

## CAN MYSTICISM HEAL US? ADDICTION AND US

### CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING PARABLE:

An event is announced — “the vase will be on display for a limited time only.” The hall was set up for the showing. Ushers were called in, with partitions set to ensure the requisite distance between human and art. The vase was placed on a white concrete stand and protected with a glass casing.

The announcement was published in a magazine whose readership made up the who’s who of the rich and stable. The hall was therefore packed on opening night. Dressed in their finest, they wandered around paying more attention to the expressions on each other’s faces than to the vase centered in the middle of the room. A subtle air of boredom suffocated the place.

Suddenly, the back doors of the hall fly open and in stumbles the town addict (alcoholic, user, junky, crackhead, drunk etc.). All heads turn towards the back of the hall, mouths gaping, audible shock. Now they have something to look at, something that draws their attention away from their preoccupation with nothing but themselves.

The addict stumbles towards the center of the room. With guests moving quickly out of the way so as not to catch his illness (but not too far as to miss the excitement of it all), the addict quickly arrives at the center of the room. At this point the silence is palpable, what will he do next? Myriad questions (and assumptions) run through the minds of all those present, except of course the one question that would be helpful, namely: “can I help you in anyway?”

The addict pushes the ushers out of the way. Knocks down the partitions (closing in on the distance that separates human frailty from the sublimity of art). Smudges his hands all over the glass casing, he casts it to the side. Picks up the vase and holds it for a moment. The crowd at this point is waiting with bated breath to see what happens next.

The anonymous addict lifts the vase, and lets it fall from his hands, shattering into a million little pieces. The crowd goes wild. “It’s his parents’ fault!” yells one person; “it’s the schools’ fault!” yells another. “It’s the pharmaceutical companies!” cries the third; “it’s his own fault!” says the crowd in unison. Of course, nobody approaches the addict to see if they can help pick up the pieces. No one sits with the addict, quietly sharing his pain/shame/guilt/hopelessness about the destruction. The voice of the chorus continues to swell until suddenly the crowd gets bored again, slowly exiting the hall, back toward their lives in search of a less severe, less abject form of entertainment. Left alone, the addicted individual has two options. He can wander off in search of something else to break; or, he can sit amid the mess, amongst the broken pieces, and slowly try to put the vase back together.

The addict sits, slowly and painstakingly putting the vase back together piece by piece. Making progress, it falls apart again. Cutting himself on the broken glass. Losing hope, finding hope. The addict slowly but surely puts the vase back together. He places the vase back on the concrete stand. Walking over to the glass covering, he cleans the smudges. Puts the partitions back in place, calling the ushers back for a new showing.

A new showing is announced, the rich and stable return to look at the vase. The addicted individual puts on new clothes, vanishing anonymously back into the burgeoning crowd. At this point the crowd and the addict are gazing at the same vase. But while the crowd sees the same old vase in all of its boring banality, the addict sees something entirely new. Intimately aware of the delicacy of the vase, he is attentive to each and every detail that makes up the vase. Anxiously aware of the vulnerability that cuts through the heart of what appears stable, the addict enjoys each moment of the vase in its stability.

Where the crowd sees the same, the recovering individual sees the perpetually new.

צו וזרוז אות ט' להרה"ח הרבי קלונימוס קלמן מפיאסצנה הי"ד

ט

נפש האדם אוהבת להתרגש, לא על שמחה לבדה רק גם סתם להתרגש אוהבת היא, אף להתרגש בעצב ובכיה רוצה היא. אוהב האיש לראות מראות אימות, ולשמע מעשיות נוראות עד כדי לכבות כדאי להתרגש על ידן. חק וצדק הנפש היא כשאר חקתיה וצרכיותיה. לכן רק האיש המשלים חקה זאת בעבודה ובהתרגשות התורה והתפלה, שומר נפשו. מה שאין כן מי שעבודת קדשו בלא התרגשות היא, (או) או שתבקש לה הנפש התרגשיות

אחרות זולות אף של עברה להשלים חקה, או שסוף כל סוף תחלה אחת ממחלות הנפש, מהסר אחת מצרכיותיה.

HARAV KALONYMUS KALMAN SHAPIRA, REBBE OF PIASECZNO



The human soul relishes sensation, not only if it is a pleasant feeling but for the very experience of stimulation. Sooner sadness or some deep pain rather than the boredom of nonstimulation. People will watch distressing scenes and listen to heartrending stories just to get stimulation. Such is human nature and a need of the soul, just like all its other needs and natures. So he who is clever will fulfill this need with passionate prayer and Torah learning.

But the soul whose divine service is without emotion will have to find its stimulation elsewhere. It will either be driven to cheap, even forbidden sensation or will become emotionally ill from lack of stimulation.

## CARL JUNG

The following is a letter written by Dr. Carl Jung (1875-1961), one of the founders of modern day psychology, to Bill Wilson, known as Bill W. one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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.  
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Dear Mr. Wilson,  
your letter has been very welcome indeed.  
I had no news from Roland H. anymore 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.<sup>1)</sup>  
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~~ 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~~ 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.*

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