country. The percentage also includes business and professional people, as well as so-called “working” people (especially beer drinkers), who consume large quantities of alcohol for lunch, before dinner, and before bedtime, and yet stop this side of total disorientation. Such persons, like myself, are just as alcoholic or chemically dependent as those who drink themselves under the table every time they take the cork out of the bottle.

**BEHAVIORAL CHANGES**

Behavioral changes accompanying loss of control over mood-altering drugs are pathological, or, if you will, deeply evil in the most profoundly moral and metaphysical senses of the word. The addict becomes phenomenally sick, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Every addict knows this, no matter how intense or complicated the issue becomes among the researchers in the field.

I want to emphasize with considerable intensity the “spiritual” nature of the illness. Alcoholics Anonymous has not called the illness “spiritual” for so many years simply out of commitment to some out-moded world perspective or religious point of view. Rather, sick alcoholics and recovering alcoholics discover, in the process of alcoholic deterioration, a remarkable collapse of moral sensitivity and judgment, and an equally remarkable collapse in healthy relationships with other persons and with God. The drug, in fact, becomes God to the alcoholic or similar addict. The illness factor in addiction could not be expressed more succinctly.

After losing control over consumption of alcohol or drugs, the addict begins a natural downward development into spectacularly unnatural behavior. A.A.’s description of the power of alcohol in this phase may seem florid, but it is accurate: “Remember we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now!”

The alcoholic, plunging downward, however, does not typically turn with any seriousness to God. He turns to an alibi system to explain his increasingly bizarre behavior. He must explain his actions to himself, and to the important people in his life—especially his wife, children, or parents. (For the sake of grammatical efficiency, I am referring to the alcoholic in the masculine gender. I do not wish, however, to be chauvinistic in reverse. Female alcoholics exist in the millions, and in all probability, with feminine liberation, are increasing in number.)

As we look for alibis, we discover that we drink because we are tense, depressed, or both. We don’t like our jobs, our supervisor, our

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