



TRANSPARENT KNOWING

As every blossom fades and all youth sinks
into old age, so every life's design,
each flower of wisdom, every good, attains
its prime and cannot last for ever.
At life's each call the heart must be prepared
to take its leave and to commerce afresh
courageously and with no hint of grief
submit itself to other, newer ties.
A magic dwells in each beginning and
protecting us it tells us how to live.

High-purposed we must traverse realm on realm,
cleaving to none as to a home. The world
of spirit wishes not to fetter us
but raise us higher, further, step by step.
Scarce in some safe, accustomed sphere of life
have we established house, than we grow lax;
he only who is ready to expand
and journey forth can throw old habits off.

Maybe death's hour too will send us out
new-born toward undreamed-of lands, maybe
life's call to us will never find an end . . .
Courage, my heart, take leave and fare thee well!

That's a poem from Hesse. I want to read another poem from Hesse that has made a great deal of difference to me and I think has meaning for our lecture this morning on transparent knowing.

On one occasion I had the experience of seeing one of my comrades entertain doubts; he renounced his vow and relapsed into disbelief. He was a young man whom I had liked very much. . . In one of those Swabian or Alemanic small towns where we stopped for a few days because an

opposition of Saturn and the moon checked our progress this unfortunate man, who had seemed sad and restless for some time, met one of his former teachers to whom he had remained very attached since his schooldays. This teacher was successful in again making the young man see our cause in the light which it appears to unbelievers. After one of these visits to the teacher, the poor man came back to our camp in a dreadful state of excitement and with a distorted countenance. He made a commotion outside the leader's tent, and when the Speaker came out he shouted at him angrily that he had had enough of this ridiculous expedition which would never bring us to the East, he had had enough of the journey being interrupted for days because of stupid astrological considerations; he was more than tired of idleness, of childish wanderings, of floral ceremonies, of attaching importance to magic, of the intermingling of life and poetry, he would throw the ring at the leaders' feet, take his leave and return by the trusty railway to his home and his useful work. It was an ugly and lamentable sight. We were filled with shame and yet at the same time pitied the misguided man. The Speaker listened to him kindly, stooped with a smile for the discarded ring, and said in a quiet, cheerful voice which must have put the blustering man to shame: "You have said good-by to us and want to return to the railway, to common-sense and useful work. You have said good-by to the League, to the expedition to the East, good-by to magic, to floral festivals, to poetry. You are absolved from your vow."

"Also from the vow of silence?" cried the deserter.

"Yes, also from the vow of silence," answered the Speaker. "Remember, you vowed to keep silent about the secret of the League to unbelievers. As we see you have forgotten the secret, you will not be able to pass it on to anyone."

"I have forgotten something! I have forgotten nothing," cried the young man, but he became uncertain, and as the Speaker turned his back on him and withdrew to the tent, he suddenly ran quickly away.

We were sorry, but the days were crammed so full with events that I quickly forgot him. But it happened some time later, when none of us thought about him any more, that we heard the inhabitants of several villages and towns through which we passed, talk about this same youth. A young man had been there (and they described him accurately and mentioned his name) who had been looking for us everywhere. First he had said that he belonged to us, had stayed behind on the journey and had lost his way. Then he began to weep and stated that he had been unfaithful to us

and had run away, but now he realized that he could no longer live outside the League; he wished to, and indeed must, find us in order to go down on his knees before the leaders and beg to be forgiven. We heard this tale told again here, there, and everywhere; wherever we went, the wretched man had just been there. We asked the Speaker what he thought about it and what would be the outcome. "I do not think that he will find us," said the Speaker briefly. And he did not find us. We did not see him again.

Once, when one of the leaders had drawn me into a confidential conversation, I gathered courage and asked him how things stood with this renegade brother. After all, he was penitent and was looking for us, I said; we ought to help him redeem his error. No doubt, he would in the future be the most loyal member of the League. The leader said: "We should be happy if he did find his way back to us, but we cannot aid him. He has made it very difficult for himself to have faith again. I fear that he would not see and recognize us even if we passed close by him; he has become blind. Repentance alone doesn't help. Grace cannot be bought with repentance; it cannot be bought at all. A similar thing has already happened to many other people; great and famous men have shared the same fate as this young man. Once in their youth the light shone for them. They saw the light and followed the star. But then came reason and the mockery of the world then came faint-heartedness and apparent failure; then came weariness and disillusionment, and so they lost their way again, they became blind again. Some of them have spent the rest of their lives looking for us again, but could not find us. They have then told the world that our League is only a pretty legend and people should not be misled by it. Others have become our deadly enemies and have abused and harmed the League in every possible way."

I think this whole lecture should just be poetry, really. You can't talk about transparent knowing anyway. It's transparent. Here's another poem, also about transparent knowing.

So Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him: "If you are faithful to what I have said, you are truly my disciples. And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free!"

"But we are descendants of Abraham," they replied, "and we have never in our lives been any man's slave. How can you say to us, 'You will be set free'?"

Jesus returned: "Believe me when I tell you that every man who commits sin is a slave. For a slave is no permanent part of a household, but a son is. If the Son, then, sets you free, you are really free! I know that you are descended from Abraham, but some of you are looking for a way to kill me because you can't bear my

words. I am telling you what I have seen in the presence of my Father, and you are doing what you have seen in the presence of your father."

"Our father is Abraham!" they retorted.

"If you were the children of Abraham, you would do the sort of things Abraham did. But in fact, at this moment, you are looking for a way to kill me, simply because I am a man who has told you the truth that I have heard from God. Abraham would never have done that. No, you are doing your father's work."

"We are not illegitimate!" they retorted. "We have one Father—God."

"If God were really your Father," replied Jesus, "you would have loved me. For I came from God; and I am here. I did not come of my own accord—he sent me, and I am here. Why do you not understand my words? It is because you cannot hear what I am saying. Your father is the devil, and what you are wanting to do is what your father longs to do. He always was a murderer and has never dealt with the truth, since the truth will have nothing to do with him. Whenever he tells a lie, he speaks in character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. And it is because I speak the truth that you will not believe me. Which of you can prove me guilty of sin? If I am speaking the truth, why is it that you do not believe me? The man who is born of God can hear the words of God, and the reason why you cannot hear the words of God is simply this, that you are not the sons of God."

"How right we are," retorted the Jews, "in calling you a Samaritan, and mad at that!"

"No," replied Jesus, "I am not mad. I am honoring my Father, and you are trying to dishonor me. But I am not concerned with my own glory; there is one whose concern it is, and he is the true Judge. Believe me when I tell you that if anybody accepts my words, he will never see death at all."

"Now we know that you're mad," replied the Jews. "Why, Abraham died and the prophets, too, and yet you say, 'If a man accepts my words, he will never experience death!' Are you greater than our father, Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets—who are you making yourself out to be?"

"If I were trying to glorify myself," returned Jesus, "such glory would be worthless. But it is my Father who glorifies me, the very one who you say is your God—though you have never known him. But I know him, and if I said I did not know him, I should be as much a liar as you are! But I do know him and I am faithful to what he says. As for your father, Abraham, his great joy was that he would see my coming. Now he has seen it and he is overjoyed."

"Look," said the Jews to him, "you are not fifty yet—and has Abraham seen you?"

"I tell you in solemn truth," returned Jesus, "before there was an Abraham, I AM!"

At this, they picked up stones to hurl at him, but Jesus disappeared and made his way out of the Temple. (John 8:31ff. Phillips)

These three universal questions come to all men—about the truth, about the life, and about the way. Jesus said, "I am the truth." He said, "I am the life." And he said, "I am the way." Another way you might talk about it is this. Spirit occurs

when the external situation blasts in upon life in such a way that it causes an interior crisis. In the midst of that exterior situation, which is causing a radical upheaval on the inside, man asks three questions: "What is life all about?" "What am I going to do with my one time around the clock?" and "How shall I be my humanity?" I don't know of any other questions that cannot be included under these three questions.

Whenever one asks the question, "What is life all about?" the answer to that question is the subject of our lecture today on transparent knowing. Everybody asks the question, "What shall I do?" The answer to that question is the New Religious Mode chart on transcendent doing. Whenever anybody asks the question, "How shall I be my humanity?"—the New Religious Mode chart on being deals with that—the style that runs to the roots of humanness. Transcendent knowing and transcendent doing are like a whiplash that runs through the center. You don't have any being unless you have your being in the midst of an answer to life. And you don't have any being unless you have your being in the midst of a cause in the midst of a gift of life. Being is an intensification of knowing and doing, as we have said many times. Chastity is the external spirit, if you like, the communal spirit: contemplation is the very center of solitariness. And solitariness and corporateness also flip through the center of our diagram. Being is both corporate and solitary at one and the same time. The very center is not solitary—it's corporate; but it's not corporate—it's solitary. It's both. This is a polarity that is never either apart. The center is just a great white-hot abyss, if you like. Just a nameless gap in the center of the charts. Corporateness is at the top of the diagram—that spirit objectivity that occasions solitariness. Solitariness is at the bottom—that spirit subjectivity that creates corporateness. Transparent knowing is on the right hand side over here, that spirit lucidity that compels doing. Transparent doing, that intentionality that necessitates you to know, is on the left hand side

I'll say that a little slower. It's very clear that when you get out in the midst of the scene of history to do something, you have to know what life is all about. You have to reach and interpret the whole of life. Ortega deals with that where he says that when you have to decide, you suddenly have to raise the question of who I am, who man is, and what life is all about, before you can make that next step; and if you make that next step, you make it having answered in some way or another, or accepted answers from somebody somewhere, the question of what life is all about. Doing compels you back to knowing. And if you ever find that you know anything, that's dangerous because that compels you right back to doing. The minute you see something in life, brand new imperatives are given and grounded in the new thing that you see. It's almost as if you can't ever separate the knowing from the doing. They also are intimately related to one another. And whenever you begin to see an intimate relationship between knowing, and doing, you feel yourself standing in, or maybe fallen through, the gap in the middle of this diagram.

Today we want to talk about the truth. What is the truth? What's life all about? How do you get that struggled with in some particular way? It seems to me this struggle comes to us a little differently, because the mood we're in is different.

It's an eternal struggle. You're never apart from the struggle for the truth. In the old days when the real issue was getting yourself out from under being buried by the error of your times, the struggle for the truth was sloppy hatchet work. You had to swing hard to chop down trees a hundred feet thick. To give witness to the truth required something totally irrational, in order to get it through the thick skulls and armor plating of a rationalized society that something radically new was emerging in our time. Now that the whole mood of the moment has shifted to the doing pole, shifted to where it is and how it is we are going to rebuild the whole construct of global society—now that our struggle probably is more there, the *knowing* struggle comes new to us. One senses the necessity to give well ordered pictures that cut off all the possible escape routes, and that what you need is enough order to sustain you in the program that is going out here, knowing that your order is in constant revolution.

Transparent knowing experiences its job to be to remember all that it knows and not forget, and give such wonderful order to all that it knows that any possibility of getting off the hook of doing what has to be done is blocked off. I don't know if that makes really good sense or not, but a certain kind of refined quality to our struggle in knowing probably has to emerge as we move out into the building of new social vehicles.

The four categories we are going to use for this lecture—and these are rough—are: **ecstatic reason**, **universal secret**, **active certitude**, and **eternal illumination**. If you put it negatively, you might want to say rational mortification. That's more poetic, anyway, so put that down if you really like a good one—rational mortification. But I feel maybe **eternal illumination** is more positive.

A joke or two has to be given about some of the categories in these lectures. I started to put all the categories of all the lectures up on the board and compare them this morning—but the time ran short, and just having to say a word about every one of those categories was so frightening that I dismissed it. But we ought to get them all together—nine charts and four poetic phrases for each one of them—and put them all up on one piece of paper and look clear across until we really begin to see things we haven't seen before.

I

Under **ecstatic reason** the first thing I want to say is that the twentieth century has had a great revolution in its understanding of the knowing dimension of humanness. We have a clarity on what it means to be knowing creatures that is utterly unbelievable when compared with any previous age in Western or any other civilization. I wish I could spend more time on it but I won't.

But I want to mention just a few things. Hegel was the last human being in Western civilization that tried desperately to hold together what you might call universals. These had to be real universals—real in the sense that they really were universal. They really were the things that did not pass away, come and go. They were the stable grasp after reality, and the great invention of Plato and Greeks before that. I suppose that before the concept of rational universal became a real thing in human society, everybody clung to his own tribal privatism. And everybody having his own tribal privatism is not as good as comprehensive universals—no, they didn't use "comprehensive"—*divine* universals that held together the whole of history.

On the other side of the Kierkegaardian and analytical philosophical revolt, what we have on our hands is relative universals. I'll use that phrase "relative universals" just to shock us with the fact that we still deal with universals in our society, but they are relative. They're relative in the sense that we know that no rational construct of universals of humanness are now or ever were permanent; they are creations of man. But the creations of man that hold together the furthest reaches of the human community's experience are in a sense universals.

I got into an interesting conversation with someone one time about living in Einstein's universe. They said, "Well, if all universals are relative, I think I just won't live in the Einsteinian world. I'll get myself up another one." That's to radically miss what has happened. The Einsteinian world is the only world we have. It's the only rational construct that pulled together the physical data of the experience of mankind in a way that enables us to predict what's going to happen when we send a rocket ship to the moon. If you don't have that world, you don't have any world. You are stuck in that world. You live in that world. That is your world. And any other kind of corporate wisdom that holds together our whole world of today is of that nature. You *live* in it. You have no other option—than to live in the rational pictures that the world of our time has given us, even though we all know that they are relative and that tomorrow's children will live in a different world, a new world. I understand that even now the Einsteinian world is meeting certain kinds of absurdities that it cannot explain: for example, "horrible quazars," as one astronomer said. But we live in that world with its anomalies. We live in that world with all its chaos, and all its order. We have no other world to live in.

This is true in every realm of your life: you live in the truth that you have on your hands. Then those great experiences happen to you in the midst of life where the world changes. And the way the world changes, as Thomas Kuhn talks about it, is that your problems get so intense that one night in your sleep or something, you have a great flash, and a brand new model or image comes forth that organizes everything in a new way, and you just drop off the old ways of organizing and move out a new human being in a new world. And your new world was made out of all the experience you had in your old world—experiencing problems and experiencing possible limited explanations—so when you moved into the new world it was a brand new thing. It was wholly new

This is the kind of context in which reasoning goes on in our time. When you say to anybody in our time, "I have got the truth," they sort of give you a big grin and say, "For how long?" We know that all truth of any sort whatsoever, anyway you can point to a proposition of any sort, might hold truth—maybe. But we know that the truth as we talk about it in terms of rational pictures is in constant revolution.

Yet there is a truth beneath our truth, and the kind of talk we are having right now is a sort of a truth beneath our truth. We know this. We know it not because we have had it proved to us rationally or something. We have pictures about it. But we have *certainty* that there are no truths that are eternal. And that certainty we would be willing to bet our lives on. The certainty that rational pictures are human creations and not dropped down from heaven somewhere—we would bet our lives on that kind of truth.

Probably one of the great problems of people who reason in our time is that in the midst of such a world, they have become very cynical about being knowers. They claim they do not care any more for truth. They retreat in loss of passion to know what life is all about. It evaporates. The other perversion you run into with people is that they claim to possess some little piece of rational truth that is eternal and they hold on to it for dear life. They do not get it said to themselves that you can never possess the truth—that whenever something is really the truth, it comes up and possesses you, and then you try your best to get it said, perhaps, in order to hang on to it

But the truth is never something you can possess and get hold of up in your cranium and have a secure feeling about. Truth is always something bigger than any way you ever got it said, and therefore is never possessed: it possesses you, if you like. And when you can't be an intellectual Pharisee and know that you know everything, then you want to be an intellectual libertine and just go sit down, quit the studying and quit the working. We give ourselves a shrewd combination of dogmatism and skepticism that prevents us from really having to face the serious issues of our time. I suppose the question that Pilate asked Jesus was just such a question. "What is truth?" he asked. "What is truth?" I suspect that a lot of people in our time ask it not expecting an answer, but to get off the hook of really having to give an answer with their lives

Sometimes we talk about laying our lives down on behalf of all mankind as if we really knew what that meant. Back behind the decision to die, the decision to do, the decision to do with our very death—are a lot of different understandings as to why you would do that. Somebody can lay down his life out of an utterly foolish context. A decision to lay down your life could be just one more way to justify yourself or prove to yourself that you are really courageous, that you are really grand, that you are really great, or something along that line. Transparent knowing gives you the bottomless context in which your dying goes on. It gives you the crucifixion in the context in which the crucifixion first came—that is, to give witness to life the way life is, to be crucified or killed for bearing witness to the way life really is.

That's what the crucifixion is--when you're crucified for being God's man. If you're crucified for something else, it isn't a crucifixion. If your life is given in some other context in that sense, you are not laying down your life on behalf of all men in the understanding of the deeps of life that transparent knowing is pushing to.

Another way to begin to get a window on it is to realize that faith is not some kind of answer to life. Faith is *the* answer to life. Faith doesn't end all the problems you have with doubt. You always have things that you're in doubt about, including doctrines of faith, including teachings of the Church, including your economic theory, including your political theory, including your organizational concepts, including the way you're going to give a lecture the next time you give it, etc. All these are always filled with doubt.

But faith is a relationship to all of that doubt. It is utterly certain. It is a stance toward your doubt that all of your relative certainty and all of your doubts about life, are your life. And what it means to live is not to have life wrapped up, but to live in the midst of constantly having life unwrapped and having to take responsibility for wrapping it up afresh. That is certain. That is for sure—that you are always going to be given fresh chaos—that you are always going to be given fresh new possibilities of moving into the situation and living.

Here is where reason becomes ecstatic, where one begins to see that all reasonable things are finite, that all reasonable things pass away. Yet the only way you can get hold of life and all its absurdity and wonder, glory and awe, is to use reason to give it expression. And whenever reason is giving expression to life, reason is ecstatic, reason is jumping up and down, reason is glory, so to speak, with white hot energy. Then you stand around and look at your reasoning and you say again, "How fragile, how ridiculous, how stupid that all was. But I know the wind of reason blew through it when I did that. I know that it was ecstatic "

To begin to experience ourselves again as passionate thinkers is maybe the first step of grasping what transparent knowing has to do with—to touch the raw, deep interior base of life and to assume responsibility, then, for giving expression to it.

II

The second point here has to do with the **universal secret**. I think the first thing you really begin to know, when you begin to know life the way I was talking about knowing, is your sin. That seems to be where knowledge really finally begins. You begin to know how broken your life is. You begin to know how badly you fear death, or how upset you really are about the fact that you cannot rationally wrap life up, how frustrated you really get with life as it comes to you, and how little you want the frustrations that you've got. When knowledge begins to push into the deeps, you learn more

and more and more just how rebellious you are against life the way life has been given to you, how broken and twisted, not only your own life is, but the life of every other person that you run into. I don't have to give that lecture; that's somewhere in the RS-1 course. But it's very important to say that knowing begins there. Knowing begins with lucidity about the way life is, and one's rebellion from life.

At the same time, knowledge about life's brokenness and about life's estrangements and hostilities is also knowledge about life's glory. You cannot know the glory of humanness, unless you also know its misery. For it is in coming to know its glory that its misery is thrown into relief. As long as you can think that humanness is what you now are, you're in pretty safe shape. It's when you get a whiff of real humanness that your sin begins to overwhelm you. That's why the New Religious Mode charts are so exciting: their aim is to point us into the deeps of what it really means to be a human being, and to call us forth to see afresh just the wonder of creation itself. When you see that, then you are called upon to see also how little you have been that, or where concretely, you have not participated in the truth.

The New Religious Mode charts themselves are transcendent knowing. The agony and struggle and difficulty of thinking to the bottom what those charts are pointing to is the agony of transcendent knowing. It's hard for me even to talk about the pain of really trying to get to the bottom of poverty, or the pain of really trying to get to the bottom of prayer, or the pain of really trying to get to the bottom of any one of these charts. It's as if you get a deep death urge when you are asked to prepare one of these lectures, and that's just to go to sleep and stay there clear through the lecture. And that's sort of a sin. That is sin. That is unwillingness to see what you jolly-well know you have to see to move on through to the deeps.

Kierkegaard drew a picture one time about the journey of lucidity in which you begin very naive about life and you move up to where you see life and all of its full glory. You have to draw a very special picture to see that. Consciousness is an ascent. The farther you go along in clarity on the way life is, the higher powered your decisions of faith are, but also the higher powered your sin is

When a human being first becomes relatively conscious of what it means to be a creature that is dying and having to deal with his death and having to deal with his sin and having to deal with all the concrete relations and responsibilities of life, his sin looks bad, but as he moves on and on and on, he gets a whiff of Hell itself down there. The farther he moves into the deeps of what it means to be a human being, the farther he moves into the deeps of what it means for a human being to be a sinner. But the greater the temptation is, the greater is the power to overcome it.

That's a weird and wondrous mystery and one of the things that began to trouble me when I first saw this diagram drawn. I was clear that I was probably somewhere down at the bottom and somebody else was way on down the road and it was bad that I wasn't further on down the road. Then I became clear that I wasn't ready to deal with what was further

on down the road even if I were there, and furthermore that the Lord has assigned me to be struggling right where He decided me to be struggling, and the issue of faith was never to be more lucid. The issue of faith was to live gloriously with the lucidity you have and pray that the Lord not lead you into more lucidity. But if he does deliver you from all evil, that the ascent of lucidity and faith was not the same thing—being more wise about life was not the same thing at all as being a man of faith. If you were a man of faith, however you would have to be more open about life. But when wisdom about life came, that was always a crisis of faith. "Am I going to live with this, am I going to be able to handle this new lucidity? Will I decide that life is still good now that I see what I see?" That's the kind of struggle the journey of knowing always is.

Transcendent knowing is not to reach the end of all lucidity about life. Transcendent knowing is to have lucidity about all your lucidity. It does not matter how lucid you get, you still have the same problem. You still have to decide to be the human being struggling with life exactly where it is you've been given life to struggle with.

You're on a great boat with more and more truth about the way life is. You're rowing and rowing and rowing the boat and you don't know where you're going. Then Jesus comes walking across the lake and steps in your boat. And the scripture said that when it happened in the New Testament, immediately they were at the place they were going. Do you like that story? "Immediately they were at the place to which they were going." If you take Jesus into your boat you are immediately arrived.

That means you can live the life you have on your hands in all of its abundance, in all of its glory, in all of its lucidity and all of its stupidity. If any of your stupidity becomes lucidity you can still live life. If ever some of your lucidity becomes revealed as stupidity you can still live life. That is to say, you have arrived—to know that the life that has been given is the life to be lived is the glorious life. It is this momentary struggle with life—to see through it and to deal with it, while seeing through it—that you now have on your hands. To have decided to do that is to have lucidity about all your lucidity, and all the lucidity that you will ever have until the end of time.

To get that said to myself has been very helpful—that I'm always on a journey of spirit. At the same time, when I have been enabled to be obedient to live the life that has been given to me, I am utterly alive; I have come to the truth about all of life. And to live in this truth, that all of life as it is given to you is good, is to have arrived. Human history as it goes on for twenty billion years will not arrive at any greater place than that. We have already arrived at the eschaton and have decided to live our lives exactly as they are now given to us. And then life goes on.

This, then, is the universal secret, that this truth that you have in the revelation of Jesus Christ is the only issue for man—the issue of accepting the fact that he has not lived his life as it was given to him, and accepting the possibility of

that situation—laying hold of himself, laying hold of the future, and laying hold of life with all of its wonders and glories. That is the universal secret of life that prophets of ancient, and twenty-ninth century man will seek to know about life.

III

The third category is the **active certitude**, that knowledge is action. You decide to be a person of faith, but all kinds of knowledge is action. At the roots of any kind of knowledge is an act to risk yourself out into the unknown—to build over the unsteady abyss, as Nikos Kazantzakis put it. I picture that something like being out over a mountain ledge. There's a five thousand foot drop right off the edge of the mountain and another mountain ledge about three hundred feet out, and you're going to build a bridge right out over that three hundred foot gap. So you build the bridge or start to build the bridge out over the gap to the other mountain ledge, and when you get about 290 feet out you find that the mountain has moved a mile away. That's what it means to build over an unsteady abyss. You never quite know what you're going to run into. So you retreat back to the other mountain you were on and bracket that problem and put up a big sign that says, "Dead End," and go on and risk yourself out over the abyss again to get hold of something real perhaps this time.

All knowing is a risk. There is no alternative to risking. You can't sit by in your study waiting for some divine mystery to come down and write something truthful on your slate. Knowledge is a risk that you step out into the tomorrows with. It is a creation. A creation, of course, lays hold of life as it is given to you, but it is always a creation.

It comes like this. You're looking back to the past and all you see in the past is that your memory has conked out—all the books in your library are meaningless words stored up in musty old pages. You look out to your future and all you see is wild chaos. Simplistic answers won't touch it. If you try to hold anything together you have an urge to die, because it's so complex and meaningless and difficult to get your mind around. You look out at the exterior situation of the world and it's just whirling with unbelievable complexities. When you see that you feel the same kind of whirl down inside your own interior being.

Now rational creation is just wonderfully glorious. It's like a graph you lay over the very center of that chaos, so that when a really fresh symbol emerges, a really fresh grasp after life emerges, it turns the outward whirling into some form and it turns the inward whirling into some form. It turns a meaningless past on, and it turns a meaningless future into a destiny. That's why one has to know: to lie there in the unformed being is not to be a human being. One is a human being when he reaches out and gives form to his exterior and interior and future and past by that decision. And it's always a risk: once you've given it form, life is always bigger than your form and continually rocks it, and YOU have to continue to give life new form.

But you never have an interior experience of life unless you give expression to it. Unless the work or symbol or dance or form is something that gets life said, you didn't experience the life because you didn't get it said. Unless there is an external dramatization of the way you're experiencing life, there is no experience of life. All occasions of knowing are creative occasions in which you participate. Here you're not written upon; you reach out and creatively forge some new way to grasp the experience that has been pushed upon you in that situation. All knowing therefore is a creative risk—a creative venture. An utterly essential part of knowing is that something stays with you. An exterior dramatization is forged there.

Knowing is at the same time something very special. It's very communal. It's a happening down in the interior deeps. And it also makes life different. You're different after you've known something you've never known before—after a flash, a happening bringing new order into the midst of life. You are a different part of life after that, and the whole creation has been changed by your having grasped life afresh at that particular moment. Nor do you just *see* the whole of life as different. The whole of life *is* different because it has you in it, seeing it that way. So it's always a community happening whenever some flash—some new grasp after life takes place. And a community of revelation always gathers around every new kind of breakthrough of life.

Maybe our experiences with RS-I could illustrate that. RS-I is a revelatory event for people that establishes a community of those who have experienced together that kind of knowing. It leads one to see his own life in a fresh way. Even though his life was always the way his life was until he took that course, he didn't see the way his life was. And after he took that course he was a part of a community of people that saw life the way life was. That is the great secret of the mystery of being the Church. The Church doesn't have anything the rest of the world doesn't have except the Word that enables a human being to see life the way it is for everybody, but having seen life the way it is for everybody you're a different community and you have something to witness to.

Every society in the world has this kind of struggle at the roots of its certainty to create symbols to hold the way life is. And when societies are in the midst of deep crisis, it's usually because their foundational symbols have been shaken. That's why this passage out of Kazantzakis is so great where he says, "Our hearts have been overwhelmed with new agonies, with new luster. The mystery has grown greater and the entire human island quakes." When the fundamental symbols in and through which you experience the awe of life have cooled off and no longer speak, the entire human island quakes. And so he says, "Let us stoop down to our hearts and confront the Abyss valiantly. Let us mold once more with our flesh and blood the new contemporary face of God"—let us put on our own flesh a new way of grasping after the abyss. I have always had a bit of an argument with Kazantzakis' way of coming at this where he says that God is not almighty. What I really believe is that Kazantzakis is not really talking about God, because God is almighty. But Kazantzakis is talking about the face that man forms for God, and none of the faces man forms for God is almighty. But

God—that's another matter. The problem is that "almighty" is one of the faces that man has formed for God, and the face almighty is not almighty. God is almighty. What almightiness pointed to is sure truth about God.

Let me give you another illustration of this stooping down with your own hands and flesh and building a new face of God. I remember Amos. Amos was facing all of the Assyrians coming across the whole part of the land of which he was a part and he heard a lion roar in the forest. With that roar of the lion and that roar of Assyrian military machines coming down from the North, it suddenly broke into Amos' consciousness that God was a great Lion. And God, like a great lion, was poised to pounce on Israel and shake the living sin out of her. With that kind of vision Amos came down out of the hills. Now that was a creation of a mask for God. It scared the living sin out of the whole of Israel because it was a true mask. That is, that was exactly what was going on in Israel in that moment. Life was moving against Israel in the way that his picture interpreted it.

A little later Hosea drew a new picture for Israel out of his own flesh and experience as well. He was as clear as Amos was that God was an almighty destroyer, but Hosea added this kind of note to it—that God was destroying us for our own good. That was the way he put it. God is like a father that chastens us for our sins. He is like a husband whose wife has become a whore and he will buy her back from slavery, and after a period of discipline he will restore her to her holy place. This was the mask of God Hosea created out of his own most personal flesh and brain, and as a creation, you and I know how that one can be perverted. The fatherhood of God was a pretty sick one as it was interpreted to me in my Sunday School class, but in his situation Hosea brought forth a new picture that enabled Israel to relate to the Almighty.

Now this picture of the Almighty itself maybe ought to be spoofed a little bit just to see what they were pointing to. Through the Middle Ages they grappled with the idea that when man pushes his power out to the limit of what his power can do, when he meets what his power cannot do, he meets the omnipotent power. That was their symbolic way of talking about just running into it. Running into the utter brink of life where you were powerless, you met the almightiness of being. In the same way, if you ran out to the limit of what you could know, you'd meet the omnipotent one. Or when you ran out to the limit of what you could be present to, you'd meet that power that was present to all things at all times.

It's as if the key power of all our language of all sorts is rooted back in these fundamental experiences of man—using lions and other kinds of pictures to say what life is all about. I was very intrigued with something said recently about Augustine and Benedict. I had never thought about it before but our word "Benediction" was probably created out of the word Benedict—that is, it was because Benedict was such a hot symbol of the good Word in history that we began to call the good Word the "benediction." Or maybe Augustine—what did he do to the English language? Is awe and August derived from that man's augustness, that man's awefilledness? And think what the concept of burning bush has done to

the whole history of the Western world. Well—the active certitude. One knows God through his own creation in creating masks of God. Now God always tears them up, but nevertheless it is only in the building of those pictures that you have any real certainty at the roots of your whole experience of knowing.

IV

The last point has to do with **eternal illumination**, and we'll talk about it in terms of the Gospel of St. John, that in the beginning was the Word and the Word, or the truth, was with God and the Word was God. And all things were made by him. Then he goes on to say that the light which enlightens every man was coming into the world and was made flesh among us. The truth became flesh. It's not Jesus's teachings we remember as the truth, it's not the doctrines of truth we remember as the truth. The truth was Jesus himself. What's even more shocking about this particular passage is that it goes on to say that those who believe on Him He gives power to become sons of God also, that the light that illumines every man is now resident in Sally McGillicuddy who believes on this happening.

What a shocking kind of thing to begin to think through. What does it mean to participate in that happening in such a way that that happening and you become synonymous?—that the light that illuminates every man is now resident in Sally McGillicuddy, and if you've ever seen Sally McGillicuddy you've seen the eternal truth about life. It's the same kind of statement as when the scriptures say, "You are the light of the world."

Now if Sally McGillicuddy really is the light of the world, she has a particular quality about her both socially and internally. On the inside she knows that man never knows everything. There are other people who know more about certain particulars about life than Sally McGillicuddy. She knows also that her images about life are always going to be changed. But she knows that she knows all that there ever is to know. All there ever is to be learned will only reinforce what she already knows. She knows that the way life always was, now is, and ever shall be is what she knows in this particular happening.

I think the story of the worm and the bridge are very helpful to begin to see this in different symbols. The writer says, "I am *not* nothing, a vaporous phosphorescence on a damp meadow, a miserable worm that crawls and loves, that shouts and talks about wings for an hour or two until his mouth is blocked with earth. I am *not* nothing, a worm that talks about wings and then his mouth is blocked with earth, though the dark powers give no other answer." Then finally when you look at life, you see that's what you are, a worm that talks about wings for a few hours and then your mouth is blocked with earth. But he says no: a deathless Cry cries out, "Truly I am an improvised bridge and when Someone passes over me, I crumble away behind Him. A Combatant passes through me and eats my flesh and brain and opens up roads freeing himself from me at last. It is He, not I. that shouts "

It is as if Sally McGillicuddy doesn't cease to be stupid Sally McGillicuddy, but that she has become a bridge through which the very Word about life, the very truth about life, takes on sociological reality. And when Sally McGillicuddy becomes life in this sense, she illuminates the life of every man. She is like an audit wherever she walks. She's like light shining in the darkness. She's rejected and she's hated and she runs into black opposition because she's auditing people's lives to the quick.

The second sign is that she loves all. She knows all about this black opposition and she knows she represents the creational truth that all human beings are running from. She knows that—and this is terrifying—she is the son of God, and that every man is potentially the son of God even if he is now the "servant of the opposite power out to kill me or take me into his camp." Sally becomes a living and walking worship service. She is the confession of all men's sins on their behalf. She is the praise of God as all men should or can but won't. She is love or dedication of death on behalf of all those who cower in the corner and shake. When Sally McGillicuddy walks into the room, the whole worship service enters. Awe enters. God enters the room.

The first time this happened Sally McGillicuddy was terrified and went home and asked if she could have some more ordinary destiny. As Sally McGillicuddy was looking through the scriptures she ran across this particular passage to read to herself.

"Jesus took Peter and James and John with him and led them high up on a hillside where they were entirely alone. His whole appearance changed before their very eyes while his clothes became white, dazzling white, whiter than any earthly bleaching could make them. Elijah and Moses appeared to the disciples and stood there in conversation with Jesus. Peter burst out to Jesus, "Master, it is wonderful for us to be here. Shall we put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah?" He did not really know what to say for they were very frightened. And then a cloud arose which overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud and said, "This is my dearly loved son. Listen to him." Then quite suddenly they looked all around them and saw nobody at all with them but Sally McGillicuddy, and as they came down the hillside he warned them not to tell anybody what they had seen until the son of Man should have risen again from the dead. And they treasured that remark and tried to puzzle out among themselves what this remark, rising from the dead, meant."

Somehow our struggle with transparent knowing must end in that particular milieu of asking ourselves what it means concretely with all our lives to be that Word, be that worship service, be that truth—walking and breathing flesh.