

At 3.30am yesterday [18Aug75] a WBAI Jewish deejay played a 78rpm of "Safe in the Arms of Jesus" and said, "I guess I'd like to be converted. Yeh, I would. But what to?" This thinksheet relates the rising hunger for integration (1) to conversion as comprehensive ["cosmic"] orientation and (2) to the current wistfulness about the charismatic, the parapsychic ["paranormal"], and the occult--the three terms referring, respectively, to three contexts: church and parachurch, lab and HPM, and cult [=extraestablishment-esoteric sodalities]--the three agreeing on interest in what lies (a) beyond ordinary consciousness and everyday experiencing and (b) within reach of the ordinary person, whether or not presupposing a third dimension beyond reach. I argue the importance of this concern for (1) one's own integration into the planetary culture coming at us from the future, (2) evangelism, and (3) pastoral counseling, as well as for (4) social and political action in a time when all the old definitions of "philanthropy" and "justice" and "equality" are in decay and new definitions unborn.

1. My own age-17 conversion had integration [personal/historical/cosmic axis mundi] as its primary quality. I would describe it as enstatic instead of ecstatic: while it was quietly emotional, I had the sense of being given the gift of belonging, of "standing-in" [en-stasis], more than the gift of transcendence, of "standing-out" [ex-stasis]. Because of the particular "nature" God gave me, I've never had a hankering for religious ecstasy; and because of the profound BVR [basic visceral response] quality of my conversion-assurance that God "has the whole world in his hand," I've never badmouthed the ecstatic except where its excess has made the lower coil an enemy of the upper coil.

2. Fragmentation and aimlessness, with attendant three-dimensional loneliness [interpersonal, historical, cosmic], are what I see today in the arts and in working with people, including clergy [in this case, chiefly in repressed forms]. If you want to see where people are looking for instant cures, look at what's booming: respectively, encounterism [including all sorts of intimacy-promising groups], cheap and costly nostalgia trips [including camp art and romantic revivals], and consciousness-expansion via drugs, sex, and "meditation." I emphasize the word "cures," for people are more desperate than "education" can speak to, though most of what they are getting into has a public-relations "education" note. A solid PR strategy, e.g. for NYTS, would be to reverse this: describe "educational" offerings in cure-offering terms.

3. PROPHECY: When the crazes fade, folks will be found gathering around ones they think "wise." Harbinger: The fall-winter '75-'76 TV commercials feature elders preaching products' virtues to youngsters. Youth's not going out of style, but respect for wise age is rising. Prescription: Clergy should shape up as wise ones now, no matter their bio-age. I'm convinced it's this eternity-speaking-to-time, the-ages-speaking-to-the-hour quality that, more than exotic appeal, makes the Eastern-hemisphere guru powerful in America's middle and upper classes today. For the guru at least seems "together," in self and in universe [being together in society being, for many at the moment, no virtue; and being "out of it" being some kind of opposite of vice, though less than virtue].

4. Finally, TWO ACCOUNTS of the normal/supra-normal [as three-ways defined in the 1st paragraph]: (1) The familiar biblical picture: integration in the one God who, in benevolence, creates, restores, elevates the visible and invisible realms, "matter" and "spirit" being coequal and co-inferior to the divine; (2) The monistic [Indian] or dualistic [Iranian] picture: "mind" is both metaphysically and morally superior to "matter" [including "body"], and humanity's cosmic project is apotheosis ["self"-divinization].

OVER

tion: phusis-natura, "partakers of the divine nature"; but even here the relational governs the metaphysical.

* A sophisticated escape from this dilemma is that of Apollonius of Tyana, who disclaims magic, miracle, divination and explains his blessings as (4.44) "that wisdom which God reveals to the wise." [Cp. wisdom as "seeing life steadily and...whole."]

5. THE CHANGING DEFINITION OF "THE WISE ONE," the Western history of---
STAGE ONE, ancient times: The Near-Eastern sage [including the Bible's "wisdom books"] and the peripatetic "philosopher" [Pythagorean and later].
STAGE TWO, through the 16th c.: The Christian leader, then the Renaissance leader alongside the Christian leader.

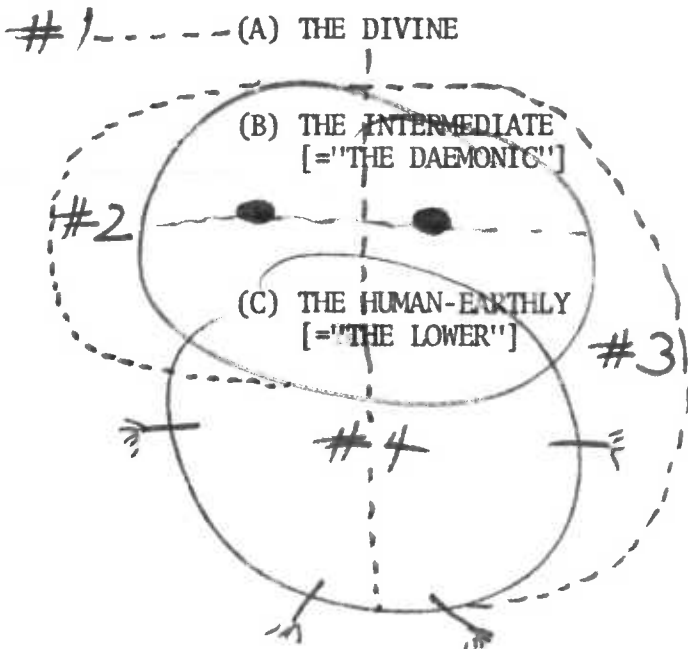
STAGE THREE, through World War II, gradually decreasing 1945-75: The "scientist," meaning the systematic manipulator of physical energies, material equations.

STAGE FOUR, the present: The systematic manipulator of nonphysical energies, human and at least seemingly transhuman: "the charismatic" in both the religious and the theological senses [including Nixon's pre-Watergate White House], the yoga and/or "meditation" guru, the occultist [even in the sedate Scribner's on Fifth Ave. you've got to walk past "Occult," a far larger section, to get to "Religion"!].

NEXT STAGE: The wise one who integrates West/East, religion/science, combining space/time, matter/spirit, time[yesterday-today-tomorrow]/eternity. Will these wise ones be leaders in (a) historic religions, (b) religious institutions, old or new? Or will their primary institutions be the media and their primary orientation (1) the soul and/or (2) the future? As a Christian I believe Christian education should prepare leaders to catch this next upsurge of human longing, and in this sense theological education should be future-oriented and "integration"-intentional.

6. The rest of this thinksheet is a meditation-model from Hellenistic paganism. Its importance is not only in itself, but also in the fact that the current upswelling of the occult in America is primarily Hellenistic mysticism redivivus. Similarities with and differences from the Hebrew-Jewish account are important: draw them yourself....Pythagoras, Plato, and later religious leaders saw reality in three levels (A, B, C on the diagram).

Thus, FOUR INTEGRATION-LEVELS:



#1, God's in-himself integrity-integration-integrality ["the One," "Being," "the Good"], the model and promise of our ultimate integration [from "henotes" to "henosis"].

#2, within human awareness, the integration of the two levels of consciousness, higher-"daemoniac" [read, Hebrew-wise, "angelic"] and lower-"human." Ab-normal, para-psychic powers are accounted for by consciousness-dwelling in the intermediate (between divine and "human") realm, where such powers are available to the self. [NB: The opposite of the biblical doctrine of "Holy Spirit," in which the devotee becomes available for God's use, and parahuman powers are humanly unusable by the human will.]* Larry LeShan is deep into scientific research on this.

#3 stage is the integration of your integral (daemoniac/human) consciousness with your life, the at-onement of soul/body/relationships. This is becoming a god on earth. In

Christianity, "the saint"; in Buddhism, "the bodhisattva" who shuns nirvana in order to remain benevolently on earth (in my opinion, an image powerful in Hellenisticism).

#4, at-onement of your integrity, your wholeness, with "the Good," so that one becomes God [apotheosis=divinization]. 2P.1.4 is the only instance of this metaphysical non-biblical