

Ecumenical Institute
Order Youth Council
Chicago

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August 20, 1971

STATEMENT ON THE LIFE PHASES

Grace be unto you and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

I think I am not only not capable of giving a good speech anymore, but I don't even like to give them. After the ones I have heard I am beginning to see why. But I am going to intrude myself upon this gathering just to say two or three words.

I don't like badges but this is a significant badge, a tribute to our order. We went to a conference of Methodists from throughout the world. Visitors is usually what they delegate the Ecumenical Institute, but we were full delegates. I have to get a plane back there because on Monday morning I meet with Cardinal Vehabrand who is the Pope's representative in all ecumenical work of the Roman Catholic Church. We have been plotting and scheming about how we would talk with him, and we wanted just the right thing to put in his hands--something so astounding that we would anticipate that it would get to His Holiness Pope Paul. I think, after I have read a few pages, that this second generation report is the document. Unless I find something scarry in it, this is the document that we will give to him. If it be true (I tell you I appreciate Dale's word here) that the second generation is the key to a third order (and I am more convinced than I was a week ago that that is true) then this is the kind of thing that His Holiness would look for, if he got to thinking about the key to a third order. So it is going to be with a great deal of pride that this is the document that I put in his hand. I am delighted to have been here and gotten that.

I want to say one or two words. First of all, you new ones must not consider even your initial work finished. You must consider having representational force come together in December to push further and maybe again at Easter vacation. And if we take the first steps in July '72 toward a four-year entrance into being an historical order, we would certainly have to have the youth play a signal role in Summer '72. So you can begin to think in terms of the work you still have to do,

Then I have a second word. To you older ones here. I perceive that because of the kinds of circumstances that Joseph the younger mentioned, some of you older ones are behind some of the new ones who have come later than others into our group. I call upon you in the next twelve months to get caught up. If you are not caught up on what it means to be a prior, get caught up on that. If there are certain areas in terms of the intellectual aspect of our work that you are not up on, get caught up. If we are going to be ready to move in July, have your field outfit ready tomorrow. This is just a little bit of the advice from an elder.

As I worked before this summer very hard on the life style aspect of our triangles, I was just shocked what has happened to me relative to life cycles, which I prefer to call the life phases. My universe has fallen apart and been put back together at this point. I suggested a week ago something in this direction for you. The sociological meaning of being an individual has to do with these life cycles. Sociologically, I only exist as a new, an un-new, or a-new. Sociologically this is the only reality of selfhood that I project. Maybe you young ones are brighter, but I am almost sixty, and for the first time in my life

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I have become aware of the fact that when you are new you have to live the new to the hilt. When you are the Aimee Hilliards you have to live the un-new to the hilt, and then you get to--

Some people who have wondered why we celebrated Slicker's fiftieth birthday are not wondering so much anymore. But I think we probably mis-fired. I became clear that the youth culture had decided that you were in one master phase of life from one to thirty. In the last few years that had been shoved up ten years for me, and there are subphases in that. I was thinking that your second or middle phase was really twenty years from thirty to fifty. I don't know whether it is because I am now hitting sixty or not, but I am about to revise that (You can't laugh too hard. If I were Marshall speaking you could laugh, but this October I am sixty. So pay no attention to your giggles at that point). Then from sixty to ninety you are in that third phase. It may very well be our society has really said that from fifty you belong to the other, and that may be. I am not sure, but rationally that would be thirty, thirty, and thirty. And the first ten years of life you don't know what's up and they tell me that the last ten years you don't know what's up.

Now the thing that just rocks me when you talk about your having to be the trans-establishment is that that means that you have to experience transparency. Little Big Man--I can't get rid of him. He is coming through in a million ways, particularly where you spot the revolutions. The female revolution, the semi-lesbians that they call the lib today, are the disestablishment. The trans-establishment recognizes that you force a transparency so that there is a new kind of male and female that is beyond male and female, without ever getting beyond male and female, that is coming into being. Right in our order we are about discovering what that is. Or if you take the black and the white, any black man who is saying anymore that black is beautiful, have pity upon him. The awakened white man and the awakened black man have to see through both of those and become that which is other than white or black while you remain utterly black and utterly white. That is the transparency. This is the figure of locking pinkies together, and in locking pinkies together you become something other than one white man and one black man. You remain both. Also, with the revolution between the Western world and the non-Western world. So, with the youth revolution. I have no patience with youth anymore (and I hope you can say that backwards to an old man). I don't mean I don't have patience. If you are going to end up a slob, God bless you as you move into your slobbism. But the moment has come when we have to push for transparency between the new and the un-new, whirling beyond both of them while we remain utterly the new and utterly the un-new. No romanticizing. This is going to happen. You may not participate in it. You may end up a slob, and may not participate in it. He may end up a slob, but the possibility is at hand, when you take those three life cycles.

You remember that painting, Spirit of '76? I always thought it was sentimental. I don't think so anymore. They are marching into machine-gun fire and there is one who is tall, one who is shorter, and then there is a little one. The trouble is that the young one should be right in the middle. He unites the two, if you can think of them holding their pinkies. Then what I am trying to say by transparency is that only then do you have a real man. This is what dynamical sociology is all about (I have been struggling with this, although it is old to some of you). You young people have no chance of being authentic persons without the un-new and the a-new. Without me, you haven't a chance. Without you, I haven't a chance of authenticity. In dynamical sociology it is something like this. I

will not illustrate the triangle except from the point of view of youth and the relationship to the un-new and the a-new. When youth stand before the old, like myself, it is my being--not what I do, not what I say, just my being--that reminds you of your death. Not just the kind of dying in which you stick me in a six-foot hole and therefore you see yourself. You see that, in principle, my life is spent and I have to live with my spent life. That is what I mean by your being confronted with death.

On the other hand in the ontological dimension of being, as an old man, I am confronted in your being--not in what you do, not in what you say--with my life. This is why someone said to me last night, in another context, "I don't know how to handle it when some romantic mother puts a baby in my lap. I enjoy it about two minutes, then I want her to come take it." That is not just a crotchety old man talking. It is an old man who is faced in the life of that young child with his own life. When you find people that you have called "don't like children," you know it is not entirely a lie, but you also know there are ontological reasons, not just warpedness within the personality.

The Aimee Hilliards, not the old, but the middle, confront you with responsibility. Do you ever know why very frequently you can get along with your grandparents better than your parents (I'm not talking about your excuses for not living your life.) Whether it is the homeliest Aimee Hilliard in the world or the most gorgeous Aimee Hilliard in the world, what anybody that age confronts you with is horrifying burden or responsibility. You don't like that any more than I as an old man like to be confronted with my life. And what you confront the middle-aged with more by your being than what you do and say is freedom. Life and death. Freedom and responsibility. One of the things that irritates me about my sons is that I don't have the luxury of the freedom that they have--but that reminds me of the fact that I do have the freedom, and that frightens me.

In each case you are ministering unto each other. I will not do this in detail. But you see the old, on the knowing pole, call the young in question at the point of challenging their romanticism; and the old call the young in question, challenging that sentimentalism. You know the Kierkegaardian categories I used last Sunday; I don't need to spell that out.

But there is a redemptive pole. The way the youth redeems me as an old man (sociologically, not psychologically) is to take care that you ground everything you do in the common memory in the past. Do you understand? The way you redeem whatever you do is to ground it in the past, to see the transparency of humanness in the past as well as in the future. That is the way, you put the absolution on the old man.

Then the way the old man puts the redemptive side upon the youth is his hope. Do you know you young ones cannot hope? The hope that I am talking about is only born on the other side of the stark-naked awareness that there is no hope. In one sense, only when you are old and you have seen it all can you hope where there is no hope. You can't hope if you aren't old at the same time you are young, and if I am not young at the same time I am old. I don't want to exclude these categories in terms of chronological age. I am talking about a dynamic. I can hope on your behalf in a way that you have not dreamed of hoping, and that is through the redemptive dynamic of the old in relationship to the new.

Now very quickly, in relationship to the Aimee Hilliards, under the knowing rubric, or the judging rubric. Their job is to do the nitty-gritty. Their job is to take care of running the outfit. If they weren't doing that, you wouldn't have a chance. Neither would I as an old man. We must always have them. When you see the middle-aged reaching after force, reaching to run things, the sociological dynamic under that is to make an idol out of their own deeds. You have to challenge that. That is the way you judge them. The way they judge you is at the point of challenging your tendency to abstract.

I was reading here a little while ago that the middle-aged people prophesy, the young ones see visions, and we old ones dream dreams. You have to have all three. I remember when Ellison, the young one, laughed one day when he read that, laughed when he came to the part the old men dream dreams; but he better also laugh when the new ones see visions, for the task then of the Aimee Hilliards is to take your visions, without which history will not be history, and shove them into reality. They want to know how you are going to concretize that vision and whether or not you are ready to shed the kind of blood that is necessary to put into concretion some fantastic anticipation that you have.

Then, in terms of the redemption aspect of the doing, the young ones toward the middle-age, the way you redeem them is to be the loyal opposition. Can you grasp that? You cannot redeem them by submitting to them. You cannot redeem them by wildly rebelling. The word of absolution on them is loyal opposition.

We were just talking about men in the phase of youth, not children and then the way this must come to you is somewhat painful. The way the Aimee Hilliards speak the word of absolution to you is to require engagement. That is--require engagement. If my boys will forgive me, in one sense, I don't care what they do. I want them engaged in history. And that is my word of absolution to them. As long as I live they are going to be over against that demand--that they be engaged in history. How, I don't care, finally. That's the redemptive word of the Aimee Hilliards.

I wish I could speak like Martin Luther King. I have a dream--my dream is the Spirit of '76. After next July we have four years for us to discover how Marshall and Mathews and Wood join hands, pinkie to pinkie, and in doing so, we are doing so not only to serve our own ends as an order, though that's important. We are going to be the new symbol that the whole world is waiting for; for when youth, and un-youth, and age hook together, only then do you have a BIG man. And the interesting thing to me (if you want to call me romantic you may do so) is that that is a virtue of youth. There are three BIG men then in one.

March on and we will see what comes of your document.