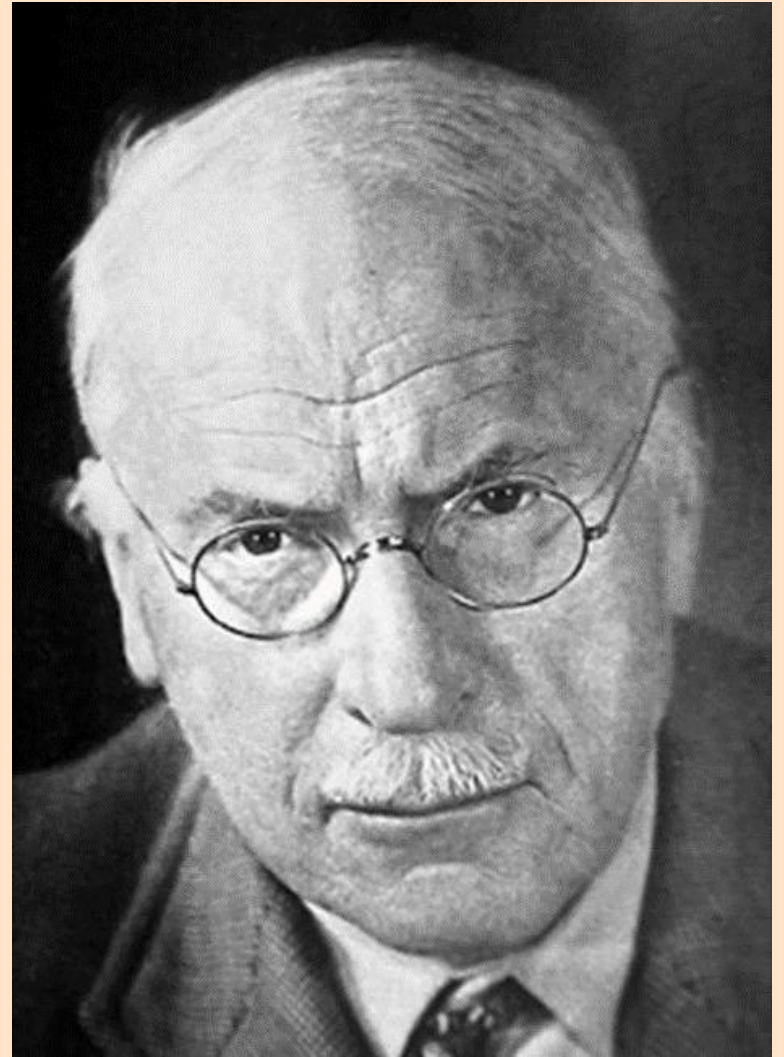
Akrasia = weakness of will ✖

Need for a Higher Power

The Three Pertinent Ideas

- a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives
- b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism
- c) That God could and would if He were sought

Alcoholics Anonymous (1939: 60)



Rowland Hazard III & Carl Jung

PROF. DR. C. G. JUNG

KÖSNACHT-ZÜRICH
SEESTRASSE 22B
January 30, 1961

Mr. William G. Wilson
Alcoholics Anonymous
Box 459 Grand Central Station
New York 17, N.Y.
=====

Dear Mr. Wilson,
your letter has been very welcome indeed.
I had no news from Roland H. anyone and often wondered what has been his fate. Our conversation which he has adequately reported to you had an aspect of which he did not know. The reason ~~was~~, that I could not tell him everything, ~~was that~~ those days I had to be exceedingly careful of what I said. I had found out that I was misunderstood in every possible way. Thus I was very careful when I talked to Roland H. But what I really thought about, was the result of many experiences with men of his kind.
His craving for alcohol was the equivalent on a low level of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in mediaeval language: the union with God.¹⁾
How could one formulate such an insight in a language that is not misunderstood in our days?
The only right and legitimate way to such an experience is, that it happens to you in reality and it can only happen to you when you walk on a path, which leads you to higher understanding. You might be led to that goal by an act of grace or through a personal and honest contact with friends, ~~or~~ through a higher education of the mind beyond the confines of mere rationalism. I see from your letter that Roland H. has chosen the second way, which was, under the circumstances, obviously the best one.
I am strongly convinced that the evil principle prevailing in this world, leads the unrecognized spiritual need into perdition, if it is not counteracted either by a real religious insight or by the protective wall of human community. An ordinary man, not protected by an action from above and isolated in society cannot resist the power of evil, which is called very aptly the Devil. But the use of such words arouse so many mistakes that one can only keep aloof from them as much as possible.
These are the reasons why I could not give a full and sufficient explanation to Roland H. but I am risking it with you, because I conclude from your very decent and honest letter, that you have acquired a point of view above the misleading platitudes, one usually hears about alcoholism.
You see, Alcohol in Latin is "spiritus" and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: spiritus contra spiritum.

Thanking you again for your kind letter
I remain
yours sincerely

C.G. Jung.

¹⁾ "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." (Psalm 42,1)

Letter from CG Jung to Bill Wilson – Jan 30, 1961

You might be led to that goal by an act of grace or through a personal and honest contact with friends,

...if it is not counteracted either by real religious insight or by the protective wall of human community.

You see, alcohol in Latin is "*spiritus*," and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: *spiritus contra spiritum.*

GOD

Group of Drunks

(i.e former 'drunks'- members of AA)

Also:

Good Orderly Direction

Gift of Despair

Ian *'I hated the fucker. All the bad things that had happened to me in my life were his [...] fault. And this being the God I was brought up on. Catholic. I'm pleased to say I've been able to separate God from religion.'*

Ben *'I describe God in the feminine because my concept of 'life-giver' is purported to the feminine of all species I know of'*

Jennifer *“I don't consider a Higher Power to be a personal being — anthropomorphic — nor an intelligent puppeteer in the sky directing the show. I do not conceive of HP as a santa god who rewards the good and punishes the naughty. Neither do I see this force as working for some and not others as in “There but for the Grace of God go I.”*

Sophia *‘The people in the fellowship have had a huge influence over my version of a HP, mainly by me not agreeing (for me) with a lot of HP versions I hear in AA. So by defining what my HP is NOT it has helped me define what it IS.’*

Other sources

- *The Lion King*
- *Star Wars*
- *A Course in Miracles*
- *The Dhammapada*
- *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*
- *The Prophet* Khalil Gibran
- *Co-dependent No More* Beattie
- The Dalai Lama
- *Babette's Feast* (Film)
- *Les Miserables*
- The Bible
- Julian of Norwich
- Ken Wilbur
- Eckhart Tolle
- Richard Rohr
- The Footprints Prayer
- Hazelden Literature
- *Spirituality of Imperfection* Kurtz
- *The Secret*
- Marianne Williamson
- Thich Nhat Hanh



**Alcoholics
Anonymous**

Ellie, *'The old me drank. I needed to become a different person, one who could cope with life, who could manage my feelings of guilt and shame. The steps were a way, a framework for me to do that. For dealing with the past, and for developing the qualities that I needed to have the strength not to head straight back to the drink at the first sign of a difficult emotion.'*

**‘In return for a bottle and a
hangover we have been given the
Keys of the Kingdom.’**

Alcoholics Anonymous (1939: 312)

Huw

‘My wish to help another drunk is the key to my spiritual well-being’

*With thanks to our participants for sharing
their stories with us*

@higherpowerproj



University of
Chester