Pseudo-religious ways eventually fail. The alcoholic employs a pseudo-religious way which, in its failure, produces an increase of both his existential and his neurotic anxiety.

As the alcoholic's illness progresses, he tends increasingly to handle all three aspects of his religious need by means of alcohol. First, his need for a sense of the numinous and the transcendent is satisfied partially and temporarily by his experience at certain stages of intoxication. This is the import of the quotations from William James, above, and from the young alcoholic who felt himself to be on the edge of a beautiful land. In her autobiography, a remarkable woman alcoholic, using the pseudonym Elizabeth Burns, writes: "Liquor wasn't a crutch for Liz, it was an exit. A quick flight to a world of her own making. . . . It wasn't that this present world was too much for her; it was that it wasn't enough." 16

The second aspect, the alcoholic's need for a sense of meaning in his life, is also handled by alcohol. In trying to explain the function of alcohol in his life to Big Daddy, his son Brick exclaims: "A drinkin' man's someone who wants to forget that he isn't still young and believing." A paraphrase of this would be: An alcoholic lacks a sense of meaning in his life. He knows he is moving toward the day he will die. Alcohol lets him forget his emptiness and painful awareness of his mortality.

But alcohol for the alcoholic does more than provide the balm of anesthesia. Increasingly it provides a summum bonum to fill the value-vacuum (Frankl) in his inner world. It becomes the value in his bleak inner life. But a vicious cycle is established by this use of alcohol. The relative meaninglessness, which makes alcohol so attractive as a value substitute, is only magnified as other values are squeezed out of his life by alcohol addiction.

The same kind of vicious cycle operates in the third area of his religious need satisfaction—the satisfaction of the need for experiences of trust and relatedness. The alcoholic who reads John Donne's familiar words, "No man is an island," may sneer, "Oh, yeah?"—for he feels exactly that: a lonely island, a clod cut off from the mainland of humanity. He feels like Camus' Stranger, as though wandering in a foreign land where he does not know the language and has no possibility of learning it. Through alcohol he experiences a temporary but highly valued experience of unity. This includes the unity of psychological and physiological satisfactions achieved by regression to the oral level of infancy, to which Lolli refers. 17 At earlier stages of intoxication it also includes feelings of closeness to other people. But when the magic