

CHANGING HISTORY : THE KNOWING, DOING AND BEING OF A RELIGIOUS ORDER				
History moves on discontinuity	Stages of a movement	Knowing: articulating the seeing through	Doing: living the sacrificed life	Being: letting the mystery shine through
1	5 6	11 12	15 16	20 21 30

1. History moves on discontinuity. In religious language, that is saying God is sovereign, that God's economy determines the economy of time, of temporality. But in our day particularly, if you cannot get this into utterly secular language, you do not know what that poetry about the divine will or divine providence means.

2. The only way we have of directly grasping what it was like in another time, of course, is to look through the solidification of that time. It is only by an indirect exercise we call empathy that you can get out of your time and into another time where you feel after the states of being that produced the solidified articulation of those states of being which we call doctrines or philosophies. I am quite sure that if you got inside of the forging of that which comes to us as solidified abstract doctrine or conceptual relations, you would be feeling the way you feel today in trying to get said, in what for you is secular language, the traditional poetry that determined your interior montage. If this be true, then we are pointing in a fresh way to the new essentialism that man is stumbling into. This is grounded in states of being instead of intellectual conceptions. But of course you have to add that this is always amidst the relativities of your own posture, which is the way it was in the beginning, is now, and shall ever be.

3. History moves on discontinuity. This means that change never takes place except in the presence of awe. Awe is discontinuity. When you experience awe, you become aware of the fact that in some way or another things are not the same and will never be the same. All things become new. This is an illustration inside yourself of the fact that history moves on discontinuity and on discontinuity alone. This means that the religious establishment and the so-called secular civil establishment move finally only in and through the activity of God. This you say in a secular way, you just say the way it is. Unless discontinuity breaks in, you do not have the coming to be of something new.

4. Now discontinuity is not some formless thing in history, though it is ever without form. When discontinuity strikes, it becomes form. If that were not true, you could not say that history moves on discontinuity. Now this is hard for me to get said, but if discontinuity did not take form, you would not even know there was such a thing as discontinuity. You would have no way of being conscious of discontinuity, and what you are not conscious of, obviously is not there--unless you go to an abstract universe and posit some kind of an eternal gaze. That stance is fine, but you have to remember that that is where they got mixed up in rationalism. That gaze is not your gaze. It is a posit of your imagination, and therefore has not the quality of what we mean by reality. That is where we said "no" to abstract rational systems.

5. Now the form of discontinuity has a billion levels. First of all, it is

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far smaller than the point of a pin. As a matter of fact, the form is almost like that whistle for a dog. You work back to where there is no noise, and then there is some noise, and then it expands, expands, expands, so that it becomes extremely discernable. This is an illustration in your own experience of awe. The form begins in the recognition that you do not simply have awe in you, but you are in objective awe. That is the beginning of the form. By the time you get to the point where you sense "I don't know how, but by God, I'm different," the form has begun to whirl into larger whirls. Then when you get so far to where you are ready for the great indicative resolve in your existence, "biteable" form is there. Then you can go on to the practical manifestations, in which form seems to be superimposed upon form itself.

6. The form of discontinuity can also be seen in history. When you start "way back," the form, to use our jargon, involves the religious order. There is the serving order, the extended order, the movemental order. Then there is the movement, the new church, the new world. Or, pretty obviously, it is move-ments, move-ments, move-ments which change society. First there is fixed society. Then movements within the dynamic alter the fixedness of the society and create another fixedness of society. You may say, "Society is always moving." But that is not true. The civil rights people know that society just would not "budge." The irony of it is that the civil rights movement is a manifestation of the "budging" dynamic of society. And this has been true in every culture. History has been moving. When you work backwards from that, you see there have been movements in history, and therefore religious orders, from the very beginning of time.

7. Obviously movements have had many faces and many forms. I say "obviously" because the movement that makes history move, or that makes history movement, must itself be moving. Movement that is movement itself is the closest thing there is to pure change, which is awe--the primordial beginnings of form. Therefore in no time and no place could you ever have the same movement.

8. But not only that. The moment a movement stops moving itself, or becomes unopen, it passes over into the static and is therefore no longer movement. For instance, at one time the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the WTCU, was a movement. But it has been wooden now for a long time. You can not call it a movement. Similarly you cannot talk about a labor movement anymore. I do not want to be dogmatic about this, I merely wanted to say that a movement itself moves.

9. Each entity of a movement is filled with openness or movement as it goes along. To abstract the stages of movement, there is a natal stage, then a formation stage, then a conscious stage, then an ordering stage, then a serving stage, then a blending stage, and finally an ending stage. At the ending stage you become WTCU as it is now. But inside each one of these there is movement. As long as a movement is movement inside itself, it is going someplace. And inside of those "going-someplaces" there is movement. This is its openness. Movement is only movement as long as it is openness. The moment a movement is not, to itself and to the world, discontinuity, it is not movement.

10. The religious order--call it what you will--is the heart, the spark, of any movement. A movement changes history, communicates discontinuity to continuity, by being the presence. This is how a religious order carries history on its back.

11. And this presence just is. There is no intentionality in it whatsoever, first of all. It is unintentionality, and this is what you mean by presence. If I am a presence only when I am conscious of being a presence or decide to be a presence,

then I am kidding myself and am not a presence to the world. On the other side of that, of course, radical intentionality is within this presence. But it is almost as if you would want to call it "unintentional intentionality." Before I get through I want to reverse it and make it "intentional unintentionality." Both of them are necessary.

12. It is clear that a movement is not its knowing. It is not its verbal articulation. It is not its reflective capacity. But a movement obviously lives upon radical intentional knowing. That is, any movement, any radical core of movement in history, has seen through. That is the intensification of knowing. And because it has seen through, it has the capacity to articulate having seen through. If it does not, it has finally not seen through. For example, it is fine to have states of being, but until you are able, no matter how poorly this is done, to articulate them rationally, you have not seen through. It is as if, relative to a particular fixed moment in history, the movement beholds an absolute by which judgment is executed upon the un-movement dimension present at that moment in society.

13. Another way of talking about the intensification of knowing is just to come right out and say that a movement not only prays, it is prayer. I mean it is prayer. And much of the power of a movement rests on that seeing through. We have talked many times about what charisma, what spiritual power is. Spiritual power has nothing to do with my intentions or my will power. Nothing whatsoever. It is the unavoidable consequence of having seen through.

14. If I wanted to press at us a little bit, I would say that, to the degree that one of us is not comprehensive in this operation, we have lost our seeing through. I mean your power goes out. Have you ever noticed one of your colleagues who is a big mighty guy in other situations, but comes in to the place where they are working on assignments and grinds his own petty little ax? Have you ever noticed how a great giant like that crumbles just before your very eyes into a little mouse? You see them just wither down. The power of the movement is in having seen through. This is not its function, but it has that power.

15. The religious order by definition, then, is those who have seen through. You have to wipe out of your mind everything you may have meant by the term "religious order," for in our time we have seen the solidification of many religious orders. A religious order is that body which has seen through.

16. Secondly, a movement is not its doing. But its doing is intensified. I need not mention at any length the power of cruciformity. A religious order is that body for whom cruciformity is no longer something out there; they are cruciformity. This is why sacrifice is there. This is the power, the unbelievable power of chastity in the great monastic movements in our culture as well as others. If you think of that on the moral level--and I mean something deeper by morality than most people do--you will never see it. This is on the ontological level. Chastity is a sign, and a sign is not something external. A sign is always down inside your guts. It was a sign to them, and therefore it became a sign to the world, to those about them.

17. I am not making a case for chastity, because chastity in itself is worthless. But behind chastity was the absolutely sacrificed life. Oh, I would like to get up on a housetop these days and scream that God's people are the people who see that their chance to live a glorious life is glorious beyond all articulation. And they lay down that great, glorious gift, going to their death so that other people might live their own glorious gift. This is the great holy suicide.

18. And not all, by any means, are capable at this time of this radicalized doing. I tell you, the deeds that change history are not the deeds of shoveling this pile of coal, or being in that demonstration. The deeds that change history take place down inside of you, but they are the most objective deeds that man can find words for. This radical doing is what being a religious order is. Now you or you or you might belong to an outfit like this and be no more a religious order or part of it than the moon is. Likewise for Roman Catholic orders. How many folk have they got in them who are on the rolls but who are not religious? And of course they know it, and weep over it. And, like the rest of us, they do not exactly know what to do about such things.

19. This doing is the power of agape. And I mean it is power. You show me one man who is this great deed--who inside his gut has committed holy suicide--and I will show you a man who cares for this world. You cannot have one without the other. Without that great act down in your guts, you are going to love only your family or your nation or your race or your church--and not love the whole world. Do you want to know what spiritual power is? It is not something somebody gets by flexing muscles. It is the by-product of a sacrificial life. No moralism here, no sentimentalism. When this happens, you do not care whether anyone else thinks you have laid down your life or not. No moralism here, that does not even enter your mind. You are consumed to see that you be the indicative that you are. What could anybody else's opinion even have to do with such a thing? This is the power of agape. This is the power which turns justice which has gone to ashes into mercy out of which new justices are built.

20. This is not what we have been conditioned to believe. We have been conditioned to believe the Abraham Lincolns and Napoleons and Wellingtons and Caesars and Gregory the Greats and Genghis Khans are the ones that change history. No. Agape changes history. And the manifestation of agape is a religious order.

21. Now what is left to discuss is only being. Since there is no such thing as being, you cannot very well talk about it. But we have already talked about it in doing and knowing which are unimportant because being is the intensification of those. That is to say, being is actually the presence which is contentless, but is filled with that which does not exist, intensified knowing and intensified doing.

22. I used to scream about those French theologians who in our time took that concept of presence and brought it to the attention of the world. But unfortunately they thought that presence meant getting out in the middle of a ghetto and going around doing this or this or this. No, no, no. The presence is the intensification of the seeing through and the agape. It is as if the last three areas in the other world come together for me and represent the sheer mystery that shines through in the presence, which is the intensification of the river and of the mountain.

23. Or presence is finally not being there yourself. A religious order does not change history; discontinuity changes history. The intrusion of the mystery transposes history. The religious order, in the intensification of knowing and doing, becomes transparent so that the mystery flows out through me to impact the world. There is no magic here. No magic whatsoever. Only the mystery changes the world; only when society is once again shoved up against the mystery does change occur.

24. And the mediator of that mystery to the masses of man is the religious order. This is why a religious order is either the beloved parasite of civilization or the hated outcast. In either case, those of the orders are the outcasts. Either

one of those responses can be perverted or can be a genuine and authentic response to the religious. But with either one of them, if the response is authentic, civilization is not responding to the religious order. It is responding to the disclosure of the mystery through that religious order.

25. This is why even though I do not know a great deal about it, I say to that 80 year-old nun, if you take off your habit, I will wear it. Now that habit is but an external sign of the awareness that one is set aside to be the transparent mediator of the mystery whereby men, society, lives, and finally history itself are changed.

26. I am not making a case for a habit at the moment. I am trying to point beyond that and say that if those wearing the habit are no longer there, some people will have to fulfill that role. I call them the beloved parasites." This role is present in the Eastern Church when, for example, I saw people rush to kiss the bishop's ring. Out of my Protestant background I had thought that was silly. Well, of course, it can be perverted. But when there is health within it, it is a communication of the mystery. That is the role of the beloved parasite. Some of the Roman Catholic priests may not like to wear their collar, but when I wear mine traveling, I find I get attention, kindness, courtesy and consideration from policeman, from airplane operators, from everyone. Maybe the priests have had so much of it that they are sick of it. Maybe that is why they resist it now.

27. If you pull the sickness out of this and get down to the ontology, communication of the mystery is what I mean by the beloved parasite. As long as that religious does not insist that I kiss his ring or take off my hat before him, I tell you, I would be willing to take off my hat before that one more than before any other temporal phenomenon that I know anything about. The bishops of the Church are my bishops. And I can bow my knee before them all, because finally integrity in that bow has nothing to do with the man sitting on the bishop throne. It has to do with me.

28. On the other side of that, the religious are the hated outcasts. This again is the fear and the fascination that you can expect whenever the mystery shines through. The religious can always expect to be persecuted. We sometimes wonder why the establishment is not friendlier to us. Well, the one who thinks that the establishment is ever going to be friendly to us at all is out of his mind. That does not mean that from time to time God will not bring us showers of blessings, and bring this bishop, that bishop, or another moderator into sympathy with us as God opens his eyes, not to us but to the mystery that we represent.

29. I want to add another thing. All of us have sensed a kind of respect in recent years from those in the established Church, as it begins to dawn on them who we are. Even if it is for only a moment, there is respect--not respect for any of us, but a respect for something that is shining through us. I do not mean to extol our virtues, all that makes no difference. What a religious order has been from the beginning in history and shall always be is the presence. It is an incarnation, that in this body the mystery shines through and awes men, trembles them, excites them, envisions them, motivates them. This is to say that the religious order never changes history. It is the catalyzing factor. It is the motivity agent that arouses men to be their best (and I mean that ontologically and not morally), which means to be God's men.

30. And then one sees that our presence itself--and I mean the presence of all religious orders in history--is discontinuity. That is why you and I should be

worried whenever we in slobbism begin to move toward looking like the establishment. We must ever be discontinuity. We are the "trans-establishment" and we have also to be the "dis-establishment." But yet, here is a secret no one can see. It is the religious dynamic in history that loves the establishment like the establishment could not even dream of being loved. The one who can say "NO" with his life, with his being, is the one who has said an eternal yes to creation, and that includes the establishment. We must never forget that.

31. Now finally, a religious order has to be nothing. Let me use the Roman Catholic orders as an example. To the degree you can show the grand things any of the orders have done--the Jesuits, or the Dominicans or the Christian Brothers, and they have done grand things--to that degree they were running out of being a religious order. Does that communicate to you? Now mark you, they had to do glorious things. That is what they were in history for, but, to the degree that you can point to these things, they were running out of being a religious order. That ought to worry us, because either we are going to fail or some glorious things are going to happen. This is our danger.

32. But this is complex. A religious order has nothing to do with wanting to be humble. On the contrary. In one way a religious order is the most prideful thing that ever hit history, because without a religious order there is no history. You cannot get much more pretentious than that.

33. So there is a paradox. The key is the nothing of the order. It is the presence, which is not the order's presence but the presence of the mystery. Therefore to the degree they become something, become flesh, that transparency goes. And then their moment has passed in history, and other movements, which can be nothing which can be transparent, come to be.

34. What I have intended to say in all this is that there is nothing religious about a religious order. There is nothing religious in the statement, "A religious order carries history on its back." That is just the way it is. It is the way it always has been and it is the way it always will be.

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