

Global Centrum: Chicago
Global Priors Council

8/26/74

THE TRANSPARENCY OF TIME

There are two dangers in talking about the "Transparentization of Time." The first is to be so abstract that no one really understands what the topic means. The second is to be so commonplace about its meaning that its full historical shock and depth slips by us. For the transparentization of time points to a very radical happening in both our day and our most personal lives. We are also extremely familiar with this happening.

I want to start with the question, "What is transparentization?" and describe some experiences we have all had. Then I will draw a picture of history to show how the transparentization of time has become a crucial issue in our moment. Thirdly, I will look at the implications for the new myth of man and say a closing word on what it means to live this transparency out.

You might begin by saying that transparency is nothing new. When Isaiah went into the Temple in the year that King Uzziah died, and the seraphim flew around the Temple, and awe flapped in his face, his experience was one of transparency. When Moses stood before the burning bush, he was experiencing a transparent glow in the very mundane bush and a transparent voice speaking through a very mundane, windy afternoon. You might mention Jacob and his angel. If I were going to read one piece of Scripture, I would most like to read the story of how Abraham stood in the heat of the day before the door of his tent by the oaks of Mamre. Three men walked up and God said to him, "You are going to have a son in the spring." That was a transparency experience.

In the New Testament, the Gospel of Mark has intrigued me by beginning with the Baptism, ending with the Resurrection, and having the Transfiguration right in the center of it, as if all three of those are times in which the whole structure of the Gospel of Mark disappears and one looks through it. A final voice says, "This is my beloved son; listen to him." One looks back and there is only Jesus. Or there is only a tomb. One might say the whole New Testament is sucking one into experiences of the transparent; dropping one through to the Other World on every page.

It is probably most important for us to realize that transparency is taking place today, right in the middle of modern technology, urban life, and scientific reflection. I remember when, as a student of physics, I first read Einstein's basic concepts. At that time (and to be honest, at all times since) Einsteinian physics came as a dark image into my Newtonian world. Modern man has experienced a radical shift in his understanding of what is natural. Miracles used to appear in the natural realm out of man's image of predictability. When some arena of life was thought predictable, the appearance of the absolutely unpredictable was considered miraculous. When modern man discovered that he invented predictability, the Mystery, or the unpredictable began leaking through every syllogism of scientific thinking.

Another example of the miraculous lies in the concretions of scientific imagery. Nearly all of us have read Eiseley's *Immense Journey*. On the third page, the mystery of the origin of what we are and is as strange as something from outer space. The same thing happened in astronomy. I cannot keep my eyes off any new article that has to do with astronomy. Astronomical pictures are unbelievably intriguing, but they are also frightening. One picture in particular has lived with me for a long time: It portrays the sun as the size of an orange, and the Earth on the same scale as a grain of sand, thirty feet away. The nearest star, on this scale, would be located in Hawaii. I do not know why those immense distances never struck me before.

In sociology, the experience of Summer '71 was our fall through sociology into the Other World. In history, I remember being shocked, through the category of communalism, when I suddenly realized that Hitler was communalistic when he fought being a part of the global process. The Japanese struggle in World War II was also communalistic as they fought being part of the emerging global humanity. Transparency happened when I saw that in my own nation, and in all the nations or the world, little groups trying to fall back into their own systems of

thinking and religion, and fighting against the one humanness of the one world is coming in on them. Suddenly, I stood before something awe-filling and realized it was something more than the simple process of time.

A very simple, personal illustration of transparency happened when I was driving a car along a dark road many years ago, and a bird smashed into my windshield. It was startling to see that bird unexpectedly end himself there, before my eyes. To make matters worse, only a few yards farther down the road, a possum was standing on the median, eyeing the moon. He did not move. My bumper just smashed him. A few more yards down the road and it was as if I was the bird and the possum. This was the way life was. I was being smashed and killed. I exist before an Enigmatic Other that smashes me like a bird. That oblivion, that nothingness, is surrounding me.

Life is full of such transparent experiences. Some are more complicated to tell about than others. Every one of us could list ten real experiences in his life for every one of those sixty-four categories on the Other World chart, if we took the time and worked hard enough at it. These awe-filled moments are like burning bushes in one's past. One tends to forget them because every time he remembers one of them, it burns again. There is a tendency in us not to participate in the burning bush all the time.

Yet, when one thinks about it, probably the only things in his past worth having are all of those burning bushes. Nothing else in one's past is worth remembering. Thinking of all the food one has eaten, or all the fine times one has had, does no good whatsoever; it just illuminates the misery of the present moment. But remembering all of the moments of transparency in one's life brings you right back into those moments again. Conversely, any time one is present to the mystery in the moment, it is as if all those moments in one's past light up again. All my experiences of transparency over the last twenty years or so are the greatest part of my life.

We are getting wise to ourselves and others who try to live in abstract moments rather than in the sea of transparency which is present in each particular moment. We are learning to balk when we see moments of transparency used improperly to exalt our self-deprecating selves. Instead, we are finding that moments of transparency can be used in dealing with immediate decisions and responsible actions for mankind in history.

To picture transparency, imagine yourself in a room with four walls. In the very center of the room, a fire is burning. You step into the fire and the east wall turns into a sheet of glass and through it you see into the future. What the future looks like is beyond belief. Then it turns black. You turn and look to the west wall and it too turns into a sheet of glass, beyond which is the past. It contains all the origins of civilization, of man, of life and of the earth itself. Then all of those images blacken, too. You turn and look to the north wall. There you see the historical flow of events in our time; the conquest of the East by the West, the rise of the Eastern nations, women, the youth, technology and political upheaval. Then that plethora of happenings turns black. Finally, you look to the south wall. When it turns to glass, you see your own life, very specific events and very specific people's qualities, foolishnesses, gifts and flaws. That also turns to sheer blackness, sheer mystery, and devastates every picture you have of who you are.

In this situation, I realize that I am no less mysterious than the future, the past or the whole history of my time. Being in relationship to all these, they are what I am. My very self comes to me as beyond me, as a mystery, as an other that tears up all my images of myself, all the things I thought I was. Even the "real me" is a mystery that is beyond me. Standing in that flame of awe, in the center of the room, I behold the nothing but sheer black mystery in every direction. This is a picture of what we are struggling to say with the word "transparency."

This experience of transparency is rooted in the past two thousand years of Western history. In this period, the categories of space and time have waged a fantastic struggle. The Hebraic stance to life which deals in temporal categories has contended with the Hellenistic approach to life, which deals with the spatial cosmos, spirit, matter and utterly rational, spatial means of imaging life.

Throughout the Middle Ages, we were dominated by the Hellenistic or spatial approach. In our day, time, or the Hebraic concept, has won. This war has not taken place in theology, although it is reflected there. It took place primarily in the practical sciences, in technology. As far back as the Reformation, or the Renaissance, this powerful influx of the Hebraic concept in the West began to take place and set the stage for the technological

revolution. Our whole era is now preoccupied with events, with the meaning of history and with freedom. These are temporal, Hebraic concerns.

In the non-Western world, especially in India and China, people have radically worked with the imagery of space. The spirit-space of India, of course, is easy to grasp. For thousands of years, they have been preoccupied with great moods and themes that deal, in one sense, with only the world of the spirit, or with the states of consciousness.

In our era, the West, in which the category of time had conquered, has waged a great battle with the Eastern cultures. The West has won, in the sense that technology has literally conquered the world, whether people wanted it or not. In the first instance, people did not want it; everything in their being fought against it. But, in our particular moment, the world has bought technology. Our question is, why did that mood change? How did India and other peoples decide that becoming technological was not only necessary but wise, where nothing essential was being lost.

I think the answer is rooted in the fact that the East also won. It won in the sense that the category of space really did not really go away. Therefore, all the force of the Eastern heritage was not irrelevant, but came into its own, or at least had the potentiality of coming into its own in entirely new ways.

If you call the era we have just come out of the "Age of Technology," then we are now moving into the "Age of the Transparentization of Technology," or the "Age of the Transparentization of Time." This transparentization has to do with the coming of space, the Other World, spiritual, essential entities into this temporal, horrifying expansion that technology points to.

In that context, the East is bubbling back in and its great heritage of struggling with the spirit world is now finding its way of expressing itself amidst the transparentization that is taking place in the continuing technological explosion .

That is a complicated picture, but an exiting one. It is probably more important to our moment than almost any other picture you could draw for discerning what fundamental trend is calling everything into profound crisis. This trend gets clouded sometimes, because millions of people are still trapped in the backwardness of obsolete mysticisms in the space category. Others are trapped in the spiritless technology in the time category. This is a very powerful, deep current happening in every nation and In every life, whether the nation or life knows it or not.

The fact that all religions in the world are in crisis is a clue to spelling out this profound trend. Christianity in its classical form was forged in the spatial thinking of the Middle Ages, which is now gone. Hinduism, Islam and so on, were forged in their own classical spatial imagery, which is also torn apart. A radical transformation of every religious heritage is called for, in order to move out of antiquity into the contemporary transparentization of time. Images of the radicality of this transformation keep blowing open and becoming more radical. In the past, we stored up inside a storehouse, the Church, the Temple, or the memory, huge symbol systems which we depended on to enable society.

In our era, a perpetual revolution is going on in every scrap of wisdom and consciousness. If we are going to live in the perpetual revolution, that stored-up defense of static forms from the past will not work. Our baggage has to be light. It has to be literally contentless and applicable anywhere. In the past we were dealing with the rise and fall of stable civilizations. Now we have just "rise" on our hands. The threat is not of some alien group coming and taking religion away. It is a threat by the entire future expansion which perpetually humiliate our present hold on things. And there seems to be no end to it.

To sense after the eternal and to find a sense of spirit space that lives in that wild expansion of demands, complexities and social forms, means an extremely radical transposition of all the heritages of the past. The technological sweep is still killing off all of the religions of the past. Secular temporality is still on the move. Only

in the midst of that temporality do we experience the Other World, for there is no way whatsoever to go back to an earlier time.

The new essentialism is really new, radically different from the essentialism that man struggled with before. When it talks of man as being freedom, being constantly in the presence of Mystery, being care for the world and being peace and tranquillity, it is pointing to a dimension of awareness beyond every Ur.

All of the Urs of the world are faced with the same problem. How to transpose their profound human witness into the profound commonality of humanness that is bubbling up in this technological world. An exciting dialogue with all of the religious heritages of the past is now possible. This dialogue is going to enrich us beyond belief. Those of us who had some opportunity to study Hinduism and Islam this summer began to realize that one can dialogue with all religions of the earth as profoundly as you can with the Old and New Testaments. We also saw that the transposition of Ignatius is just as difficult as, but not much more difficult than the transposition of Buddha or Lao Tze. We were awe-filled at the implications. The whole history of man is literally at your disposal for fleshing out, thinking through and grasping the full implications of what is happening to you in your life.

The Christian Church is living in this crisis shared by all religions of the earth--secular and relevant in allowing all men to participate in a profound relationship to the Mystery in the very midst of the struggle of their time. The Church is responsible for building piety, building new forms for man to live in, while, at the same time, building its own new piety.

Building piety and building society are two sides of the same building. When you have made your trip into spirit space, and you return into the temporal sweep of events on this earth, you must first build piety. The Church's responsibility is to rebuild piety in order to rebuild the whole fabric of mankind. This requires a new way to talk about religion. In my college days, some people used to talk about "Christian economics" and "Christian politics." Most people today are aware that there is no such thing as Christian economics. There are bad economics and good economics but no Christian economics. That is bad theology. To say the same about religion is a bit more shocking. There is no such thing as "Christian religion." There is good religion and bad, but no such thing as Christian religion.

Religion is part of the temporality of this world. It is the first thing you have to do when you go to live in time. Every man has exactly the same relationship to it as every other man. The man of faith knows that living means participating in all those realities the way they are. In moving into the relative and doing the crucial job of building religion without Christian categories, heritage or dogma, how would you know whether or not the religious modes you were building were good? What methods of checking could you use to determine a good religion when you saw one? What is good religion? The short course we use for art might be helpful here: It is good art if it expresses the way life is and bad if it does not. Religion is good religion if it expresses the way life is and bad if it does not.

Every society has myths, rites and symbols. In our time, we have bifurcated into what might be called secular shallowness. Quasi-faiths like Communism, and others have myths, rites and symbols, but they do not probe the profound. They do not even permit a conversation on the profound depths of life to emerge. There are, of course, Communists who find themselves religious men, probing the depths of life in spite of secular shallowness. Their basic theological motifs, however, do not have the tools to raise effectively the question of profound humanness. On the other hand, we have the classical religions of the past which concern themselves with the profound humanness, with the essential relationships of man to the mystery and to himself. But these are irrelevant to our time; they are set in a time that is gone.

Secular transparency lives between secular shallowness and classical religions. It has a profound dialogue with both. From the secular expressions of our time, it borrows the image of relevance, but pushes the necessity of profundity. From the classical religions, it borrows profundity and pushes relevance. It is always in danger of drifting into one of two reductions: Mysticism or humanism. Mysticism involves some obsolete expression of the Mystery which ends in a rejection of this world. Humanism, or temporal secularism, leaves out the profound

dimension of humanness. To live inside that tension of embracing both the mundane and the Profound, and to build new life in dialogue with both, is an awesome task.

In dialoguing with Ignatius or with Hinduism, one finds himself coming up with shallow understandings of what each is pointing to as a first hypothesis. Then, what they really said on paper beats you to death until you come up with something more profound. This dialogue between the transparentization of one's time and the classical heritages of all the Urs is a dialogue which enriches you. It forces you to recognize the validity of mankind's total memory on the profound meaning of being human. One must be cognizant of every bit of that memory and realize that in participating in the dialogue, he is radically transposing it.

A whole new myth of man emerges in this dialogue. One senses he does not want to be the man this myth is telling him he is. Standing in the heat of his relationship to the Mystery is the meaning of being human. Although you would always like to step out of the center of that relationship, you are continually dragged back against your will. You find there is no place else to be. Even when you escape through sleep or watching television, you find you have to shut down the whirlwind of your real life. Standing in this white hot relationship to the Mystery is real life. To shut it down is what the Fall of Man is all about. It is the retreat into unconsciousness or vegetablehood. Standing in the wild, dreadful, tiring and painful presence of sheer Mystery is what it means to be human

Our task involves creating those patterns which allow men to see through to the Mystery and bring the enduring into some form of expression. This is a time of new essentialism. Our scientific thinking will allow us to organize our existential insights into meaningful patterns. Such patterns will involve us in the category of space once more.

A very old image of ours concerning the intensification of knowing and doing will help us in the process of living this transparency which is part of our times. We have said that truth knowing and doing intensify themselves into the abyss. That abyss or gap at the bottom is just a black hole. The descent into the black hole we called awakening; the return, service. The key to service is to lead all men to the center of their being and then to lead the return to living in this world. Such service is what we mean by "love." To describe living this transparency as it returns to earth, we might use the category of "levitation."

A Medieval story about Joseph of Cupertino illustrates living transparency. Some monks came to a Medieval village to teach an RS-I. When they gave an altar call on Sunday morning, Joseph was the only one to raise his hand. All the other participants practically stoned the teachers, but Joseph wanted to be a part of the monastery. When the monks looked at Joseph, they were not too sure they wanted him. Of all the participants, they would have liked least for him to be the one saying "yes."

When they got back to the monastery, they decided to assign him to hoe potatoes in the field. But his ineffectiveness was beyond belief. The first week he was out in the potato patch, he cut off one of his toes. The monks then decided his gifts must lay in the intellectual realm, so they put him to work copying manuscripts. The second day, he spilled a bottle of ink all over two months' work. So the monks took Joseph out of the intellectual office and put him on permanent K.P., permanent Daily Wonder. But even on Daily Wonder, Joseph was hopelessly ineffective. He could not do the simplest thing without chopping off a finger. The rest of the monks despaired of assigning him.

One fact about Joseph which made him unusual in the monastery was that when everyone else was down, he was up. As a matter of fact, he was so wonderfully up that he could actually rise from the floor and sail around the room. No one else in the entire monastery could do that. The villagers thought it was the most wonderful thing going on in the monastery. They did not really care about the great scholars or the evangelists, but they told all their neighbors about the monk who could levitate and float around a room.

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Joseph of Cupertino is an example of living transparently. Those who knew Joseph best knew that it just fit him to float around the room. In spite of the fact that there was no one more ineffective than Joseph, nevertheless, he did outsee all of his fellow villagers. He worked miracles his whole life long. He apparently lived a happy life. These three directions we must look into to discover what it means to live this transparency.

---Gene Marshall

8/30/74

CHICAGO

THE TRANSPARENCY OF TIME
Seminar Lesson Plan

GM

Sept., 1970
Week 13

TOWARD RELEVANCE AND PROFUNDITY IN THE RELIGION OF OUR TIME

Intro		Transparencization in Experience										A Crucial Issue in Our Moment										Living Out Transparency																																
Subj. and Dam-ners		Examples					Universal Nat.					The Past/Contemporary					Transposit'n					The New Essentialism																																
		The Bible Sciences					The Personal Scope Analysis					The West					Easts & West of Mon Space					Pro-found Trend					Perpetual Revolut'n					The Problem					The Task					The Dialogue					The Service					The Miraculous Life		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39																

Rational Objective: To clarify the present state of religion and the task of creating a new myth of humanness.

Existential Aim: To objectify the religious crisis of our time and sense possibility for relevance and profundity in relating the past to the future.

Major Emphasis:

The New Essentialism par's 25-35

PRELUDE

MOVEMENTS

FOOTNOTES

I					II					III					FOOTNOTES				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. What is this paper about ?					1. Someone name the examples given in p. 3-8.					1. Rehearse the Hebraic and Hellenistic stances relative to time and space.					1. What is the problem of all the world's Urs ? the possibility ? p. 25				
2. Put up chart and walk through broadly and briefly.					2. What significance is placed on the "awe-filled" moments of one's past ?					2. Compare the non-West with the West. p 16					2. Give examples of piety and society. pp 27-30				
3. What are the dangers in p 1 ?					3. How is transparency described in p. 12 ?					3. Name the fundamental trend calling everything into profound crisis. p. 21					3. What new forms of piety and society are called for ?				
4. How does he propose to deal with the subject ?					4. What is the "mystery" in the "real me" ?					4. What is rising and passing away? p22-24					4. Discuss Secular/Religious emphases of the dialogue. What are dangers ? pp31-32.				
5 min					12 min					10 min					15 min				

1. Ground K-D-BK
Image. p 35
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2. Someone tell the story of Joseph of Cupertino.

3. Name the three directions of p. 39 as a closing image.