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## False Gods and the Two Intelligent Questions of Metapsychiatry

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**Abstract:** This paper explains how the spiritual teaching known as Metapsychiatry, developed by psychiatrist Thomas Hora, employs two questions as its focal educational method. Those questions facilitate phenomenological discernment of the source (*i.e.* the meaning) of our problems in living and help students and patients to understand the real nature of God. Perceiving our existentially invalid attachments and the inevitable suffering they produce encourages us to seek inspiration from God.

**Keywords:** phenomenology; meaning; God; love; intelligence; embarrassment; values; spiritual; idolatry; truth

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### Introduction

Half a century ago, a Hungarian-born American psychiatrist, Thomas Hora, M.D., created a spiritually oriented teaching and psychotherapeutic method that he called Metapsychiatry. Its name implies that it intends to transcend the limitations of conventional psychiatry in relieving human suffering. Dr. Hora described it as a method of realizing overlooked truths of human existence. The teaching is characterized by precise definitions of various states of consciousness and of spiritual values in a way that reveals the various ideas underlying such states.

It addressed life problems and solutions by asking what it identified as the two intelligent questions:

- What is the meaning of my experience?
- What is what really is?

The first of these is recognized as the *phenomenological* question, while the second is known as the *ontological* question. Since the Metapsychiatric definition of reality is that it is spiritual, that it is the governing, benevolent intentionality of the universe, commonly called God (or love-intelligence or

infinite mind, *etc.*), it proceeds to explain the nature of God and how individuals can attain conscious awareness of and unity with it. God is seen as the source of life and for all good ideas.

In a substantial sense, the Metapsychiatric method may be thought of as helping seekers to identify false Gods that they have been worshipping with their attention. Then, by contrast, it guides students to appreciate and become receptive to communication from the true God. Finally, it shows them how to distinguish whether the ideas obtained are existentially valid or self-delusional.

## Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of phenomena, which are appearances occurring in experience. In Metapsychiatry, phenomenology is an inquiry into the meaning, *i.e.*, the mental equivalent, of experiences, a practice essential to understanding what happens in our lives. Whatever is troublesome originates with some inharmonious notion to which we have become strongly attached. Clearly, whatever we are most interested in *has become* our “God.” They are ideas or values that are cherished, hated or feared, and are like idols to which we devote ourselves. The process of identifying the problematic ideals that we cling to requires

- awareness that we need to examine our situation to gain understanding
- wholehearted interest in asking ourselves the meaning of our plight
- and receptivity to acknowledging the truth about our questionable attachments.

The phenomenological search is often facilitated by an experienced psychotherapist. Once an individual learns of the validity and usefulness of this approach, one becomes able to use it independently. Humility is the principal attitude needed for successful discernment of meanings.

Examining the meaning of experiences, whether they be physical sensations, mental disturbances, interactions with others, dreams, symptoms of illness, or even pleasant feelings, is based on the insight that “nothing comes into experience uninvited” [1]. This awareness, of ancient provenance (see Job’s declaration that “For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me”<sup>1</sup> or from Proverbs “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”<sup>2</sup>), enables the sincere inquirer after understanding of the seeming mysteries of life, to search for those deeply held values that one tends to hide from oneself. When one is sufficiently interested and humble, as determined by one’s willingness to be embarrassed, the secretly prized thoughts and ideas underlying one’s situation may become clear.

Metapsychiatry asserts that such a discipline can lead to recognition of an erroneous orientation to which we have inadvertently succumbed. It further explains that it is the invalid value that is the issue, not the individual who has become involved with it. There is no blame for an individual. Only ignorance, ignoring that which is available to be known, is to blame.

To alleviate ignorance we need to know the truth. Once we recognize the meaning of an inharmonious situation, regret must prevail in order for attention to turn toward the question of what really is. If there is no regret, then we tend to remain attached to the invalid “mode of being-in-the-world” [2] and to continue to suffer from its illegitimacy. And regret can only prevail when we are in sufficient pain and realize that our old ways are inevitably futile and must induce ceaseless suffering.

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<sup>1</sup> Job 3:25 (KJV).

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 23:7 (KJV).

Metapsychiatry identifies several popularly embraced values that, by disregarding the primacy of the fundamental harmonizing force in the universe (*i.e.*, God), produce recurrent problems that make living difficult:

- Materialism: love of money or worldly possessions
- Emotionalism: overriding desire to feel good through emotional gratification
- Sensualism: attachment to bodily sensual pleasures
- Intellectualism: interest in being known for being knowledgeable
- Personalism: emphasis on personal recognition from and interaction with others

For re-orientation to occur, we need to be sufficiently uncomfortable with discovering the unwholesome values we have adopted that we are willing, even anxious, to forsake those false “Gods,” and become motivated to understand the nature of the real God.

### God as Spiritual Reality

Religions provide an abundance of ideas about God. Many revolve around ancient texts that prescribe certain behaviors for humans to satisfy the requirements of a demanding deity. From a phenomenological perspective, such commandments or decrees constitute what is called “should thinking,” which has been earlier described by prominent psychiatrist Karen Horney as “tyrannical.” Further, Metapsychiatry considers such directives as ignoring the good of God, as man’s primary interest, one essential to achieving a fulfilled life. It asserts that God is an “is” system, not a “should be” one. In other words, God really exists and is the benevolent force determining our well-being. We are being foolish when we place our personal priorities before our creator’s.

Metapsychiatry eschews any attempt to influence the infinitely loving and intelligent mind of the universe, labeling it “operationalism.” Instead, it suggests that individual (and sometimes group) study, prayer, and meditation are the only means of promoting one’s receptivity to hearing the inspired wisdom that issues forth continuously from God. It defines prayer as “the acknowledgement of the perfection of divine reality” [3], which magically liberates by re-directing the seeker’s thought and main concern.

Further, it states that “God is cognizant of us, while we are mindful of God” [4]. Only when we are attentive to the will of God are we receptive to its inspired ideas. Authentic communication is unidirectional: from God to man (and to other men and women). Petitionary prayer for anything is invalid, since listening to the wisdom of infinite mind rather than asking for what appears desirable by limited, personal mind, is what is needed. To attain constant conscious awareness of God, it is helpful to be guided by the question, “What does God want?”

Contemplation of that inquiry has yielded the perception that God’s intentionality, like the inherent purposefulness of all creations, is to be manifested in the world; in this way they are in accord with their authentic identities. And, since God is spiritual reality, and man is made in God’s image<sup>3</sup>, then manifesting God’s qualities for man means being predominantly focused on spiritual values and qualities, like peace, assurance, freedom, gratitude, truth, love, harmony, joy, humor, generosity, compassion, integrity, humility, *etc.*

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:26 (KJV).

It is often observed that when the meaning of a troublesome attachment has been discovered, a specific spiritual value is the precise, valid, countervailing thought needed to displace the invalid one. For examples, an appreciation of the blessing of peace may heal a desire for excitement. An attentiveness to harmonious co-existence may alleviate an indulgence in conflicting interpersonal interaction. An awakening to humor may dissolve a descent into seriousness.

To avoid deceiving ourselves about whether we have actually realized some liberating truth, Metapsychiatry advises that we utilize the criteria of peace, assurance, gratitude and love (comprising the acronym PAGL) to determine the validity of our thoughts. This means that unless we can be aware of the presence of these spiritual qualities in our consciousness, which are indicative of harmony with spiritual reality, we need to continue seeking understanding of the truth.

The transitions facilitated by the two intelligent questions, from pathologic preoccupations to God-centered spiritual values, consist of recognition of erroneous commitment to some existentially invalid value, followed by regret for one's ignorance, and then re-orientation toward imbuing consciousness with a revelatory truth. This process is dubbed the 3 Rs of Redemption in Metapsychiatry. It has helped many individuals suffering from social, economic, family, mental, vocational, and even physical problems to find relief and healing.

### **Illustrations of How the Metapsychiatric Process Works**

An example of how perceiving a meaning can lead to a redemptive solution occurred to the author. He observed that he was becoming anxious before delivering a paper at a computer conference that described an unsuccessful project. That discomfort impelled him to notice that he was concerned that he would appear foolish to his peers in the audience. As he considered the issue, he realized that he would be showing fellow software developers how to avoid various mistakes on future projects. With that awareness, his anxiety disappeared and the delivery went smoothly and effortlessly and the reception to the paper was positive.

In another instance, a young child was found by a doctor to have a hearing problem. An operation was advised to ameliorate the condition. But consultation with a phenomenologically oriented psychotherapist revealed that the family atmosphere was permeated by yelling to control behavior. The embarrassment experienced by the parents led to a cessation of such coercive action, and an appreciation of family harmony. The problem with the child's hearing quickly disappeared.

### **Conclusions**

Metapsychiatry states that "The meaning and purpose of life is to come to know Reality" [5]. By reality it means God. When that orientation prevails in our life, when our concern is with awareness of spiritual reality, we become "beneficial presences" in the world. It is by the quality of our consciousness that we attain a fulfilled, authentic life, which is a blessing to ourselves and to those we encounter.

In summary, the examination of the meaning of phenomena in our lives leading to a turning toward divine inspiration as a valid and effective way of living appear to be necessary for a satisfactory existence. Without the understanding gleaned from phenomenology's explanation of our suffering as

attachment to false gods, our spiritual endeavors may be inauthentic. Without seeking spiritual healing of our problems, they remain theoretical perceptions without healing potency.

### References and Notes

1. Thomas Hora. "The Law of Karma." In *Beyond The Dream*. Old Lyme: The PAGL Foundation, 2008, p. 33.
2. Attributed in spoken communication to Ludwig Binswanger, M.D. from Thomas Hora, M.D. Martin Heidigger is reputed to have used a German expression for "being-in-the-world." Binswanger elaborated it to "mode of being-in-the-world" to communicate that it is an adopted pattern of thought and behavior.
3. Thomas Hora. "Collective Right-Knowing." In *One Mind*. Old Lyme: The PAGL Foundation, 2001, p. 316.
4. Thomas Hora. "Friction." In *Beyond the Dream*. Old Lyme: The PAGL Foundation, 2008, p. 246.
5. Thomas Hora. "Frontispiece." In *Dialogues in Metapsychiatry*. Old Lyme: The PAGL Foundation, 1986.

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