

### About the Author

In addition to his doctoral degree in clinical psychology, Dr. Gregory C. Dilsaver studied philosophy and the Great Books at the original St. Ignatius Institute of the University of San Francisco. Dr. Dilsaver also received a master's degree from the John Paul II Pontifical Institute on Marriage and Family where he was a McGivney Scholar. Dr. Dilsaver is currently the director of Imago Dei Clinics ([www.idpsy.com](http://www.idpsy.com)).



### About Imago Dei Clinic

Imago Dei Clinic treats the full spectrum of mental disorders, including those of depression, bipolarism, anxiety, psychosis, and obsession-compulsion. Imago Dei Clinic also works with marital, familial, and gender-sexual related issues. When in-clinic visits are not possible, *telephonic sessions* are widely utilized by therapists to avail themselves of the unique IDP process. In addition to working with laity of various religious and qualitative worldviews, Imago Dei Clinic works extensively with Catholic clergy and members of religious communities.

Certification as an Imago Dei psychotherapist is open to psychologists, psychiatrists, and master level clinicians. The IDP certification process entails academic training in theology, spirituality, philosophy, and psychotherapy. Furthermore, clinicians-in-training must undergo Imago Dei Psychotherapy as a therapist and have a portion of their clinical casework supervised. Only certified IDP psychotherapists may claim to use Imago Dei Psychotherapy or its techniques.

Please visit [WWW.IDPSY.COM](http://WWW.IDPSY.COM) for further information.



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Therapeutic undertakings, whether in medicine or in psychology, proceed from assumptions that are necessary if the very concept of “therapy” is to be intelligible. . . . Psychotherapy, too, is intelligible as an undertaking only insofar as there is a model or theory of the healthy person—the healthy mental life—not sufficiently reflected in the life of this person, this patient. It is therefore something of a professional self-delusion for therapists to insist that they are “neutral” on the question of the nature of human nature and (therefore) the conditions favoring its flourishing. Therapy begins with a theory or conception of—Dare I say it?—*the right life*, no matter how widely placed are the perimeters.

In *Imago Dei Psychotherapy*, Dr. Dilsaver comes to grips with this unavoidable starting point and defends a conception of human nature that he would have guide therapeutic practice. The foundation he builds is, as he says, “intrinsicly dependent on a Catholic philosophy and theology”. He finds within the doctrinal teaching of the Church, developed over two millennia, a systematic anthropology able to comprehend the fullest range of human values and human interests. The teaching is *essentialist* and thus is assuredly not confined to Roman Catholics. Indeed, the (Thomistic) essentialism that is integral to this anthropology “does not require the overt inclusion of faith principles” within the therapeutic context.

What makes this such an important book is that it invites reflection and criticism. It is a book that actually takes a position—and on nothing less than human nature and its prospects.

—DANIEL N. ROBINSON  
Oxford University

In this treatise on clinical psychology, we find a current presentation which is fully in accord with traditional scholastic philosophy and theology.

The whole Catholic worldview of man made in the image of God, a composite being of spirit and matter, is the philosophical basis of Imago Dei Psychotherapy. This is an invaluable tool for Catholic counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists whose goal it is to bring their therapants to a state of mental health which is in accord with both the natural law and divine revelation.

—FR. KENNETH BAKER, S.J.  
Editor, *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*

Imago Dei® Psychotherapy: A Catholic Conceptualization ● ● ● G. C. Dilsaver, MTS, PsyD

# Imago Dei® Psychotherapy: A Catholic Conceptualization



G. C. Dilsaver, MTS, PsyD

Imago Dei Psychotherapy (IDP) is the first and only fully integrated Catholic psychotherapeutic conceptualization. IDP is based on the premise that the most complete and accurate understanding of human nature is found in the corpus of traditional Christian philosophy, especially as enunciated in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas. IDP maintains and professes to demonstrate that locating the science of psychology within this traditional Christian understanding of human nature actualizes that science's full and unprecedented clinical efficacy.

As the name signifies, Imago Dei Psychotherapy is ordered toward the restoration of *the image of God (imago Dei)* when that image is marred by mental illness or characterological distortions. The image of God is precisely a person's rational and volitional nature. The Imago Dei psychotherapeutic process is informed by the philosophical principles of Thomistic moral agency, where the fully human act entails rational assent to truth and a subsequent volitional embracing of this truth as the good. It is IDP's Thomistic recognition of the underlying moral factors of mental disorders that causes it to be a *psychodynamic* psychology. So too, Thomism's emphasis on being (*esse*), coupled with the observational and interpersonal demands inherent in clinical psychology, requires that IDP have an *existential* orientation.

Imago Dei Psychotherapy is strictly Thomistic in its philosophical anthropology, teleology, epistemology, and morality. Though this Thomistic philosophy is validated by and draws on the revealed truth of sacred theology, it nonetheless can be assented to through natural, unaided reason. In that IDP is based directly on philosophy, and is therefore one step removed from theology, it need not overtly employ theological principles in its clinical work nor does it require religious faith from its therapants.

Imago Dei Psychotherapy defines mental health as the *ability to perceive, receive, reflect upon, and act upon the real*. It is *the real*—be it existential being, cognitive truth, or volitional good—that is the anchor of mental health. Indeed, Imago Dei Psychotherapy holds that mental health finds its ultimate anchor and source in the supremely real, the supremely true, and the supremely good: in Supreme Being Himself.