charm of alcohol is its ability to impart the Dionysian and thus to restore for a time a sense of unity within oneself, with others and with nature.

It was undoubtedly because of its power to give experiences of the ecstatic and the transcendent that alcohol found such widespread use as a symbol of these elements in religion. Wine, it should be noted, was and is often used in those religious rites and festivals related to the mysteries of man's existence, such as birth, marriage and death. The roots of such practices are deep. That they have survived through the centuries attests to their functional value as meaningful symbols for the participants. It may be that when alcohol loses its associations with the mysteries of life (and the ritual ways of handling them), as it has for many of our culture, it tends to be used in an unrestrained manner.

It is the central thesis of this discussion that one of the significant factors in the etiology of alcoholism is the attempt to satisfy religious needs by a nonreligious means—alcohol. This is to say that the spiritual problems of the alcoholic are not merely derivative from or symptomatic of his underlying personality problems, but constitute genuine problems in their own right. Religious factors cannot be understood adequately when isolated from other factors—sociological, psychological, biochemical—but constitute a significant dimension of a depth understanding of some if not all alcoholism.

For the alcoholic, alcohol is not a symbol of the vertical dimension of life. It is the vertical dimension. The alcoholic substitutes a symbol—the very nature of which is to point beyond itself—for that which is symbolized. Alcohol is not a symbol of his experience of a higher Power; it is his higher Power. Perhaps this is the meaning of the statement, "Before A.A. we were trying to find God in a bottle."

An exploration of the ways in which this operates requires an analysis of the nature of man's religious need. There are at least three aspects of this fundamental need: (1) The need for an experience of the numinous and the transcendent. Ruth Benedict has referred in her anthropological writings to the belief in "wonderful power" which was ubiquitous among the cultures she studied. This need to feel that there is something wonder-full, transcending the mundaneness of life, is what was meant earlier by the "vertical dimension." (2) The need for a sense of meaning, purpose and value in one's existence. Frankl calls this the "will-to-meaning" and sees it as more basic in man than Freud's will-to-pleasure or Adler's will-to-power. (3) The need for a feeling of deep

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12 This need is so described on the assumption that a religious-philosophical answer represents the only adequate means of satisfying the need. (Such an answer is in no sense limited to the institutional expressions of religion.) The term "philosophical-existential need" could be substituted and perhaps would make for greater clarity. This need is existential in that it grows out of the very nature of man's existence as a self-aware, valuing creature who knows that he will die. The term philosophical is used in the sense of Weltanschauung. The term "religious need," as used in this article, is an abbreviation for "religious-philosophical-existential need."