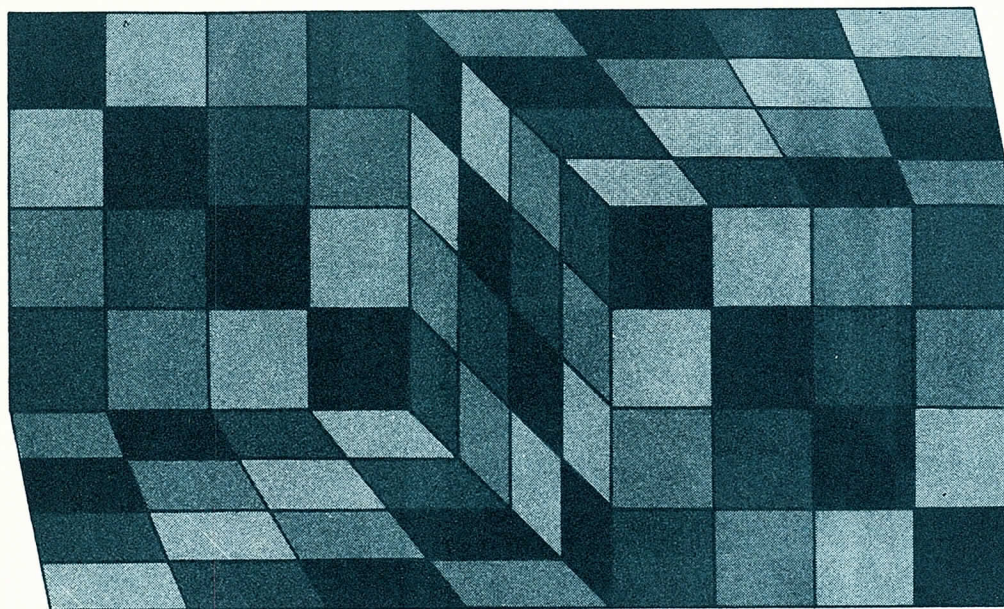


# IMAGE



The Solitary Life of the Secular Religious

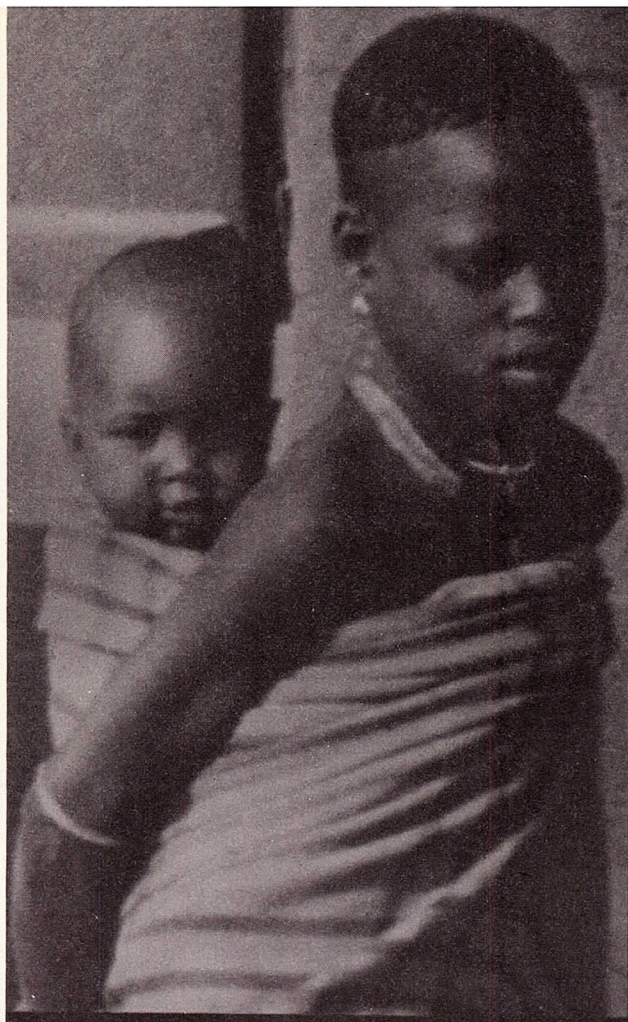
journal of the ecumenical institute

number nine

JUNE 1970

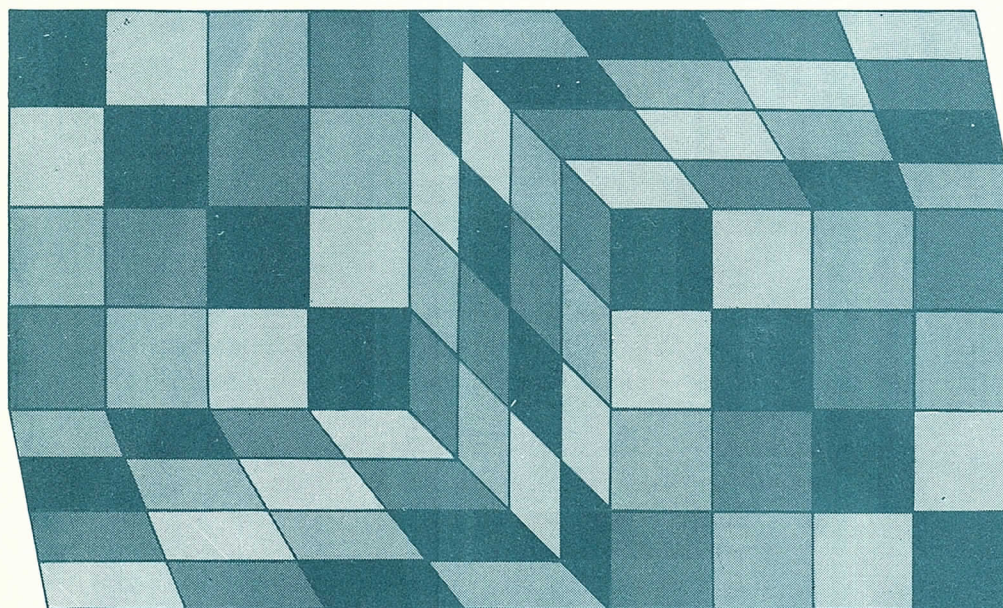
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IMAGE



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**IMAGE** is an occasional journal. It is intended to provide the reader with the insights, models and methods that have emerged directly from the Institute's fifteen years of experimentation and research in contextual re-education, social reformulation and human motivation. Each issue is an **IMAGE** of a style of life for the universal human citizens of tomorrow's world. Price: \$1.00. Additional copies \$.50 each.

NUMBER NINE

JUNE, 1970

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*The publication of this issue of IMAGE is a sign of a major turning point in the life and work of the staff of The Ecumenical Institute and in the course of the Church in the twentieth century. In the last two years the staff of the Institute, as a research body on behalf of the whole Church, has been struggling with the implications of the global cultural crisis as it has been illuminated by recent events that have shattered the composure of every human being who is sensitive to what is going on. Such events have signaled the collapse of the optimistic social activism that characterized the mood of the Church in the sixties.*

*Today the man of faith is raising again the deep questions of human destiny that drive him back to reflect on his interior solitary existence. And it is here that he experiences the confusion and frustration that illuminate the depth human need to re-contextualize all over again what it means to pray in the twentieth century, or better, what it means to be a religious man in a totally secular context. Every man knows that prayer is not some kind of spiritual magic. The crucial need is to rediscover what prayer is.*

*The deep question of what it means to create a new secular piety for the twentieth century religious man has compelled the research staff of The Ecumenical Institute to undertake a depth examination of the devotional life of the individual, or the solitary religious practices of meditation, contemplation and prayer. The theoretical research and practical experimentation in the corporate life of the staff have been systematically organized in the following document on the solitary religious life. This issue of IMAGE is offered, however, not as a presentation of completed research in the form of a finished model, but rather as an invitation to participate along with us in the shaping of the new religious mode of existence through the creation of a solitary office that orders the solitary life of every man. This document, in its present form of a working paper, is offered to our friends and colleagues who have deeply struggled with prayer in their lives as a crucial dimension of being human.*

*The chaos of our times demands that spirit men forge out methods to enable the emergence of the spirit dynamic in every human life. The research of the Institute in the religious dimension has since its beginning dealt with the practical methods of enabling human spirit decisions. The imperative to share this particular aspect of the continuing research reflects the demand in our day to create the new religious life style for the new global man.*

*We urge your own participation in responding to this imperative through your own practice of the solitary office and we invite your comments on the document particularly in the light of your own experience.*



## THE NECESSITY OF THE SOLITARY

### *THE TASK OF THE RELIGIOUS*

1. Man in the twentieth century has experienced a profound alteration in the basic images of reality by which he lives. As he encounters explosive change across the globe he cannot escape the awareness that the new world has called radically into question every political and economic system and every symbolic universe that has sustained human society in the past.
2. The crisis of today is a crisis in humanness itself. It raises the question of what it means to be a human being who is present to the sheer mystery of his existence in a universe radically different from the past. It demands that humanness be invented anew through the creation of symbols which articulate man's experience of his relationships.
3. The signal contribution of religion in any era is in its invention of humanness. Authentic religion offers recognition of final mystery: it articulates that "otherness" man is finally faced with. It offers man a symbolic universe as a context for dealing self-consciously with his life experience. Authentic religion creates a story which articulates the secret of fully human existence. It becomes the life story by which selfhood or un-selfhood is measured. Authentic religion creates a life style that relates man's self-understanding to his practical decision-making.
4. The form in which humanness is articulated is the religious metaphor or poetic image that is born from the consciousness of one's consciousness—from the process of reflecting on one's self-awareness. It is the primordial or *ur* image which captures for a particular cultural ethos a mode of existence in relation to man's encounter with the mysteriousness of life. The primordial *ur* image bridges the gap between one's idea of life and his practical life decisions, allowing one's subjective response to be synthesized with the objective situation in a concrete life response.
5. The task of the religious, the People of God, is to create humanness out of chaos. The religious must perceive the chaos of the times and out of his self-consciousness must construct the life metaphor that articulates a religious mode, or a way for every man to be human in the midst of history.



## THE NEW RELIGIOUS MODE

6. Man in the twentieth century is becoming aware of a basic mutation in human consciousness and thus in the basic *ur* images that have defined humanness. For the first time in history mankind is experiencing a universal upheaval in consciousness: every continent, every people, every individual, and every stage of life is affected. For the first time in history man is aware that he *creates* his own self-consciousness. This mutation in humanness was born out of the global cultural revolutions of the twentieth century.

7. The revolution in common sense has given man a scientific comprehension of the universe and altered his images of human participation in it. The revolution in common style has shifted the basic orientation of man from images reflecting past patterns to the creation of future possibilities. Under the impact of accelerating social change the simple rhythms of nature, the intimate, and the provincial have given way to the complexity of historical variation, the anonymous, and the comprehensive. Today the entire world is an emerging cosmopolis in form and mentality. The revolution in common mood of man has replaced the assumed authority of the past with intentional temporal models forged out of the insight of the times as a means of determining the future.

8. Man in the twentieth century experiences the demand to create his own future by creating his own self-consciousness, and thus the demand for a new religious mode of existence articulated through the self-conscious transformation of the basic *ur* images by which he lives. He is aware that he has grasped his humanness out of a particular primordial invention which is only one of several *ur* images emphasizing different, though equally significant, aspects of what it means to be human. This awareness is the first step in creating a new, universal invention of humanness embodying the gifts of all the *ur* images in a new religious mode.

9. A religious mode, in any age, is that ethos of a time and a people by which man is related to the final mystery of existence itself. It is that style out of which his every relationship is defined. It is that ground out of which he is enabled to forge his own particular self-understanding. The religious mode demanded in the last third of the twentieth century is for the first time not the mode of a people but the mode of all peoples. Nothing less than a universal religious mode is demanded of our time.



10. Every religious mode is expressed concretely in social structures, or it becomes an esoteric system or abstraction that is not a mode of existence. A religious mode is embodied in the social vehicle which holds it in being. In order to change a given complex of social structures it is necessary to revolutionize the mindset which sustains it. It is the transformation of human spirit through the bringing into being of a new religious mode which gives man permission to invent a new social vehicle.

11. Today the demand upon every human being is to participate in creating the new global political, economic, and cultural structures of a social vehicle that will offer the possibility of humanness to every man. Those men of the spirit who respond to this demand—the People of God—know that the only strategy that will make possible the creation of a new social vehicle for the globe is the intentional creation of a new religious mode that is the spirit revolution itself. The decision to embody this new religious mode in one's solitary being, his corporate being, and his spirit journey is that without which nothing new is created in history.

#### *THE SOLITARY OFFICE*

12. Every man in every age, regardless of his social and religious context, stands present to the totality of existence in three fundamental ways. He is driven to order the chaos that surrounds him, to extend his consciousness to the edge of the knowable, to continue his journey of increasing the sphere of consciousness. He is also driven to accomplish, to give meaning to his life through participation in society, to grasp his significance as related to ever-broadening the scope of his action.

13. Yet knowing and doing are finally not adequate ways of describing man. He discovers in knowing that he knows nothing, and that all of his knowing throws him over the abyss. He grasps all his doing as impotent, and thus all his doing throws him over the abyss. He is the one who is unsynonymous with his knowing and his doing, yet his being is the intensification of both which utterly transforms them. Man's being is a style whereby he stands present to all of his life and therein creates history—a style which in our day is that of transparency.



These facts are imperious; they cannot be wished away. They cannot be prayed or cursed out of existence.

It is as futile to ignore them as to run away from them. We have no choice, then, but to come to terms with them. It is surely clearer every day that the times have caught up with us but we have not caught up with the times.

—John Cogley

What is needed is a chance to rearrange the elements of the Western vision.

Carl Oglesby





We will not reach that goal today or tomorrow. Perhaps we will not reach it until the end of our life. But seeking it is the greatest adventure of our age. We may be impatient at times with the weight of our obligations, the complexity of decision, the agony of choice. But for us there is no comfort or security in evasion, no solution in abdication, and no release in irresponsibility.

—John F. Kennedy

It is the loneliness of a man who knows he will not live to see the mystery of life solved, and who, furthermore, has come to believe it will not be solved when the first humanly synthesized particle begins—if it ever does—to multiply itself in some unknown solution. It is really a matter, I suppose, of the kind of questions one asks himself.

—Loren Eiseley

The judgment of the future upon the present is not a matter of claiming allegiance to certain abstract eternal values or ideals, but of quite specific technological and political goals. They are defined and given concreteness in the midst of the dialogue between our vision of man and of what he can become and the situation in which we find ourselves.

—Richard Shaull





14. Man in the twentieth century experiences his existence as radical discontinuity with all he has known, done, or been. As he faces the collapse of his knowing and the frustration of his doing, he is driven to raise the question of his being anew out of the explosion of new depths in his self-consciousness. Every human being has been thrown into a depth struggle against the primordial mystery at the center of life itself. That struggle is finally a solitary struggle in which the new face of God is created by man's solitary primal decisions and those alone.

15. Humanness always manifests itself in myth, rite, and symbol which hold any religious mode in being and are manifestations of that mode. Man in the twentieth century, having been thrown into his solitary struggle with the mystery of his existence, experiences with every solitary man in history the demand to forge a solitary office which will hold him before the white hot intensity of the final mystery.

16. The solitary office is that human act that is at the very core of both the religious mode and the social vehicle of the times. It is a particular enactment whereby the religious mode is created and sustained. The myths, rites, and symbols of a people are discovered and created by those human beings who shape the consciousness of a time and place. At the same time the religious mode is the primary context in which a solitary office is performed; the office itself is informed by and takes its shape from the mode in which it is enacted. The Moslem shalom six times a day could come into being only in the Islamic religious mode.

17. The solitary office is simultaneously that human act which creates and sustains the social vehicle of a people. As that unique, unrepeatable act of the will is performed, it concretizes the religious mode in selfhood, demanding a spirit decision to create a new politics, economics, education, symbol, and style. The social vehicle in turn prescribes the context within which that spirit decision is forged. The psychotic is the person whose solitary is out of step with his society. Revolution takes place by means of those solitaires done on the rim of the psychotic abyss, unrelated to the social vehicle of the day, while at the same time the revolutionary remains utterly a part of that vehicle. The solitary office is the core of the spirit discipline of the People of God at any given moment in history, and manifests itself in a covenantal rule with colleagues and reality itself.

18. Man in the twentieth century stands as a solitary being before the awesome task of creating that which never was. The solitary office is that spirit exercise by which he decides to be the being that history demands.



## THE GROUND OF THE SOLITARY OFFICE

### INTRODUCTION

19. All men everywhere have always engaged themselves in the solitary dimension of humanness. Wherever there is humanness, there is the solitary. Man's participation in the solitary dimension of life is realized as he conducts a solitary office. The solitary office is grounded in a human decision and thus in a life stance.

### HISTORICAL GROUND

20. Man has always struggled with those powers that are present in the midst of his world. The struggle became human when a given power was met and manipulated. These human deeds were the spirit acts by which the human was invented. In ancient times these solitary struggles produced the *ur* images of the world. As human civilization began to take its classical forms, the solitary as a human act took on a creative role in shaping the culture of an entire continent of people. The Hindu focus on contemplation—the self becoming one with the All through servitude, rulership, detachment, and freedom—produced the social vehicle of the Indian subcontinent. The caste system is built on that depth human wisdom about the basic spirit relations a human being has to life. The Greek philosopher likewise shaped Western civilization. His meditation gave rational ordering to the multiple relationships that make up any individual's life, as in the roles of artisan, warrior, administrator, and philosopher king of Plato's *Republic*. Christian monastics gave form to Western civilization through the activity of prayer. As they held themselves at attention before the daily struggles of a prefect, a family, a school, or a hospital, the particular way they ordered their consciousness expressed itself in concrete social structures. In modern society the solitary has taken on a highly secularized form. Western missionaries—both Christian and colonial—took their secular mores to the non-Western world and created the basis for the response of the other inventions of humanness—black, brown, red, tan, and yellow—which signaled the demise of Western civilization. Thus the non-Western man, whose solitary called Western dominance radically into question, created the possibility of a totally new global social vehicle. The universal secular citizens of the twentieth century have even done their solitaries self-consciously in such a way as to produce signs of the new planetary society. Gandhi's solitary gave freedom to the nations of India. Dag Hammarskjöld's *Markings* gave dignity to an embryonic world government. Lumumba's poetic exhortations freed Africa,



and in Oriental civilization in the short space of twenty years human spirit has created Communist China. It was the solitary by which Mao Tse-tung lifted the Chinese nation from feudalism to the point of capturing the imagination of the voiceless people of the world.

#### EXISTENTIAL GROUND

21. *The solitary is that human act whereby history itself is forged.* Although history is finally created only by a body of individuals who unite themselves in a common deed, it is the individual's spirit decision that gives particular shape to human life. Every decision has its own unique form, and that form is determined in the act of the solitary. Human beings are basically related to raw existence or nature, to society or other human beings, and to the spirit dimension or the matrix of intentionality. As a people who have decided to stand before the final mystery—the enigmatic power that drives man this way and that—the solitary People of God call that power Father, taking a relation to that power as the source of their very being. *The solitary is that act that releases man from all those vain imaginings that draw him away from that life decision.* As a people who have decided to embrace their lives as they are exposed by that event that destroys their illusions about life, the People of God know that their real life is affirmed in the Word of that event. *The solitary is that act whereby all other words about life are relativized and made subservient to the Word.* As a people who have decided to live out their lives as utterly free people who are utterly obedient to the way life is, the People of God are thus finally responsible for forging the destiny of mankind. *The solitary is that act whereby they individually actualize that responsibility.*

#### PHENOMENOLOGICAL GROUND

22. In the depths of human existence the solitary deals with the relationship which human beings take to the structure of being-in-itself. Man becomes human only before the final mystery of life that is totally unsynonymous with his existence. Humanness begins at the moment a human being is faced with *the dread of non-being*. When man faces the fact of his death—that his existence is nothing more than a burst of energy into the great abyss—then it is that he becomes human. It is by means of the solitary that he faces non-being concretely. All abstract considerations of death in the world do not enable man to be the human being that he is. *The solitary is an act of the will whereby man looks clearly at his death and therefore at the death of all things.* And that deed is dread-filling. But he also emerges as a conscious being before *the dread of being*. The depth human fear that pervades all human



Ho! Ye Sun, Moon, Stars,  
all that move in the heavens,  
I bid you hear me!  
Into your midst hath come a new life.  
Consent ye, I implore!  
Make its path smooth,  
that it may reach the brow of the first hill.

Ho! All ye of the heavens,  
all ye of the air, all ye of the earth,  
I bid you all hear me!  
Into your midst hath come a new life.  
Consent ye all, I implore!  
Make its path smooth,  
then shall it travel beyond the hills.

—Omaha Indians

Touch ultimate emptiness,  
Hold steady and still.  
All things work together:

When you know  
What eternally is so,  
You have stature  
And stature means righteousness  
And righteousness is kingly  
And divinity is the Way  
Which is final.

Then, though you die,  
You shall not perish.

—Lao Tzu





lives is the fear of the "just-thereness" of life. Man is always going about imagining that one day he will live, that today he is not yet living. But the way life is is that his life is his life just as it is given. When he faces that, he lives. *The solitary is that act by which man brings his total attention, his total existence to bear on the facticity of his life.* When this occurs, new life or resurrected life, life in all its fullness, rushes into his existence. This experience in life is the deepest dread of all, as man sees that he is in fact a new man. The man of faith knows that his only choice is suicide or crucifixion. *The solitary is that act by which he makes that decision over and over again.* And yet in the midst of the dread of life, humanness emerges at the same time as a *depth fascination* before the final mystery. As a human being faces the primordial chaos, he is *utterly fascinated by non-being*. Man faces his death and becomes absorbed with dying that death. *The solitary is that act whereby he moves into that absorption.* Humanness also comes to be when man faces his "showed-upness" and becomes *utterly fascinated by being* or by creation itself. His task is to respond to that fascination with death and showed-upness by affirming a world in perpetual change. To speak confessionally, it is only in his response, his *eager* response to the Lord of history, that man becomes a full human being. *This response is the solitary.* In dread and fascination is found the deep human *awe* that enables human beings to be human. The solitary office is an individual rite which confronts man with the nothingness of life as well as the somethingness of life. Awe is experienced before everything that is when man stands as fully human. The solitary deals with the phenomenology of all existence, and in so doing creates life in all its manifestations.

### CONCLUSION

23. The secular, revolutionary, and universal world of the twentieth century demands that man today bring into existence a new solitary office. The imperative of the transmutation of consciousness—whereby man consciously forms his own consciousness—is the imperative to create a new symbolic life. The solitary office is the center of that new consciousness of consciousness of consciousness. The secular world demands that man intentionally forge out those symbols and patterns of relationships which allow him to decide his own life freely as he knows it grounded in all of history. The revolutionary world demands that man constantly forge new structures of civilization within a corporate group. The new solitary office must enable the revolutionary stance. It must also enable man to participate as a universal man by being the source and expression of his decision to stand before the mystery in the Word that all of life—all of creation—is received and good as it is. The symbolic life of the solitary is that which will finally sustain the secular, revolutionary, and universal which is humanness itself.



## THE CONSTRUCT OF THE SOLITARY OFFICE

### INTRODUCTION

24. Three fundamental dimensions of man's solitary struggle have formed his solitary office throughout the ages. In *contemplation* man encounters the abyss in which he stands utterly present to the final mystery at the center of life. In *meditation* man encounters a host of colleagues in the solitary struggle, allowing their insights to inform his struggle. In *prayer* man encounters the demands of history, lifting before his gaze the past and present as they focus on the future of civilization and assuming responsibility for all that will be.

25. The construct of the solitary office corresponds to the solitary experience of life in which man grasps after the deeps of existence through the human activities of meditation, contemplation, and prayer. Though these activities intermingle in life and are interrelated in the solitary office, they are here treated as three distinct entities, designed intentionally to hold man present to the totality of life. The task of creating consciousness in the twentieth century always requires comprehensive structuring of the symbolic life, which exposes man to the depth and breadth of human experience as he encounters the primordial deeps and the enigmatic future.

### MEDITATION

26. As man faced the assault of the future which demanded life and death decisions of him, one of the ways he coped with this demand to face the unknown was through reflecting on the wisdom of his "ancestors." Every man has ancestors whose lives, deeds, and sayings inform his imagination and consciousness. To meditate is to reflect self-consciously on one's actual and projected relation to those who inform his imagination. The issue for man in the twentieth century is disclosed in the fact that he is free to create his own conscience, to choose who will and who will not be his imaginal ancestors.





If it had been a question in my lifetime of choosing a spiritual guide, a *guru* as the Hindus say, a *father* as say the monks at Mount Athos, surely I would have chosen Zorba. I watched Zorba dance and whinny in the middle of the night, heard him call me to leap up in my own turn from the agreeable heaven of prudence and custom in order to depart with him on great voyages from which there was no return, and there I sat, motionless and shivering. I have been ashamed many times in my life because I caught my soul not daring to do what supreme folly—the essence of life—called on me to do. But never felt so ashamed of my soul as I did in front of Zorba.

—Nikos Kazantzakis

At that time I had a chance to read Thomas Merton's autobiography. Despite my rejection of Merton's theistic world view, I could not keep him out of the room. He shouldered his way through the door. Welcome, Brother Merton. I give him a bear hug. Most impressive of all to me was Merton's description of New York's black ghetto—Harlem. I used to keep his passage in mind when delivering lectures to other prisoners. Whenever I felt myself softening, relaxing, I had only to read that passage to become once more a rigid flame of indignation. I vibrate sympathetically to any protest against tyranny.

—Eldredge Cleaver



# meditation

# contemp

Formal Categories Phenom- enological Categories	Personal Absolution  MEDIATOR  Permission	Interior Accountability  PRIOR  Demand	Existential Guidance  SAINT  Exemplification	Missional Comradeship  COLLEAGUE  Collaboration	Formal Categories Phenom- enological Categories	Enigmatic Not-me-ness  EXTERNALITY  Other	Fearful Never-again-ness  ARCHAISM  Past
THE IMPACT signals from the neighbor	Word-bearing  Priest	Unfailing  Prompter	Revered  Hero	Destinal  Elector	THE ENCOUNTER intrusion of the mystery	Dangerous  Intrusion	Wonder-filled  Fate
THE ADDRESS concretion of the impingement	Radiant  Guru	Concerned  Judge	Scorching  Avatar	Primordial  Ancestor	THE ENTRAPMENT inescapability of the awareness	Everlasting  Inescapability	Reforged  Transformation
THE DIALOGUE establishing interior community	Persistent  Friend	Universal  Father	Ever-present  Brother	Expectant  Descendant	THE COLLEGIALLY vulnerability before the neighbor	Hallowed  Honor	Sheer  Re-creation
THE COMMUNION interchange with total humanity	Eternal  Savior	Heavenly  Advocate	Guardian  Angel	Divine  Hosts	THE ADORATION ultimate love of being	Being All  The Other	All That  Ever Was



# prayer

<p><i>Awesome Not-yet-ness</i></p> <p><b>FUTURITY</b></p> <p><i>Future</i></p>	<p><i>Dreadful In-myself-ness</i></p> <p><b>DEPTH</b></p> <p><i>Self</i></p>	<p><b>Formal Categories</b></p> <p><b>Phenom- enological Categories</b></p>	<p><i>Perpetual Repentance</i></p> <p><b>CONFESSION</b></p> <p><i>Sin</i></p>	<p><i>Situational Affirmation</i></p> <p><b>GRATITUDE</b></p> <p><i>Dependence</i></p>	<p><i>Unlimited Inadequacy</i></p> <p><b>PETITION</b></p> <p><i>Surrender</i></p>	<p><i>Universal Responsibility</i></p> <p><b>INTERCESSION</b></p> <p><i>Obligation</i></p>	<p><b>General Categories</b></p>
<p><b>Cut-off</b></p> <p><b>Unknownness</b></p>	<p><b>Unexplainable</b></p> <p><b>Thereness</b></p>	<p><b>THE BURDEN</b> <i>acknowledging of responsibility</i></p>	<p><b>Painful</b></p> <p><b>Acknowledgment</b></p>	<p><b>Daring</b></p> <p><b>Embrace ment</b></p>	<p><b>Abject</b></p> <p><b>Helplessness</b></p>	<p><b>Utter</b></p> <p><b>Awareness</b></p>	<p><b>THE ASSENT</b></p>
<p><b>Frightful</b></p> <p><b>Possibility</b></p>	<p><b>Irreplaceable</b></p> <p><b>Uniqueness</b></p>	<p><b>THE PASSION</b> <i>particularizing the concern</i></p>	<p><b>Personal</b></p> <p><b>Violation</b></p>	<p><b>Splendid</b></p> <p><b>Vices</b></p>	<p><b>Representational</b></p> <p><b>Sign</b></p>	<p><b>Particular</b></p> <p><b>Concerns</b></p>	<p><b>THE INVOLVEMENT</b></p>
<p><b>Luminous</b></p> <p><b>Change</b></p>	<p><b>Appropriated</b></p> <p><b>Passion</b></p>	<p><b>THE INTERVENTION</b> <i>decision to shape history</i></p>	<p><b>Besetting</b></p> <p><b>Sin</b></p>	<p><b>Manifold</b></p> <p><b>Blessings</b></p>	<p><b>Imploring</b></p> <p><b>Succor</b></p>	<p><b>Agonizing</b></p> <p><b>Prediction</b></p>	<p><b>THE INWARDNESS</b></p>
<p><b>All That's</b></p> <p><b>Yet to Be</b></p>	<p><b>All Being</b></p> <p><b>In Myself</b></p>	<p><b>THE EXPENDITURE</b> <i>absolute risk of existence</i></p>	<p><b>Heavenly</b></p> <p><b>Sorrow</b></p>	<p><b>Unspeakable</b></p> <p><b>Joy</b></p>	<p><b>Levitational</b></p> <p><b>Submission</b></p>	<p><b>Promissorial</b></p> <p><b>Offering</b></p>	<p><b>THE ECSTATIC</b></p>



27. The construct for meditation includes both formal categories for identifying and selecting friends and phenomenological categories describing levels of experience in meditation. There are four types of meditative friends: (1) Permission-giving friends act as *Mediators* of the Christ-Word, giving man unlimited permission to appropriate the horror and possibility of his life as profoundly significant. (2) Demanding friends act as *Priors* or self-chosen "fathers" who recall man to his unlimited obligation to his neighbor and require that he be present to the universal and particular demand on his life. (3) Style-exemplifying friends, ancient and contemporary, who have embodied a revolutionary life style in forging the future become one's *Saints*. (4) Transpositional friends are one's *Colleagues* of the past who cry out to him to complete their work and who depend on his decision for their historical existence.

28. The phenomenological levels of encounter with one's imaginal friends are, first, the initial *Impact*; secondly, the *Address*; thirdly, the *Dialogue*; and finally the *Communion*. The ever-deepening life responses to the address of friends begin at the first level with the "hearing" of what is being said. Having intentionally held himself open to this address at the second level, the meditator then enters into dialogue at the third level, saying "yes" and "no" as the free man he is. At the level of communion the friends join forces and become one in new-found knowledge.

29. The selection of spirit friends is facilitated by a comprehensive space/time chart. One might possibly select friends on a daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis. The typology suggested here would fit a daily selection, with seven temporal categories and four spatial categories. The seven temporal categories would include futuric friends (imagined, e.g. 2050 A.D.), contemporaries, friends from modern history, the medieval period, ancient history, organic life and inorganic matter from the primordial past, and mythical friends. The four spatial categories would include the West, the East, the South, and the Cosmos (e.g. Planet "X" in Galaxy 0537). Inclusiveness is enhanced in the space/time chart by the identification of roles such as teachers, actors, intimates, and the People of God. Types of media through which one encounters friends include literary works, art objects, and recordings. The task of comprehensively ordering and intentionally selecting spirit friends for the practice of meditation in the solitary office requires sensitivity to one's own spirit deeps, the historical drama, and especially to the ordering of time for post-modern man in the secular world.



# sociality

# MEDITATION

# knowing

## Formal Categories

## Phenomenological Categories

### *Personal Absolution* **MEDIATOR** *Permission*

The mediator articulates the permission-giving Word about my life as a non-authoritative authority, absolving me to participate in the struggle of my life.

### *Interior Accountability* **PRIOR** *Demand*

The prior assumes total responsibility for enabling my involvement, standing as the detached one and holding me accountable as my spirit mentor.

### *Existential Guidance* **SAINT** *Exemplification*

The saint is always before and beside me as the exemplar of the cruciform life style, guarding and guiding me on my spirit journey.

### *Missional Comradeship* **COLLEAGUE** *Collaboration*

The colleague is the comrade who stands with me in the desert, my collaborator who conspires with me to be mission to civilization.

### THE IMPACT

The impact of an encounter with a historical friend occurs as his life impinges on mine, creating an awareness of my illusions or reductionisms.

### WORD-BEARING PRIEST

My mediator impacts me as priest, the one who in his lucidity about the Word holds me over against the universal context and gives me permission to say "yes" to my life.

### UNFAILING PROMPTER

My prior impacts me as prompter, the watchman who embodies a selective and timely presence of the Word, rule, and style in pointing to an already exposed necessity.

### REVERED HERO

My saint impacts me as the hero who provides both a focus for my existence and an operating image out of which to live my life; yet in that exaltation I am cut off from him.

### DESTINAL ELECTOR

My elector is the colleague who impacts my life by continually reminding me of my calling, for he will not let me forget my decision to be the chosen one in history.

### THE ADDRESS

The address occurs in the depth encounter with another who calls into question my entire life and demands that I take a new relationship to my particular situation.

### RADIANT GURU

My mediator addresses the concretions of my life as the guru who is privy to my inner being, and whose authentic style reflects his interior appropriation of the Word.

### CONCERNED JUDGE

My prior addresses me as judge, the inspector who accuses me of violating my decision to live out of our common stance and holds me accountable for my life choices.

### SCORCHING AVATAR

The address of my saint as avatar is scorching; yet I become his obedient lieutenant and embody his style with the knowledge that my existence depends upon him.

### PRIMORDIAL ANCESTOR

Those spirit ancestors on whose stance in the Word my life depends become my colleagues, for their accomplishments are mine and they depend on me to complete their work.

### THE DIALOGUE

The dialogue occurs when I and the other, bound by a common conscience, engage in an intense struggle in which every response confronts me with consciousness of the mystery.

### PERSISTENT FRIEND

I appropriate my mediator as friend, the one who out of his lucidity about the particularities of my life persistently engages me in dialogue about the way life is.

### UNIVERSAL FATHER

When I receive my prior as father he nurtures me by his wisdom, celebrating my broken existence, recalling me to my expanding vocation, and sending me forth to be a son of the universe.

### EVER-PRESENT BROTHER

The saint with whom I experience mutual responsibility becomes my brother—he who names my name and whose name I name—for it is with him that I struggle to create.

### EXPECTANT DESCENDANT

My descendants become my colleagues as I dialogue with the vision of the future and those whose own future depends on whether I stand as a comprehensive, responsible man.

### THE COMMUNION

The communion occurs before the gaze of all of history as the past, present, and future converge in my decision to be totally related to the social nature of all existence.

### ETERNAL SAVIOR

I commune with my mediator as eternal savior; we passionately embody the one absolution of all of life by joyously submitting to the cruciform style that transcends time and space.

### HEAVENLY ADVOCATE

My prior as heavenly advocate before all of history holds me finally accountable for the past and future and delivers the verdict in the Word in which there is no condemnation.

### GUARDIAN ANGEL

Through wrestling with the saint who is my guardian angel, I am permanently branded with the Word through which he works his miracles, and we become one.

### DIVINE HOSTS

At the point of radical discontinuity, the mystery itself becomes my colleague as all of the past, present, and future of existence converge in my life and I become all-knowing in myself.

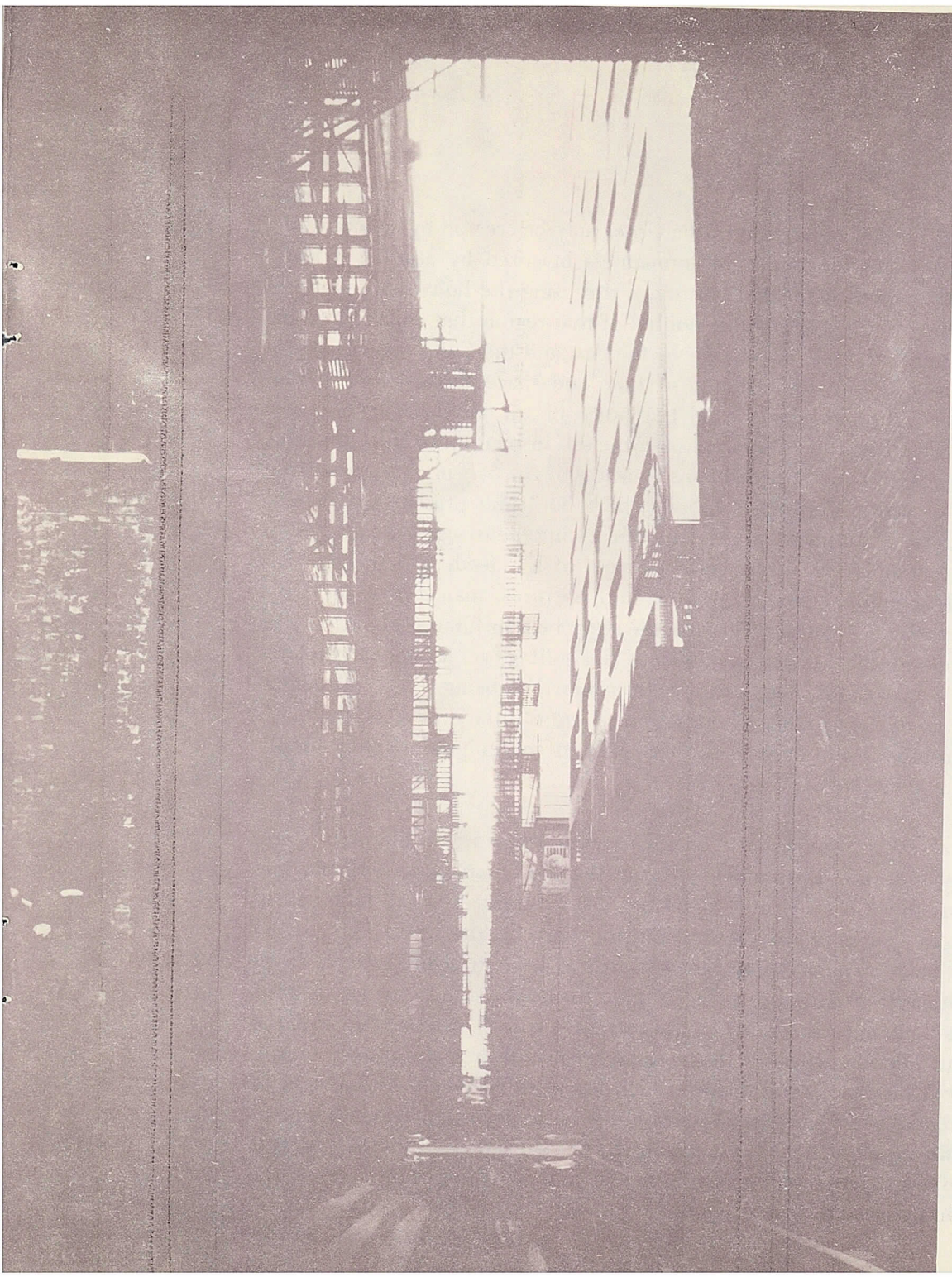


### CONTEMPLATION

30. Contemplation is the activity in which the self probes the depths of its being as being-in-relation to the mystery of all that is. Contemplation is designed to bring to consciousness the struggle to be one's being while aware of the utter objectivity of one's encounter with the mystery. The content and method of contemplation are designed to bring this awareness to consciousness through the disciplined focus of body, mind, and spirit on a particular myth, rite, and symbol.

31. The construct for contemplation includes both formal categories for ordering the reality which is encountered in the act of contemplation and phenomenological categories describing levels of experience in contemplation. The attention of the self is engaged in contemplation of its relationships to the *Other*, the *Past*, the *Future*, and the *Self* through methods which push consciousness beyond rationality to a depth encounter with the mystery.





I am being driven forward  
Into an unknown land.  
The pass grows steeper,  
The air grows colder and sharper.  
A wind from my unknown goal  
Stirs the strings  
Of expectation.  
Still the question:  
Shall I ever get there?  
There where life resounds,  
A clear pure note  
In the silence.

It occurs to you in a flash: *I might just as well never have existed.* Other people, however, seeing you with a guaranteed salary, a bank account, and a briefcase under your arm, assume that you take your existence for granted. *What* you are can be of interest to them, not *that* you are.

—Dag Hammarskjöld



32. A new consciousness of the self in relation to the *Other* may be created by encountering one of the *ur* images expressing the depth of humanness invented by another culture, through the use of a story or myth from that culture, a rite using the body in a gesture or posture unique to that people, or a geographical symbol of that region that enhances global awareness. Man's perception of the self in relation to the *Past* and the *Future* is heightened as he stands self-consciously before the totality of time and space through symbols of another historical period or through the use of the body in the rhythmic and spatial dimensions of the dance. This heightened awareness of the self in relation to the *Other*, the *Past*, and the *Future* brings about an expanded consciousness of the *Self* in relation to itself in its knowing, doing, and being. Through symbols which hold him present to what he knows, such as a rood screen or montage, man grasps the comprehensiveness and depth of his knowing. Through contemplation of the effectiveness of his deeds and through the strain, tension, and pain of extreme bodily gestures and postures, man senses anew the physical dimension of the self in its doing. Through the story he tells himself about who he is in the midst of these relationships and in the midst of this solitary act as he contemplates his style, his stance, and his decisions, man struggles to perceive his being. Thus contemplation increases consciousness of the mystery of the self in relation to the otherness, the "not-meness" of all its relationships. Methods such as these are not contemplation; they simply create the possibility of the contemplative act.

33. The phenomenological levels of experience of one's relationships in contemplation are, first, the *Encounter*; second, the *Entrapment*; third, the *Collegiality*; and finally the *Adoration*. St. John of the Cross wrote a classic description of what happens in contemplation using the categories of the Preparation, the Descent, the Dark Night of the Soul, and the Ecstasy. Initially man encounters anew his life as it is. Struggling again with all that is there, he knows himself as a strange being of unknown future and ungracious past. He falls, perhaps, into an immediate sensing of the offensive dread, the shame, and the emptiness of the moment. There may follow that raw experience of the painful uncertainty, the inevitability, and the total chaos of all being, which has been called the Dark Night of the Soul. The final awareness which may sometimes occur is the transfigurational moment in which all is seen as *one* through the ecstatic vision (or decision) that all that is, just as it is, is good. Then life comes together as one fabric as the solitary office culminates in the transparency of the self in the ecstatic love of God.



# mystery

# CONTEMPLATION

# being

## Formal Categories

## Phenomenological Categories

*Enigmatic Not-me-ness*

### EXTERNALITY

*Other*

Externality is the awareness of an enigmatic Other-than-I, an incomprehensible, uncontrollable, wierd "not-me-ness" in my life.

*Fearful Never-again-ness*

### ARCHAISM

*Past*

Archaism is the mysterious, irretrievable, fearful never-again-ness which birthed man and continues to build man, and which is constantly rewritten in his memory.

*Awesome Not-yet-ness*

### FUTURITY

*Future*

Futurity is the anticipation of the awesome "beyond-the-now" which demands that it be created, yet promises to remain the unreachable "not-yet."

*Dreadful In-myself-ness*

### DEPTH

*Self*

Depth is the consciousness that arises out of the wonder- and dread-filled mystery in the I, as it consciously relates to the other, past, and future.

## THE ENCOUNTER

The encounter is the experience of the first crashing awareness of the discontinuity in life in which my universe is destroyed and my entire life is called into radical question.

## DANGEROUS INTRUSION

Intrusion of the external takes place whenever the Other impinges upon my life as judgment; in this intrusion I encounter the mystery itself, responding in rebellion or acceptance.

## WONDER-FILLED FATE

I encounter the mystery in the past as fate, the awareness of history as the unchangeable, irretrievable, unknowable, and tragic "gone-ness" which has decided who I am.

## CUT-OFF UNKNOWNNESS

As I anticipate the future I experience myself as being cut off—determined by fate and having no power in the face of what is totally unknown and uncontrollable.

## UNEXPLAINABLE THERENESS

The encounter with the mystery of myself is the stark awareness that I am unexplainably and unrepeatably in history just as I am, and that therefore history claims me.

## THE ENTRAPMENT

The entrapment is the experience of realizing there is no escape from the surrounding abyss in the midst of my concrete involvement in history.

## EVERLASTING INESCAPABILITY

As I realize in conscious despair that I cannot hide from my situation, and that the mystery is unavoidably everywhere, a decision about my life is inescapable.

## REFORGED TRANSFORMATION

My entrapment by the mystery of the past is transformed as I realize my guilt and shame in being bound to history and in saying "yes" to the past am free to participate in it.

## FRIGHTFUL POSSIBILITY

In experiencing the wild possibility of the unlimited arbitrariness of the future, I am entrapped by the demand to bring to order what is unknown and create the form of the future.

## IRREPLACEABLE UNIQUENESS

I am entrapped by the mystery of the self as I realize that my particular, most intimate, unknown self is unavoidably all I have and is the unique possibility which is mine.

## THE COLLEGIALLY

In the midst of being bound to my limitingness the collegiality is my decision to embody it totally as my very being and so realize communion with the limiting power.

## HALLOWED HONOR

Collegiality with the other is acknowledging the intrusion as a gift, honoring the other and recognizing my common thrust with every other and my dependence on the final "not-me."

## SHEER RE-CREATION

The collegiality with the mystery in the past is my awareness that I am responsible for and embody the past; thus my past is re-created, and I use that past to create the future.

## LUMINOUS CHANGE

I become radical change as I embody the unknown as the one responsible for its creation in communion with the "not-yet," and my whole life becomes the anticipation of the future.

## APPROPRIATED PASSION

Collegiality with the unrepeatable mystery of myself comes as I choose to live the horror that I am and passionately expend the possibility which is myself.

## THE ADORATION

The adoration is my intentional transformation toward total appropriation of all that is, which brings the recognition of having unlimited freedom.

## BEING ALL THE OTHER

As I embrace all that is not-me, aware that all there is finally is mystery, I am completely free to act only for the other and say in fear and fascination, "I am the universe."

## ALL THAT EVER WAS

The adoration of the mystery in the past is experienced as I appropriate all the past and complete it by totally re-creating it and becoming all that ever was in myself.

## ALL THAT'S YET TO BE

When I decide to be the unknownness of the future, I experience the boundless creation of tomorrow as my whole life and am united with all that's yet to be.

## ALL BEING IN MYSELF

I become the sign of authentic humanness as I embrace my peculiar showed-up-ness and embody the totality of life in celebrating my uniqueness as I be pure being in myself.



## PRAYER

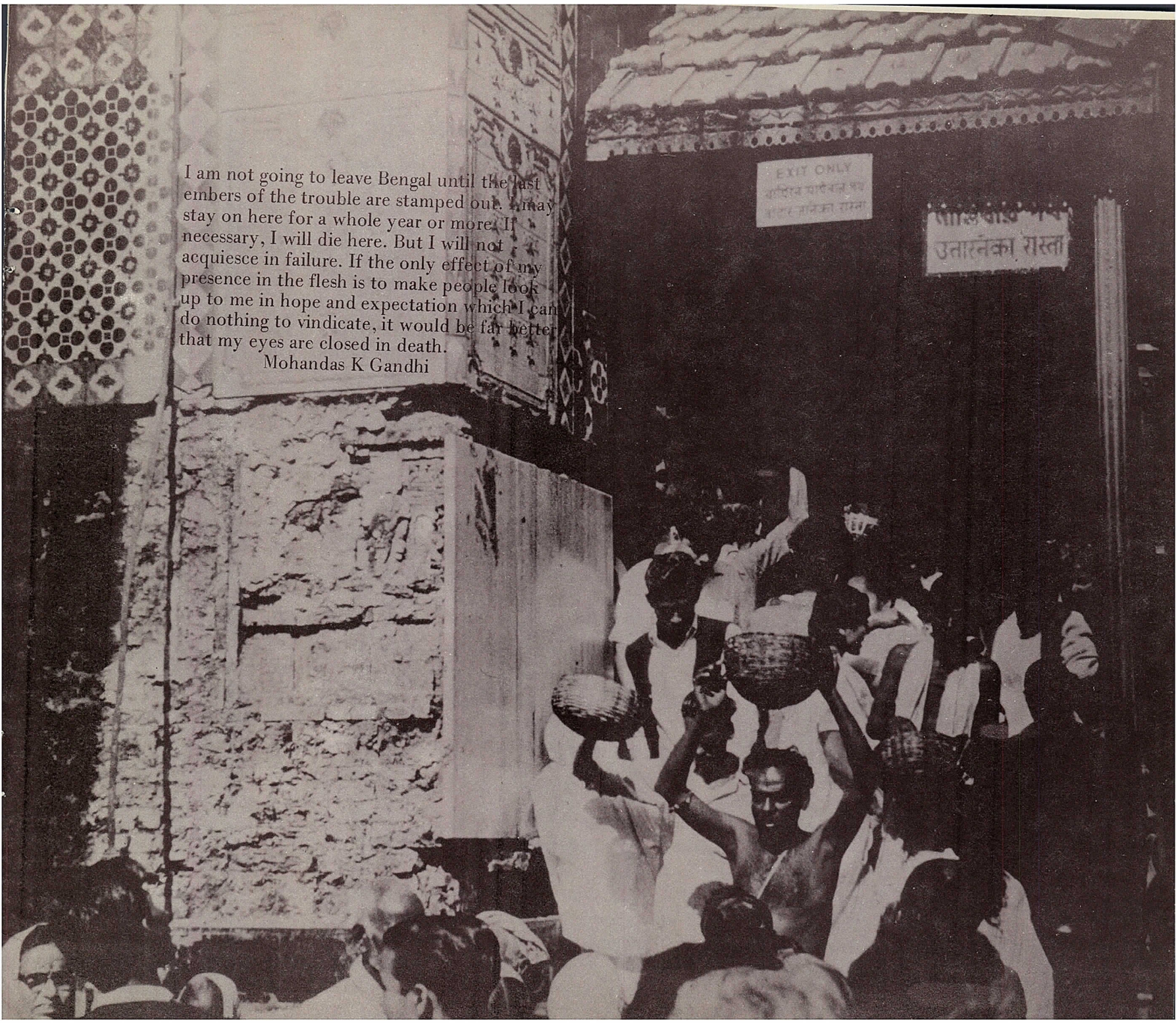
34. As man's life is engaged in creating deeds necessary to civilization, he constantly engages in acts of repentance and acceptance, of gratitude and supplication. This is the prayer life of every man. Prayer in the solitary office is the articulation of that ongoing human activity by which man symbolizes and orders the investiture of his life in the world. In prayer man decides his relationships and thus reveals his life stance as he chooses to be present to the totality of life, past, present, and future. Prayer is the creative freedom that brings to be what never was before. Out of the nothingness at the center of one's being comes something. Prayer is the deep resolve to create humanness in the midst of man's particular situation in which he is overcome by the mystery. No man prays alone; no one creates out of nothing without standing on the shoulders of colleagues from the beginning of humanness itself and within a particular historical community. In prayer man takes responsibility for the future, risking his selfhood in mortal combat with the way life itself is to create a model for what needs to happen. Prayer dares to shift the universe, and yet prayer arises only out of man's awareness of his radical inadequacy and concerns only that which is impossible.

35. The historic practices of prayer, described by the formal categories of *Confession*, *Gratitude*, *Petition*, and *Intercession*, hold one open to the methods by which man has grasped after his creatureliness as he relates to himself, others, and the final mystery. *Confession* is the acknowledgement of the sinfulness of man and one's own participation in that reality. *Gratitude* is the articulation of the decision that the world as it is given is good, and the awareness of the particular givenness of one's life as good. In *Petition* one prays as the church, assuming responsibility for the church's life in its universal, historical, and local forms. In *Intercession* the church takes responsibility for the whole world in the past, present, and future.



I am not going to leave Bengal until the last embers of the trouble are stamped out. I may stay on here for a whole year or more. If necessary, I will die here. But I will not acquiesce in failure. If the only effect of my presence in the flesh is to make people look up to me in hope and expectation which I can do nothing to vindicate, it would be far better that my eyes are closed in death.

Mohandas K Gandhi





36. Through the construct of prayer in the solitary office man recreates and participates in life at the levels of experience described by the phenomenological categories of the *Burden* of the world, the *Passion* of engagement, the *Intervention* in history, and the *Expenditure* of life. The *Burden* is that of realizing the demands of the world upon the man of faith. *Passion* is the awareness that the individual himself is responsible for what is happening. *Intervention* is creating a plan for what is needed in the concrete situation. In *Expenditure* one joyously gives himself to the realization of that prayer in history. To pray authentically is to actualize oneself as one thrust in history.

37. To enable the activity of prayer in the self-conscious practice of the solitary office, men of all cultures and faiths have used a variety of aids including literary constructs, plastic arts, rhythmic instruments, and bodily movements. Prayer books and prayer charts provide a comprehensive model of intercessory concerns, scheduled systematically to hold man intentionally before all aspects of life for which he takes responsibility as a man of faith. The plastic arts provide him with other tools like the rosary, prayer beads, and the prayer wheel, which serve much the same function, while rhythmic instruments like the gong, drum, bell, and rattle provide an emphatic accent to his prayers or guide him through the stages of his spirit exercises. David's psalms of praise were often accompanied by the lute or harp which provided a musical mood or setting for his prayers. Bodily movements such as postures (bowing, kneeling, sitting cross-legged, prostration), gestures (bowed head, clasped or uplifted hands, or outstretched arms), speech (chant, public voice, ecstatic cry, laugh, moan) and the dance (ecstatic whirling of the dervish) accent his responses and enable him to express more fully his deepest struggles as he prays.

### CONCLUSION

38. The structure of the solitary office as meditation, contemplation, and prayer is grounded in man's experience of his humanness. It enables the secular religious man to struggle self-consciously with the depth dimension of his life before the final mystery. Meditation, contemplation, and prayer serve as an intentional form by which man in the post-modern world can create his own consciousness. They are a religious mode of existence for secular society as it grasps after its real source of power and creative impulses.



# freedom

# PRAYER

# doing

## Formal Categories

## Phenomenological Categories

### *Perpetual Repentance* **CONFESSION**

#### *Sin*

Confession is the articulation of lucidity in the Word: seeing my brokenness and pain, I self-consciously acknowledge my guilt and defiance.

### *Situational Affirmation* **GRATITUDE**

#### *Dependence*

Gratitude is acknowledging the Word, embracing the totality of life, responding thankfully for particular blessings and experiencing joy where there is no joy.

### *Unlimited Inadequacy* **PETITION**

#### *Surrender*

In petition I recognize the helplessness of man, yet I identify with the world's corruption, crying desperately for help, and am thus forced to transcend.

### *Universal Responsibility* **INTERCESSION**

#### *Obligation*

In intercession I take responsibility for all that is, interpose my body between my neighbor and the abyss, and point with my deed toward life, becoming pure symbol.

### **THE BURDEN**

The burden is the experience of being driven by my contingency to come to terms with the way life is and being overwhelmed by responsibility for all of life.

### **PAINFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The burden of confession is acknowledging the pain of the world: the failure of the past and present, the fatefulness of the future, and the fact that all of life is finally escape.

### **DARING EMBRACEMENT**

The burden of gratitude is embracing the Word that calls me to accept my acceptance within separation and demands that I receive each situation as a gift and name that final reality.

### **ABJECT HELPLESSNESS**

In petition I recognize that the overwhelmingness of the universe, my helplessness, the inadequacies of man, and the total dependence of all men demand radical trust.

### **UTTER AWARENESS**

In intercession as burden I am utterly aware of my responsibility for the entire world: every problem is my problem, and I am summoned to the task of reconciliation.

### **THE PASSION**

The passion is the interior awareness that I am specifically responsible for concrete individual suffering in the world and the acceptance of the responsibility to decide what is needed.

### **PERSONAL VIOLATION**

The passion of confession is the awareness of my responsibility for a particular situation I have personally violated by my insensitivity and that I am the source of destructiveness.

### **SPLENDID VICES**

The passion of gratitude is the rejoicing in and celebrating of my particular cultural gifts, my own neuroses as my gifts, and the glory of my uniqueness as utterly affirmed.

### **REPRESENTATIONAL SIGN**

Identifying with the world's chaotic helplessness and partaking of its corruption, I as the Church honor the orders of creation and become for the world a sign of the Word.

### **PARTICULAR CONCERN**

In intercession as passion I focus spontaneously upon the one particular problem which most needs my attention at this point in history, daring to decide what history demands.

### **THE INTERVENTION**

The intervention in history is the cry on behalf of all men which is occasioned by my awareness of my utter inability to humanize the world.

### **BESETTING SIN**

In light of this responsibility, my own sins beset me as my neurotic patterns and my everlasting will to escape make heavy the weight of my being and name me chief of sinners.

### **MANIFOLD BLESSINGS**

The intervention in gratitude is thankfulness for all of life as a gift, my many blessings, all the gifts of the world which are mine, and my own life as a gift to the world.

### **IMPLORING SUCCOR**

Knowing my aid depends upon my complete submission before the vicissitudes of existence, I utter my most intimate cry for help, pleading in my personal need for inner strength.

### **AGONIZING PREDICTION**

In intercession I risk intervening in history in agonizing ambiguity by daring to predict what is necessary to create the future before the Lord of History.

### **THE EXPENDITURE**

The expenditure is the ecstatic intentional surrender to the utterly desperate human situation—joy and sorrow, helplessness and entire freedom—in deciding to die, to expend my life.

### **HEAVENLY SORROW**

Confession as expenditure is heavenly sorrow: when the weight of the world demands repentance I become one with the brokenness of life and my life becomes the way of tears.

### **UNSPEAKABLE JOY**

Expenditure in gratitude is to see eternal wholeness within life's brokenness and be at peace in no-peace, transmitting life from the source of existence itself.

### **LEVITATIONAL SUBMISSION**

In the desperation of petition is born the distance that surrenders the burden of the humanly impossible: I witness the reality of the way life is and say, "Not my will but thine be done."

### **PROMISSORIAL OFFERING**

I claim the promise of the future by expending my own body, my death, my vocation, and my nothingness on behalf of all men: here my life and death are pure symbol.



## THE FUNCTION OF THE SOLITARY OFFICE

### INTRODUCTION

39. The solitary office confronts man with his actual life situation as the only context in which he can operate and requires that he make a solitary decision about his relationship to the given situation. Within this confrontation is the objective Word in Jesus Christ, the presence of which proclaims that the situation in which man finds himself is good, received, and approved. The Word thus becomes the imperative that he grasp the actuality of his situation as open to the future. This experience is at the center of the solitary office. One is never without a relationship to his situation. Finally one is related concretely to all of life only through the particularity of his given situation. One's selfhood or humanness is not the basic relation to his situation, but rather is ultimately determined by the manner in which he relates to that basic relation already present. In consciously deciding to relate the self to the already present relationship one experiences self-consciousness. Radical self-consciousness takes place when one relates to his total relationships out of the Word in Jesus Christ in which he self-consciously decides to stand totally present to the total situation in affirmation of that situation as good and necessary. This radical experience is the birth of humanness and its occurrence in human life an objective fact, but the event which is the birth of true creativity is the experience of the solitary office itself. This can be understood only within a threefold context. First, the experience of spirit encounter is the experience of every man. Every man knows to one degree or another that the depths of human experience are to be lived in every concrete situation, and senses the demand to seize his own authentic creativity in every situation. The solitary office allows him to see that his entire life has been one encounter of the spirit after another and that the remainder of his days will be lived before that encounter. Secondly, the experience of human spirit as it is enacted in the solitary office, while being radical, is a very common, everyday experience. It is in fact the core of every experience. It is the everyday struggle at being a human being that is the setting for the spirit life. Finally, the solitary office experience is that experience which thrusts every man's knowledge to the horizon of the universe, engages every man's activity in the demands of all of history, and enables one to stand as a total human being before the unknown depths of the mystery of life itself.





Free at last, free at last! Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last.  
—Martin Luther King, Jr.



## *TRANSPARENT KNOWING*

40. The spirit decision which transforms man's relation to his knowing enables him to spell out with relative clarity the scope of the change in knowing, whether it be in general understanding or in a depth encounter. The new relationship to life in the knowing dimension is ultimately a shift in one's theological stance, a result not essentially of any degree of intellectual endeavor, but rather of the encounter with the Word in Jesus Christ. The result of reducing the solitary office to some level of intellectual astuteness is a form of intellectualism. The solitary office is not primarily an intellectual exercise, but rather a depth reflection of one's total grasp of his function as a knowing being. A much more subtle expression of the reduction to merely the intellectual is what might be called phraseology. This is the reducing of the reality of the solitary office to metaphors. Metaphors are utterly necessary for creative reflection in the solitary life, but if the categories used become tools by which the depth encounter within the office is blocked, then the dynamic vitality is frozen in sterile rigidity. In the richness of the solitary, one grasps his new relationship to life as one of standing present to the transparency of any system of knowing, being aware of the fact that knowing always reduces that which is unreducible, that it orders that which can never finally be ordered, and that it gives meaning to that which is finally mysterious.

## *TRANSPARENT DOING*

41. The spirit decision which transforms man's relation to his doing brings about theologically grounded activity in an archaic, comprehensive, intentional, and futuristic framework. The new relationship to life in the doing dimension implies that concrete action actually takes place in a new way or that a change takes place in the performance of cruciformity. This action, while experienced as a new relationship, is seen in the Christ-Word in which doing becomes transparent to life itself, grounded in the given situation, rendered by the totality of the self, and surrendered in the openness to new demands. Too often the solitary is misunderstood as a ritual to justify whatever action a person happens to be engaged in. This is a subtle form of moralism in which the individual believes that if he does the right ritual his doing will be made more effective. The solitary office is not a manipulation for effective social action. Very closely related is the mistaken idea that the solitary is some form of emotional "pep talk" in which the result is a "great feeling," or a psychological comforter in which one's particular problems find miraculous cure. The solitary office may produce a coming to terms with one's life or the decision about living in spite of one's particular



psychological blocks, but the office is not designed for these purposes. Life is not limited to just exciting experiences, but consists of ever-new decisions about how to act out one's life in relationship to his past in the present situation for the sake of the future.

### *TRANSPARENT BEING*

42. The spirit decision which transforms man's relation to his being is finally the forging of a discernable stance which is self-consciously conceived in the participation of the moment and in the midst of the actual life situation. The stance is the dynamic creating intentional activity in the one who has appropriated his own death. At the same time it is an authentic response found only when the depths of the self are transparent to the perpetual presence of the mystery of life. Because the solitary is always deeply grounded in the concretion of an individual's life, there is a strong temptation to abstract the experience to a plane of unreality, or to enter what might be called esotericism. If the confrontation of the solitary office is contained within the office and no self-conscious relation is made to the givenness of one's life, then the experience is isolated and void of objectivity. When this objectivity is lost often an individual will focus on the artifacts or the "beauty" of the experience itself. The artifacts are tools and the experience the vehicle by which one gains the necessary objectivity to stand in a new relationship to his own struggle. This change in stance in the context of the Christ-Word is not simply a realization of a psychic thereness nor of one's present stance in life, but rather involves a new decision about how one finally stands present to all of life. The solitary office enables man constantly to decide his actual relation to his total situation.

### *CONCLUSION*

43. The solitary office thus finds its significance only in the Word in Jesus Christ, which when brought to consciousness creates new relationships to life. In utilizing the solitary office one must constantly remember that the office is merely that vehicle in and through which one is able to bring to self-consciousness those already-present possibilities of relating in depth to the totality of one's experience. There is a dangerously thin line between this appropriation of the solitary and the many traps that make the solitary office a means of reducing one's response to life. The experience of spirit which is the solitary office is the uncontrolled leap beyond one's narrow self-imposed bounds and the ecstatic plunge below the self-defined shallowness of the particular situation to the mystery at the depth of all of life.



## POSTSCRIPT

44. The solitary office is finally the method by which human beings appropriate their own particular myth, rite, and symbols which enable them to participate in and formulate the time and space about them. Rather than living out of many stories which he adapts to the convenience of the moment, man consciously puts together out of human heritage a cosmic story out of which he can live fully. Yet no man can construct such a myth willy-nilly as he chooses; he constructs or discovers it amid some community in history. This is finally the eschatological community. But no one lives in a myth; it is crucial that every man participate in a rite, a high ritual, through which he is regularly and constantly held over against the mystery, depth, and greatness of his existence. The solitary office is such a rite, and it always stands as that avenue through which his wild interior struggle lives anew through the cosmic myth. Finally a man cannot maintain his humanness unless his life is pervaded by symbols. Symbols are those entities from which there is no escape. They move us beyond the immediacies of our own particular lives to the boundary of existence itself in order that the human depths we share with all human beings can be experienced in every specific encounter of our lives. The solitary office is at one and the same time the means by which our myth is retold, our rite is re-enacted, and our symbols are held before us.