

TRANSPARENT DOING

It takes a good deal of courage to talk about the Journeys—just to decide that you know what you're talking about when you move to talk about the Journeys. I'd much rather talk about the Corporates than the Journeys, which are an intensification of the Corporates. Or I'd much rather talk about the Solitaries, which when they are intensified you are talking about the Journeys.

One of the ways I screw up my courage to talk about things like this is to remind myself that I have a seminary education. I learned three things in seminary. The first thing I learned is that it is possible to affirm the totality of life. I got that primarily through extra-curricular activities. The second thing I learned at seminary was that none of the wise old men could finally tell you what life was finally about. One of your colleagues has suggested that to demonstrate and hold that kind of finiteness before people when they get overawed by seminary professors we ought to have them once a year walk naked across a stage so that everybody could see how finite they are. Nobody ever finally tells you what life is about. You have to decide. That was the third thing I learned in seminary. You finally have to decide. So I'm going to talk and then you have got to decide.

Seminary was a symbol for me also because that is where I first came in some sense to terms with the betrayal which the church had perpetrated on me, where at some point I was able to say that the church had betrayed me. That betrayal came primarily to consciousness in and through the inauthenticity of the Doing of the church. You and I know that it came through the Knowing and Being primarily, but it came to light or to surface in Doing, and we were able first to talk about the betrayal of the church in terms of its failure in action. The failure of the Doing to in some way trans-late or in some way become transparent Being or transparent to life or transparent to God. In some way, the failure of Doing is where the church was first realized as having failed.

E.E. Cummings said it for me a long time ago back in seminary in his play about Santa Claus. He puts words into the mouth of Santa Claus, or was it the devil disguised as Santa Claus. One or the other, anyway, said to the group which is about to kill him, "So you've been betrayed. So you've been tricked. We've all been tricked. I've been tricked, too. I say it and you know it in your hearts. Not one of us is whole. Not one of us is whole." Our Doing was no longer whole. It somehow fell short of becoming transparent to life.

When I was able to say that the church had betrayed me, then I saw that basically I didn't experience the church as betraying me. I first experienced myself as betraying the church. When I was able to say that the church had betrayed me, then I saw the depth of my own betrayal of the church.

We've all participated in the inauthenticity of the activity of the church. But even the midst of that, there has been and still is authentic Doing going on, especially, it seems, in the role of the clergy.

One of the places that I came to terms with that was in Ireland on a teaching trip. We had just finished our course in Kilkenny and some of the ministers took us out to a public pub. We were in a room to ourselves. I left the group and went into the public bar to see what was going on. The ministers—there were about six of them who had taken us—were all dressed in their collars and their clerical shirts and they obviously stood out in the pub, but not obnoxiously. One of the Fathers followed me into the public pub and we sat there for awhile. I was sort of back about ten feet watching myself and the Father as we were there in the pub. The thing I noticed was that the Father would get instant responses from people. Nobody there knew his name. They didn't come up and say, "Father" and then his last name. They just said, "Hello, Father." Then they would have a conversation and something would happen. I wasn't quite sure what it was but I saw something happen there.

Then it occurred to me that if I could somehow reach over and quietly slip the collar from the Father's neck, he'd disappear. Poof! If I could just somehow slip over and get it before he could see it, then he would no longer be there—that all he was was sheer role. Nothing more, but a role.

Then I looked around and wondered if maybe I swiped that guitar and hid it that the guitarist would disappear also. And maybe if I took the apron from the bartender, maybe he would disappear too. Then I looked around, and what I saw was that there were simply a lot of Irishmen around there. They were playing a role. They were playing like they were Irishmen. Suppose that you could somehow yank Ireland out of history, would they disappear?

Do you see what I'm saying? You're nothing but a role. You go around playing American. When we all are in the same country and go around playing the same thing, then it looks like we're something else besides a role. But when you get over to Ireland—or any place else—and you

This address was made to members of the Order of the Ecumenical Institute at the Chicago Base House on Palm Sunday 1970. More of an edifying discourse than a formal lecture, it is an articulation of one dimension of a post-modern piety or the new secular-religious mode which is necessary to sustain and deepen the human spirit in a time of the collapse of civilization and of the creation of a new, global social vehicle. Over the last two years the Order has engaged in intensive and systematic research in grounding in everyday experience the classical categories of the Solitaries (Meditation, Contemplation, Prayer), the Journeys (Knowing, Being, Doing) and the Corporates (Poverty, Chastity, Obedience.) This sermonic poem is on the Doing of the Journeys and is an effort to imaginably delineate the depth experiences and encounters of everyman, not exclusively those of the man of faith. It is transcribed here as a confessional reflection on the qualities and style of being conscious of being human in all of its awe and dread, its possibilities and demands.

see that everybody is playing the role of an Irishman, then you're clear: you're nothing but a role.

The issue no longer is whether you play a role. The issue is whether your role becomes an authentic role. That's the first point in my model underneath the category of Transparent Doing and that is **Sheer Role**. And the issue there is whether that role is an authentic role. Doing is something you just invent. And in inventing your Doing, you invent your Being. You decide out over nothing in the midst of the givenness that you've been given. You decide your role. You can't help showing up an American, but you must decide the form; you decide the style of that role and that Doing. That is an act of courage. In the midst of deciding that role, you say what you decide to do, what you decide to act out. How you decide to act that out tells you what you know.

You have experienced that in trying to live. When you can't really decide who it is that you are, you go about doing something, or you get some sort of impulse to act. When you can't really decide on the strategies you need to operate out of or the goals you need or where you need to move next, you begin doing things. That breaks you loose to know what it is that you know. When you can't decide what thrust you should be having at this moment, you decide what tactics you are going to use. But that is not really the key here. The key is that what you do decides your Being.

I am my role. If you change my roles, you change me. When you become a husband rather than a single person, that is a different role you play, and that means you are a different person. I thought it was very interesting to watch what happened to JFK when he became President. Maybe you remember the kind of shifts that took place in that man, or maybe the physical differences that were obvious. But the overwhelming change that occurred in the man was when he took on a new role. You shift a person's role and you shift that person's being.

If you have ever acted then you've experienced that. Even when you simply play like being another role, that does something to you interiorly. That does something to your Being. That does something to who you are at the foundation of your life—even if you are just playing. I've often wanted to talk to people who spy. I'd like to know how it is that they hold themselves together in the midst of having to play many, many different roles. What is it that gives them consistency in their lives when they have to con-

stantly play a role that they would not otherwise play.

This gives me my second category under Transparent Doing, and that is integrity, **Radical Integrity**. By radical I mean foundational. Probably I'm more clear here than with the other categories that this is one that I would want to put under the category of Transparent Doing, which is the intensification of Obedience and Prayer. But I'm probably least clear in terms of articulating what Radical Integrity means. I'm clear that it is not some sort of moralism, some sort of morality. It is not feeling good about having done the right thing. It is not having known that you have done the right thing and therefore you can sleep at night. It is not a removal from the ambiguities of deciding between thousands of alternatives. I can't say exactly what I mean by Radical Integrity but I can point to what doing it is. What it does is that it focuses your total life into one thrust. It focuses your total being into one Doing, so that everything you do is but one Doing. Every moment of your life becomes one force.

Napoleon came to mind as I was reflecting on this. He was a man of integrity, however demonic that might have been. I was reminded of how he could stand before hundreds and thousands of troops and in one speech so address the bottom of their lives that they could go willingly into battle knowing that they were going to die, knowing there was no chance of coming out of the battle—one address. The man with Radical Integrity in his life becomes a single thrust and his life becomes transparent to the mystery.

The lazer beam was another image I toyed with. I don't know enough about lazer beams, but it would be a focusing of the power of the total energy into one small beam. Radical Integrity is something like that.

The other way I thought of it was with buildings. Have you been on top of buildings and begun to feel them sway back and forth? I suspect that the Hancock building in Chicago does that. I've not been there but I suspect it does. How many feet does the Hancock building sway? About five feet? Integrity is whatever it is that holds that building together. Integrity is the steel in the midst of that building and, therefore, when it sways it doesn't crack and fall. That begins to point to integrity. Integrity is that steel.

Integrity also is the basis of relationship. If you are one person today relative to integrity and another person tomorrow, I don't know how to relate to you—if you're that kind of a schizoid. If I am one person today integrity-wise and somebody else tomorrow, I have no way to relate

to my world, or else I have to recreate my situation. You have no way to relate to the given situation in any kind of depth way save you have integrity. But that doesn't say what integrity is either, does it?

All I can say is where you begin. I'm fairly confident that where you begin is at your own death. No man can be a man of integrity save he is a dead man. Only the man whose life is given can be a man of integrity. Only when your life is already given is it possible to be a man of integrity.

I don't especially agree with a lot of the things that Eldridge Cleaver says, but a passage from one of his books, **Papers from Prison**, struck me. He tells the story of when he was caught in a house and the bullets were flying and tear gas was there and he was almost at the point of losing consciousness, and he decided that he was going to die. When he decided that he was going to die, he said goodbye to his wife in his own imagination, and to whatever else you say goodbye to when you are dying. Then he didn't die, but by a miracle escaped death. All he got was one bullet in the leg. What he said after it was, "Eldridge Cleaver died in that house. Eldridge Cleaver no longer exists. All that is left is force. All that is left is a thrust."

A man of integrity is a man who is already a dead man, so that what is left is a thrust. It's when you stand in the face of the final end of your life, it's when you stand in the face of your own death, it's when you look full in the face of life that you get down to whatever it is that creates a man of integrity. It's there that life then becomes stripped of all the unnecessary things and then you can look to where your integrity lies. When in the face of your own death you can affirm your total life, then you begin to get a hold of what you mean by Radical Integrity.

The third category which I'd want to use to talk about Transparent Doing, the depth of doing which releases life, is **Final Commitment**. Transparent Doing is always a manifestation of Final Commitment. That is to say, any doing that you do that's going to be Transparent Doing, any doing that you do that is going to be transparent to the depths of life, is going to be doing that comes out of Final Commitment. I think that either you are finally committed or you don't do anything, finally.

If you are going to be a school teacher, then your commitment to being a school teacher has got to be for the rest of your life, life-long. If you're going to be married, it's got to be life-long. If you're going to be the Church, it is a life-long commitment. No doing, no Transparent Doing comes out of any commitment that is not life-long. If you're going to really sweep the floor and if sweeping the floor is going to be Transparent Doing, then you're sweeping the floor at that moment for your total life. You sweep floors for life-long. Either you're where you are for life or you are not totally there—period. Either you're a school teacher for life or you're not totally a school teacher. Do you see that is just the flip side of being able to affirm your life as significant? Anytime you affirm your life as significant, you are totally life-long committed.

The tragedy at the bottom of the vocational crisis is the tragedy that comes out of a person not being able to commit his life in a life-long commitment. The tragedy there is that he cannot affirm his life as significant, because

committing your life is a life-long commitment which is simply the flip side of being able to affirm your total life as good, as significant.

You know the offense that you experience when you struggle to do a time-line of your whole life. The offense there is that you decide to commit your total life somewhere. The offense behind that is that you have to decide to receive your life as significant before you can make out a life-long time-line.

Final Commitment also is always a commitment to a wider area. Standing constantly before a widening arena of responsibility always comes after the decision that you're going to be committed. Nobody ever gets seduced into being committed. You decide to be committed and then something shows up for you to be committed to. Commitment doesn't just happen. It always requires a prior decision if you're going to be committed and then you find yourself always being open to wider and wider arenas of responsibility. But it is always based on that prior decision. This for me is the Preparation that Kazantzakis talks about. If you haven't made a prior decision to be committed, you better not listen to closely to the Cry or you're going to find yourself in water that's over your head.

The third way I'd talk about Final Commitment is radical assignment. That assignment first of all is from God. You experience yourself sent by God. The way life is has sent you to this particular time and space. The total process of history has sent you to this particular moment to do that particular task. It is out of that kind of sent-ness that transparent action comes.

You're also radically assigned by man—or you somehow have a symbol, some group, some man who sends you out to your particular work. Without that your work doesn't have any real significance, and without that you don't have accountability which holds you self-consciously to your commitment.

Finally, the Final Commitment is always a graveside view. It's always a view from the side of your own grave, in which you see the finality of every act and the nothingness of every act.

One of the ways I get over that is to say to myself that a few years from now, oh say about a million, they're going to find one of our models and they're going to say, "Oh yes, that's one of those strange hieroglyphics that those people were doing sometime in between Ramses II and Einstein." They're not even going to remember that we did it. It was just something that happened between Ramses II and Einstein.

It is in the grave view where you see the finality of every act and the nothingness of every act that the courage is born to do the transparent deed.

The fourth dimension of the transparent deed is **Transparent Authenticity**. Whereas I concluded talking about Radical Integrity with the grave and Final Commitment with death, with Transparent Authenticity I have to begin talking about the grave. In a sense all you're doing when you are talking about Transparent Doing is talking about Transparent Authenticity. It is as though you were looking at your total life and deciding whether or not that was going to be your life or not. You have to see yourself. I like the image of standing at the grave edge the way that

you stand on the edge of a diving board, looking back down the whole long diving board that is your life. As you look at your life, you decide whether to receive that life as authentic. When I'm deciding how I'm going to visit someone in the community or when I'm deciding how I'm going to study my course in college or how I'm going to do my job as a secretary, I stand on the edge of my grave and look at my total life and decide in that light the style that being a secretary has to embody for it to be authentic.

Sometimes you see two men doing virtually the same thing. One of them makes you sick, the other one gives you back your life. Sometimes you hear two men saying the very same thing to you. One of them you dismiss as nothing, the other one addresses the depths of your life—the same words. It's not what is done, it's the style, the authenticity of the act. This style is born at the graveside in daring to stand before your own death and deciding to affirm your life—your miserable, failing, succeeding, wondrous life, as significant. Transparent Authenticity is deciding out of your grave.

Secondly, Transparent Authenticity is deciding the will of God. It is observing, judging, weighing up, deciding, giving due consideration to men, circumstances and principles, motives, prospects, values, purposes, etc., etc., etc., and then you decide. It is the free venture in which you literally decide and experience yourself as deciding the will of God. You experience the decision that you've made as guidance.

Thirdly—and I want to center here—Transparent Authenticity is experiencing yourself in the role of Jesus. I am Gautama. I am Jesus. It's where you elect to elect your election. It's something like when Jesus said, "I and the Father are one. I don't do anything except what my Father does. It is not just me acting, it is me and my Father. We're one doing this."

Maybe you've experienced this when you decided to play a role which shoves other people back over against the mystery, depth and greatness of their own lives, and shoves them up against the comprehensive, futuristic and intentional, and breaks them open to awe. You decide to play the role of God—that's poetic. You never play the role of God. But your Doing becomes transparent to God. Your Doing becomes transparent to the futuristic, intentional and comprehensive. Your Doing becomes transparent to the mystery of being which gives a person back the mystery, greatness and depth of his own existence.

They came to Jesus and they said, "Are you ready to go to the feast?" Jesus said, "You go on along. I'm not ready to go yet, because when I go to the feast, all of history is going to be altered. And it's not time yet to do that little bit of alteration. So you go on to the feast." You be very careful when you're playing this role. You don't just go to the feast because you want to. You decide that you go to the feast because you know that history is rocked by that.

In Transparent Doing as Sheer Role, you're inventing doing, which is inventing being. In Transparent Doing as Transparent Authenticity you're transmitting being. The doing that you do as Sheer Role which invents being becomes the doing which transmits being. When you do Transparent Doing, you transmit being.

This is what Kazantzakis, I think, meant when he said you turn matter into spirit. It doesn't matter what you're doing—cutting a rock, giving birth to children. If you're doing it authentically, you're turning matter into spirit. D.H. Lawrence's poem "We Are Transmitters of Life" also comes to mind. "When you fail to transmit life, life fails to flow through you. When you transmit life into your work, life, still more life, rushes in to compensate. It doesn't matter what it is. Maybe it's just the whiteness of a washed pocket handkerchief." One becomes a transmitter of life when his doing is transparent.

The betrayal of the church which was not the church's betrayal but was my betrayal and your betrayal of the church is now being repented for. It is creating a new religious mode, a new social vehicle and in reconstructing the local congregation that is repenting for that betrayal. We've seen the innocent suffering, the dehumanization. We've turned from that and we're in the midst of abolishing that within ourselves. Then we've got 37 years until 2007 according to one time-line to finish, or continue, the job of repenting.

Whenever you find repentance going on, you find lives being laid down. Finally that's all you're talking about with Transparent Doing. Transparent Doing is finally the crucifixion. That sums up everything you've got to say. Maybe it's appropriate that we stand conscious in our thinking to the Transparent Doing during this week of Passion. The journey that is Transparent Doing is the journey of the cross, the journey of Passion, the body on the line which calls forth the divine response, which demands the divine response.

The thing that supports a community, the thing that overlays love on a community, is the style of life which embodies the crucifixion principle. Tactical models may be the tools. But what cares for a community, what finally overlays love on a community, is a style of life in which people see day after day a style of life in which somebody's body is there on the line on their behalf. That's what cares for a community.

The style of the cruciform life is always magic. It's not doing a good job. It's not doing something efficient. The style of the cruciform principle becomes transparent, like magic that awakens, that enflames, that ennobles, that calls forth a divine response, that elicits humanness from whomever it touches.

Two people came to Jesus and said, "Who is going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, and who will be able to sit on the right hand of you?" They were implying, "If it's all right with you, we'd like it to be us." Jesus answered them very simply: "Are ye able to drink the cup?"

TRANSPARENT DOING