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BILL'S COMMENTS ON WYLIE IDEAS, HUNCHES

Philip Wylie's piece in this issue of *The Grapevine* will endear the man to every A.A. And why? Because, of course, he's so very alcoholic! Neither can anyone miss the author's generous and self-sacrificing spirit. Forgetting his own worldly importance, he snaps his fingers at what the public may think; he discards his *reputation* in order to share with us his *character*. A traveller who has felt his own way out of the night, he tells how he discovers haven. We could ask no better spirit of anyone. Mr. Wylie can be a member of A.A. the very day he says so! It is a tradition among us that the individual has the unlimited right to his own opinion on any subject under the sun. He is compelled to agree with no one; if he likes, he can disagree with everyone. And indeed, when on a "dry bender," many A.A.s do. Therefore, no A.A. should be disturbed if he cannot fully agree with all of Mr. Wylie's truly stimulating discourse. Rather shall we reflect that the roads to recovery are many; that any story or theory of recovery from one who has trod the highway is bound to contain much truth. Mr. Wylie's article is like an abundance of fresh fruit. Perhaps we should take the advice of the housewife who says, "We shall eat all we *can*, and then *can* what we can't."

What caught my attention most was his reference to the spiritual experience, "a la Jung," seemingly induced "by scientific

psychological technique." What a boon that would have been to us who wrestle every day with the agnostic newcomer. If only we could give him a straight dose of that "transcendant symbol" and have it over with! We wouldn't have to bother with that tedious business of waiting while our prospect batters himself into sufficient open-mindedness to accept the possibility of a "Power greater than himself."

But, as Mr. Wylie broadmindedly observes, it doesn't matter too much how the transforming spiritual experience is brought so long as one gets one that works for him. Somehow the alcoholic must get enough objectivity about himself to abate his fears and collapse his false pride. If he can do all this through his intellect, and thereafter support his life structure upon a "transcendant symbol," more power to him! Most A.A.s, however, would think this design for living pretty inadequate. They would consider downright humility and faith in the power of the Living God a much stronger medicine. A.A. draws frankly upon emotion and faith while the scientific intellectual would avoid these resources as much as he can. Yet the more intellectual techniques do work sometimes, reaching those who might never be able to take the stronger dose. Besides, they remind us, when over proud of our own accomplishment, that A.A. has no monopoly on reviving alcoholics.

In fact, it is already becoming evident that the scientific world is becoming more appreciative of our methods than we are of theirs. In this respect they are commencing to teach us humility.

Listen again, as our friend Dr. Harry Tiebout, psychiatrist, closes his paper, "Basic Techniques of Alcoholics Anonymous," before the American Psychiatric Association: "The lesson for the psychiatrists is clear, it seems to me.

Although we admittedly deal with emotional problems, we, as a group which tends to be intellectual, distrust emotion too much. We are self-conscious and a little ashamed, when we are forced to use them, and always apologetic with our confreres if we suspect they have reason to think our methods are too emotional. In the meantime, others, less bound by tradition, go ahead to get results denied to us. It is highly imperative for us as presumably open-minded scientists to view wisely and long the efforts of others in our field of work. We may be wearing bigger blinders than we know." And again, as he says, "A religious, or spiritual experience, is *the act of giving up reliance on one's own omnipotence.*"

As we A.A.s are people who are *supposed* to have given up *all* our own "omnipotence," I'm sure that Mr. Wylie will be read with the attentive interest he deserves!

Bill