A SIMPLE DEFINITION OF PARANOUS David T. Hartman, Ph.D.
World Congress on Psychology and Spirituality 2008

Paranous (para-nous): a cultural action that moves a culture "beyond" or "aside from" (para-), in the sense of "away from" as in to leave behind, the transcendental "Nous," thus creating a cultural pathology.

Nous is to be understood as being the following: (1) Intellect or Spirit; (2) an intellectual activity that is pure in nature; (3) consciousness without contents or the experience of pure consciousness; (4) the human spirit and the "divine" Spirit in union (that is, "gnosis"); and (5) an experience of the world in its oneness, including in this unity, the divine united with pure spirit. Therefore, paranous comes about through a loss of contact with the human "nous" and/or with the transcendental "Nous" as variously defined above.

In addition, (6) "Nous" can be experienced through a dual consciousness, that is, it is possible to hold two forms of consciousness simultaneously: pure, "translucent," "watching" consciousness along with our everyday intentional consciousness. Therefore, in this case, paranous is used for an emphasis on intentional consciousness with the loss of contact with pure consciousness. Or paranous is to be "beside" or "along side of" pure consciousness in such a way that discounts or darkens awareness of pure consciousness. This takes place at a cultural level.

The above definition of "paranous," without the footnotes, is the simplest statement that I can give of what this cultural pathology is, that is, both given the complexity of the Greek term and given the nature of the experience that is "Nous." I will now repeat the above definition with the accompanying footnotes.

Paranous[1] (para-nous): a cultural[2] action that moves a culture "beyond" or "aside from"[3] (para-), in the sense of "away from" as in to leave behind[4], the transcendental "Nous," thus

[1] Under the Greek word "paranoia," it is noted that "paranous" means "demented" (Webster's, 1989, p. 854). I am using this term is a slightly different manner.

[2] Following Wilber (1998), the term "cultural" refers to the "interior" of a "collective." Thus, a community is the "exterior" of that which is "cultural" (pp. 64, 66, and 68); the interior or cultural co-arises with the exterior or social group. As an extension of this position, "culture" is a collective's "worldview" (p. 71). A world-view is a "root image" of how a group sees reality (Borg, 1991, p. 31). This "image" of reality, lying in the depths of the psyche, is a subconscious "lens" through which the members of a social group see the world (p. 31). Such habitual ways of seeing the world can be deautomated (Deikman, 1982, p. 137) or set out of commission through concentrative meditation (see Deikman, 1963, 1966a, and 1966b). In this way, our "cognition" and "perception" can be, at least temporarily, altered (1982, p. 137). Saint Augustine, the fifth century C.E. Church father, references such changes in "habit" (Saint Augustine, 1961, pp. 151 and 249) and the alteration of perception and cognition (pp. 151, 213, and 249) that then arise from such changes. Today, we speak of these alterations, in the habitual ways in which we see the world, as "peak-experiences" (Maslow, 1968, p. 73).

[3] Webster's, 1989, p. 852.

[4] The leaving "behind," to which I refer, is neither that first "fall," which was "metaphysical," nor the

creating a cultural pathology.

Nous is to be understood as being the following: (1) Intellect or Spirit; (2) an intellectual activity that is pure[5] in nature; (3) consciousness without contents[6] or the experience of pure consciousness[7]; (4) the human spirit and the "divine" Spirit in union (that is, "gnosis"[8]);

---

second one that was "psychological" (Wilber, 2005, pp. 21 and 22). What I am referencing is a much later or modern fall. Granted, during modernity, there have been benefits from Spirit's dwelling in "reason" (p. 35) and, perhaps, in "the rational denial of God," that is, the Spirit's "authentic" development in the depths of our culture (p. 36). This development is beyond what has been available to any culture prior to this time. But, there is also that "global pathology" (p. 31) that has arisen along with the positive aspects of modernity, a pathology that was rampant during the past century (extending on into this century), that is, a "less legitimate" side of rationality, one which has its "ills" as a "sick version" of this "higher level," when comparing it with a "healthy version of" that former or "lower level" (p. 36); the mythic. Here, in Western modernity, we have lost awareness of the "Spirit" (p. 31), through our denial of God. This modern manifestation is the fall to which the term paranous refers.

Not only is Wilber calling for recognition of the role of Spirit in modernity and in post-modernity, but also Walach (2007) is calling for the inclusion of "spirit," as the missing third in the mind-body discussion. For Walach, mainstream philosophy and science has continued to ignore the historically prevalent discussions of a spirit or a transcendent aspect to human consciousness (p. 220). At its beginnings, so as to make its initial advances, modern science had to jettison such a "religious" underpinning as the spirit or transcendental consciousness. But, as science has continued to do so, a basic element of human experience is now being totally ignored (p. 223). Walach, as well as Wilber, sees no reason to continue to do so.

[5] Rappe (1996): the Intellect's activity in all its pureness (p. 265).

[6] Rappe (1996): Rappe defines "nous" as "consciousness" (p. 265), that is, a consciousness without "its contents" (p. 266).

[7] See Forman (1990); Forman (1999); and Shear (1990). I want to make comments about some of the terms used in this part of the definition, the part that refers to "Nous" and to these terms' interrelationships. The terms to be addressed are "spirit," "pure consciousness," and "divine." In addition, I will refer to Roberts' terms "true self" (p. 64) and "divine light" (p. 59).

The distinction between "divine" and "spirit" will be noted in footnote 8. Normally, I follow Robert's distinctions, both between "consciousness" and the "divine"(Roberts, 1989, pp. 87, 113, and 147), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, between our "true self" and the "divine" (pp. 93f). What is more, for her, the "divine" is experienced by "consciousness" but is not consciousness (pp. 9ff, 109f, and 150ff; see also pp. 4f) itself.

Likewise, Roberts distinguishes between "the light of consciousness" and the "divine light" (p. 59). Turning to Tillich, for Tillich, mysticism has given birth to rationalism (Tillich, 1968, pp. 185, 287, 315, and 317), rationalism can be seen as an extension of this "divine or eternal light within us" (Tillich, 1968, p. 184), but now, as an extension of that "inner light" tradition which has been "cut off from its divine ground" (p. 185). It was Thomas Aquinas who cut the ground from under the "inner light" by declaring this "light" to be created (pp. 185-186). From this point on, there is a "light" in "of Nature," as there was in Aquinas' follower, Meister Eckhart (Faivre, 1996/2000, p. 51). Actually, what Eckhart did was to take Bonaventura's position that all our cognition is grounded in the "power of the divine light" (p. 185) and reduced or limited this "divine light" to being a "'spark'" residing at the core of the "soul" (p. 202). This move, made by Eckhart and Aquinas, pulled the "divine ground" from beneath the human ability to know God in any "immediate" way (Tillich, p. 185). Thus, the rationalism of the Enlightenment would not be allowed to be grounded in the "divine light." Therefore, like Roberts' distinction between the "divine light" and the "light of consciousness," Tillich distinguishes between "the divine light" and "rationalism."

What is more, on the one hand, in his discussion of Eckhart, Tillich says that for Eckhart, "divinity is the ground of being" and so, for Tillich, the "archetypes…are in the depths of the divine" (Tillich, p. 202). On the other hand, for Roberts, there is an absence of archetypes in the "divine" and an absence of an "archetypal image" in the "experience of union with the divine" (Roberts, p. 101). This is so, even though the "archetypes" may be present in

and (5) an experience of the world in its oneness[9], including in this unity, the divine united with pure spirit[10]. Therefore, paranous is the loss of contact with the human "nous"

---

the "unitive state" (p. 106; see pp. 101-107). With archetypes present in the unitive state, from Roberts' perspective, Tillich's ground does not go deep enough, but his (or Eckhart's seen from Tillich's perspective) "ground of being" is the unitive state, where the "true self" is in union with the divine.

Continuing with Roberts, for Roberts, our "true self" is not the "divine," even though it may be at one with, as it is rooted in, the divine (Roberts, p. 83). Likewise, for her, consciousness also emerges from the divine (p. 82). In addition, for her, "matter" and "spirit" "emerge from the divine" (p. 87). My key point in all this discussion is that I have not made these various distinctions in this present definition of paranous, and Hinduism does not. Roberts does not follow the Hindu position that "consciousness" is "spirit" (p. 86); a position that I am taking with regard to paranous.

One more important comment, the interrelationships between the above terms are Roberts' key point: consciousness is not the divine, but, consciousness, while it "remains…, cannot be separated from the divine" (Roberts, p. 87, see pp. 10, 51, and 107). The same is to be said of our "true self," as well as of "matter" and "spirit." Roberts' statement parallels that of de Quincey's, one that he makes in regard to "consciousness" and "energy." He maintains that while energy and consciousness "always go together" and "cannot ever be separated," "[t]hey are distinct" (de Quincey, 2002, p. 60) from each other.

So then, for both de Qunicey and Roberts, there is "unity" but not "identity" between some (de Quincey) or most (Roberts) of the above mentioned terms. That is, the divine is not that to which it gives rise, but also the divine cannot be separated from these: spirit, matter-energy, consciousness, light, and true self. As an extension of this, they, each, appear to co-arise with one another, are not separable from one another, but they are not to be identified with one another.

This is an important caveat with regard to how I am presenting most of these terms within the body of my definition. I am not necessarily being clear about these interrelationships. That is, Hinduism is more influential than are Roberts and de Qunicey in the main body of my definition.

[8] Tillich (1968) speaks of this union as "gnosis" (p. 416) and says that we in the West are now "deprived of spirit," (p. 415), for we no longer cultivate gnosis. Earlier in his book, Tillich speaks of a "union," as it were, if not of an identity, of the human nous and the transcendental Nous, in that the "transcendelia" – the Forms of the (transcendental) Nous – appearing as or through the divine Light, make human cognition possible (p. 183-184). Thomas Aquinas transformed this Light from being divine to being merely created (pp. 185-186). Also, Roberts (not speaking of Light but of spirit) indicates that there is a co-arising of the divine and the spirit. They are not separable from one another, but they are distinguishable (p. 87). The same can be said of consciousness, even pure consciousness (nous). Pure consciousness and the divine are not separable but are distinguishable (pp. 81 and 82).

[9] What Walach (2007) notes as "transcendental" "monism" (p. 233).

[10] Raff (2000): the one world or the "unus mundus" is a world in which the spirit has been purified and is in unity with the divine (p. 139). For instance, Saint Augustine, with reference to Romans 1:20, speaks of encounters with God's eternalness, manifesting as power and as God's divine nature (p. 151). His momentary experiences were a sense of the world as one. As Jung puts it, all "empirical" beings have their "eternal Ground" in this one world (Jung, 1955 and 1956/1970, p. 534). Roberts (1989) speaks of an "eternal" oneness (in the sense of unity) of matter-energy and spirit, and she speaks of a "'point'" where matter-energy, and presumably spirit as well, emerges "from the divine" and are "never separated from the divine" (p. 87). This "point" is the "unus mundus."

In conjunction with the "unus mundus," Raff speaks of the "psychoid" realm. Through development, this "unus mundus" eternally differentiates into the "psychoid" realm, in which the spirit loses its purity, as the spiritual is united with the physical (Raff, p. 141). This psychoid realm is composed of "subtle bodies" (p. 141). I suggest that the latter, the realm of subtle bodies, is the "Psyche," and that the former, the world of "pure spirit," is the "Nous." Yet, the two can be held together, so as to compose a "celestial" realm. This celestial world is the "psychoidal"

and/or with the transcendental "Nous," that is, Nous as variously defined above.

In addition, (6) "Nous" can be experienced through a dual consciousness, that is, it is possible to hold two forms of consciousness simultaneously[11]: pure, "translucent," "watching" consciousness along with our everyday intentional consciousness[12]. Therefore, in this case, paranous is used for an emphasis on intentional consciousness with the loss of contact with pure consciousness. Or paranous is to be "beside" or "along side of"[13] (para-) pure consciousness in such a way that discounts or darkens awareness of pure consciousness. This takes place at a cultural level.

Historically, during the metaphysical fall[14] of humankind, this loss of the awareness of and/or contact with the "Nous," which constitutes an earlier version of paranous, was, in part, caused by a culture's habitual identification with the body, that is, leaving behind an original lack of the sense of body[15]. That is, there was a time when the members of a culture lived

---

dimension of the one world or the "unus mundus" (pp. 151 and 153). I take this celestial realm to be esoteric Islam's "world of archetypal Images" or the "*%~lam al-mith~l*" (Corbin, 1960/1977, p. 76).

[11] Raff (2000), p. 29 and Thompson (2007), p. 99: Both Thompson and Raff experienced this dual consciousness as a visionary state that was simultaneously coupled with ordinary waking consciousness. These men's two events began when Raff was in bed and woke up during the night and when Thompson was seated on a hospital bed. Both men where aware, in a simultaneous manner, each respectively, of being fully awake and in their respective rooms and aware of what was going on around them, while, at the very same time, of having a simultaneous visionary experience. For Raff, the visionary experience was that of being almost to the top of a mountain and being fully "cognizant of" or having a strong sense of the reality of "the mountain scene." For Thompson, he was hearing a flute and upon closing his eyes he was on the banks of the Ganges River in India observing a ceremony. Likewise, for him, there was a vividness to both this visionary experience and to his ordinary state of reality; again, both at the same time.

Both men were literally of two minds. In this regard, Thompson speaks of his consciousness being broken "in half" and references the term "'the bicameral mind'" (Jaynes, 1976, pp. 84ff; see also Deikman, 1971). By the term "bicameral mind" Jaynes is speaking of the "duality" of "ancient mentality" (Jaynes, pp. 112-113); during the mythic period. This duality was due to a reorganization of the brain caused by "environmental" pressures (p. 117). This reorganization allowed the "two hemispheres" of the brain to function "like two independent persons" (p. 117); one human and one divine.

[12] Forman (1999) speaks of a mystical state which is "complex" and "dualistic" in nature. He says that with this dualistic experience a person is both reflexively aware of a pure and unmediated consciousness, while, simultaneously aware of intentional consciousness or consciousness filled with "content," be this content "sensory," affective, or "thoughts" (p. 171).

[11] See Wilber, 2005, pp. 21 and 22.

[13] Webster's, 1989, p. 852.

[15] Rappe (1996) suggests that our notion of what is external to us is a result of our habitual identification with our bodies (p. 265).

without a sense of body and, thus, without that boundary to separate its members from the world[16]: historically, at that time, there was as yet no such thing as a subject-object split[17]. This lack of split gave rise to the experience of the world as one reality[18].

Since, in a culture, the process of de-spiritualization is never "complete"[19], the development of paranous is always "uneven"[20], that is, there are always subgroups which still have, to varying degrees, experiences of the Spirit (Nous). These subgroups may work at encountering the Spirit with various degrees of success. For instance: when Spirit becomes experienced as spirits, there is the phenomenon of "spirit possession"[21]. This phenomenon can still be found in Western culture. Another instance is found in the seventeenth century (C.E.) European theosophical movement which was Pentecostal (Spirit filled) in nature, even more so than the American movement which now goes by that name[22]. Yet, none of these movements reach(ed) (or they do so very rarely) that state of unitive experience that denotes the nature of

---

[16] Rappe (1996): in Plotinus, the goal of contemplative activities is to erase the self/would "boundary" (p. 265).

Clifford (1982), following the work of Maurice Leenhardt, speaks of the Melanesian people as not having a sense of a "body" nor a sense of being a "person;" at least as we understand these terms. The Melanesians have a "personage," one that is not clearly separated from the world; life's "flux" "circulates" through a stone's "colors," a plant's "sap," and the human "body" (p. 173). Again, as we in the West define the "body" and the "ego," a "personage" (p. 174) has not yet arrived at such reifications. This early experience is a "participatory mode"(p. 174) of living (see Barfield, 1988); a *participation* "*esthetique*" (Clifford, p. 208) – one which arises prior to a *participation* "*m∃thique*" (p. 202): the archaic period prior to the mythic one.

The Homeric Greeks experienced the "body" as "an aggregate" and not "a unit" (Snell, 1948/1953, p. 6). Prior to this experience and with regard to the myth of Narcissus, my position is that this myth originally referred to the Greek discovery that a "person" had a body. Thus, a subject-object distinction was already taking place at this earlier time. This earlier discovery was prior to the Homeric description of the body as an aggregate.

[17] For Barfield (1973): see pp. 204-206. For Frye (1982): see pp. 6-7.

[18] Armstrong (1985): The experience of the world as one and as divine constitutes the nature of all cultures during the "archaic" (pp. 47-48) period.

[19] See Wiebe (2000) for an example of how, within our American culture, "desacralization" has been incomplete (p. 139), at least when it comes of visionary experience (pp. 119ff).

[20] This is a term borrowed from Wilber (2000), p. 162, note 16. He uses the term with regard to an individual's "uneven" or "mixed" overall spiritual development, given the various other lines of personal growth that take place along with the spiritual line of growth. I am applying the terms "uneven" and "mixed" to any culture's membership, as, elsewhere, does Wilber: see Wilber (2005), p. 35.

[21] See Lewis (1971).

[22] Versluis (1994) makes this argument for theosophy over against not only the Pentecostals (p. 117) but also the "'born again'" (pp. 70 and 135) tradition.

"Nous"[23].

Now, allow me to repeat my opening definition for paranous.

Paranous (para-nous): a cultural action that moves a culture "beyond" or "aside from" (para-), in the sense of "away from" and to leave behind, the transcendental "Nous," creating a cultural pathology.

Nous is to be understood as being the following: (1) Intellect or Spirit; (2) an intellectual activity that is pure in nature; (3) consciousness without contents or the experience of pure consciousness; (4) the human spirit and the "divine" Spirit in union (that is, "gnosis"); and (5) an experience of the world in its oneness, including in this unity, the divine united with pure spirit. Therefore, paranous comes about through a loss of contact with the human "nous" and/or with the transcendental "Nous" as variously defined above.

In addition, (6) "Nous" can be experienced through a dual consciousness, that is, it is possible to hold two forms of consciousness simultaneously: pure, "translucent," "watching" consciousness along with our everyday intentional consciousness. Therefore, in this case, paranous is used for an emphasis on intentional consciousness with the loss of contact with pure consciousness. Or paranous is to be "beside" or "along side of" pure consciousness in such a way that discounts or darkens awareness of pure consciousness. This takes place at a cultural level.

[23] I hold that the radical itinerancy (Crossan, 1998, pp. 38-39) program of the early Jesus movement places it in the spirit of the nomadic tradition (Berman, 2000, pp. 153ff; see pp. 166ff). "Nomadism" (p. 154) harkens back to the "hunter-gatherer" (p. 153) world, where the world itself was "'sacred'" (p. 4), in some sense of that word. I hold that Jesus was harkening back to that sense of the world as spirit filled (Borg, 1987, pp. 25ff; specifically pp. 101 and 118, note 11.); one world.

References:

Armstrong, A. H. (1985). The divine enhancement of earthly beauties: The Hellenic and platonic tradition. In Herbert Read and A. Hilary Armstrong (Contrib.) On Beauty. Dallas, TX: Spring Publications.

Barfield, O. (1973). Poetic diction: A study in meaning. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.

Barfield, O. (1988). Saving the appearances: A study in idolatry. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.

Berman, M. (2000). Wandering God: A study in nomadic spirituality. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Borg, M. J. (1987). Jesus: A new vision; Spirit, culture, and the life of discipleship. New York: HarperSanFrancisco.

Borg, M. J. (1991). Root images and the way we see: The primordial tradition and the Biblical tradition. In Arvind Sharma (Ed.), Fragments of infinity: Essays in religion and philosophy; A festschrift in honour of professor Huston Smith (pp. 31-45). Bridport, GB: Prism Press.

Clifford, J. (1982). Person and myth: Maurice Leenhardt in the Melanesian world. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Corbin, H. (1977). Spiritual body and celestial earth: From Mazdean Iran to Sh♣%ite Iran (Nancy Pearson, Trans.) Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1960)

Crossan, J. D. (1998). Jesus and the kingdom: Itinerants and householders in earliest Christianity. In Marcus J. Borg (Ed.), Jesus at 2000 (pp. 21-53). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Deikman, A. J. (1963). Experimental meditation. The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 136(4), pp. 329-343.

Deikman, A. J. (1966a). De-automatization and the mystic experience. Psychiatry, 29(4), pp. 324-338.

Deikman, A. J. (1966b). Implications of experimentally induced contemplative meditation. The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 142(2), pp. 101-116.

Deikman, A. J. (1971). Bimodal consciousness. Archive of General Psychiatry, 25, pp. 481-489.

Deikman, A. J. (1982). The observing self: Mysticism and psychotherapy. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

de Quincey, C. (2002). Radical nature: Rediscovering the soul of matter. Montpelier, VT: Invisible Cities Press.

Faivre, A. (2000). Theosophy, imagination, tradition: Studies in Western esotericism (Christine Rhone, Trans.). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. (Original work published 1996)

Forman, R. K. C. (Ed.) (1990). The problem of pure consciousness: Mysticism and philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press.

Forman, R. K. C. (1999). Mysticism, mind, consciousness. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Frye, N. (1982). The great code: The Bible and literature. San Diego, CA: A Harvest Book.

Jaynes, J. (1976). The origin of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Jung, C. G. (1970). Mysterium coniunctionis: An inquiry into the separation and synthesis of psychic opposites in alchemy (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1955 and 1956)

Lewis, I. M. (1971). Ecstatic religion: An anthropological study of spirit possession and shamanism. Middlesex, GB: Penguin Books.

Maslow, A. H. (1968). Toward a psychology of being. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.

Raff, J. (2000). Jung and the alchemical imagination. York Beach, ME: Nicolas-Hayes.

Roberts, B. (1989). What is self?: A study of the spiritual journey in terms of consciousness. Marina Del Rey, CA: DeVorss & Company.

Saint Augustine (1961). Confessions (R. S. Pine-Coffin, Trans.). London, GB: Penguin Books.

Shear, J. (1990). The inner dimension: Philosophy and the experience of consciousness. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Snell, B. (1953). The discovery of the mind in Greek philosophy and literature. New York: Dover Publications. (Original work published 1948)

Thompson, W. I. (2007). Natural drift and the evolution of culture. Journal of Consciousness Studies, 14(11), pp. 96-116.

Tillich, P. (1968). A history of Christian thought: From its Judaic and Hellenistic origins to existentialism (Carl E. Braaten, Ed.). New York: A Touchstone Book.

Versluis, A. (1994). Theosophia: Hidden dimensions of Christianity. Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press.

Walach, H. (2007). Mind – body – spirituality. Mind and Matter: An international interdisciplinary journal of mind-matter research, 5(2), pp. 215-240.

Webster's ninth new collegiate dictionary (1989). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc.

Wiebe, P. H. (2000). Critical reflections on Christic visions. Journal of Consciousness Studies, 7(11-12), pp. 119-141.

Wilber, K. (1998). The marriage of sense and soul: Integrating science and religion. New York: Broadway Books.

Wilber, K. (2000). Waves, streams, states and self: Further considerations for an integral theory of consciousness. Journal of Consciousness Studies, 7(11-12), pp. 145-176.

Wilber, K. (2005). A sociable God: Toward a new understanding of religion. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.