

PHENOMENOLOGY OF RADICAL INTEGRITY

We want to talk about the phenomenological approach to sanctification using the general categories off of our New Religious Mode chart. First is The Concept. Unless you have an image or a picture there is no way to grasp what is going on. Next is The Concretion of that concept. That image, or concept, is not an abstraction, but moves in and grabs you. Then there is The Interiorizing of that. The moment you see, "My God, that's the way it is in my life!" it just explodes throughout your life. Finally, there is The Transparency. At this point you break through and see that all dimensions of life are related. For instance, if you take the concept of sin through these categories, the concept is that sin is disrelationship with God. When you were a little child, you thought that sin was transgression of some principle or rule; and then, suddenly, you wake up to see what sin is -- disrelationship with the totality of life. The concretion might be, "My God, I am a sinner! I'm disrelated!" The interiorization of that happens as you look at all of your life and see -- I'm a sinner here and here and here. Finally you break through the bottom. All of life from beginning to end, from any place you touch it in the deeps, is just radical alienation and disrelatedness.

I want to take these specific categories of The Lucidity, The Involvement, The Inwardness, and The Ecstatic and apply them to the conceptual categories. Now to get clear on the arena in which we are wrestling. Under The Lucid Awareness is The One World, The Other World, The Self-hood Relation and The Integrative Dynamics. Under The Awful Providence is The Crushing Impact, The Compelling Election, The Total Responsibility, and The Inescapable Absolute. Under The Mortal Combat is The Deadly Strife, The Last Defense, The Real Enemy, and The Unbearable Cost. Last is The Abject Surrender which includes The Absurd Choice, The Final Submission, The Eternal Struggle, and The Endless Task.

As twentieth century man, I am aware that this world is one, yet another world constantly impinges upon it. The self recognizes its relation to all relations and integrity is devotion to that cause. In the midst of this, the world crashes upon me, The Crushing Impact. I experience a vivid Compelling Election, and I am aware of my Total Responsibility for all that is. This is an Inescapable Absolute. Deep internal resistance turns to Deadly Strife, and I endeavor with a Last Defense to defend life, liberty, and the pursuit of joy. The Real Enemy turns out to be my essential self in the eternal tension of Radical Integrity. There is no possibility of winning either way. I hand my life over to Radical Humiliation, to the Eternal Struggle at the center, with an Endless Task of loving the world.

Another way to look at it is that there is a descent, and when you pass the fourth level, to use the New Religious Mode categories, you break through into the transparent or the ecstatic. Now, in the ascent you look at things in a different way. It is not that you experience life as no longer an enemy. The rest of your life is lived in the Eternal Struggle, in the Endless Task; and the ascent is in the midst of that Eternal Struggle and Endless Task.

The world is actually about 8,000 miles in diameter; but today, that world's diameter has shrunk to three inches. And those three inches are between my two ears. It is in the center of my being, in the center of my situation. In other words, I have the whole world on my hands. And it is totally related to all of mankind, past and present. Any lucid man today knows that. That is given to him, woven into his being. Also, you are aware that the world you encounter is a peculiar world. It is dark, it is foreboding. Finally you are up against Mystery, and at the same time you know that you are up against your freedom. All your longings, your desires, your fears, your terrors tell you that you are creating. Whether you want to talk about it as being freedom from the standpoint of the relationship is beside the point. Man knows that he is up against his freedom in one form or another. He also knows that he cares. When he pauses to reflect, he sees that his cares know no boundary, he turns up caring in all situations. Finally, then, he longs for fulfillment, peace, happiness, and assurance. He knows there are thousands of people trying to bombard him with answers to those longings. Man knows that he has not only one world, that is this world, but that he is up against the Other World. In the midst of that, he knows about selfhood. All of us know that we are a bundle of relationships, that consciousness is just there. We also know that we wake up utterly aware of those relationships. In other words, we are conscious of our consciousness. We know that those relationships

include not only the given way of describing the relation, but they also hold the decisions that wrap those relationships up, all of which we must stand present to. That is humanness. That is the human situation.

I wake up this moment with myself in relationship to you. One morning I wake up happy and giddy; next morning I wake up in a deep angry relationship. Other mornings I wake up almost dead. I am always in the midst of my relationships waking up to it. I have to decide whether I'm going to be this relationship that I am. It is the human situation. Is that the relationship I am going to be, or am I going to refuse it? Finally, I am conscious of the fact that I am conscious of my consciousness. However vaguely or unsophisticatedly we might spell this out intellectually or conceptually, man knows that this is the kind of a situation he is in. Life has beat him to this place, where he realizes that he has to live this way. If you do not believe it, listen to one of the Schlitz commercials. It rehearses this kind of relationship that you finally have to take. But it does not shove us to the final relation.

Every man has his Integrity for the cause that he serves. Integrity, you see, is describing a certain relationship or dynamic in life. The question is what kind of integrity you are talking about. If my family is the context for my life, then my integrity is spelled out in relationship to that family. That is the cause I serve. I am a man of integrity in relationship to my family. If my nation decides the context for my life, then that relationship is the cause. Serving my nation reflects my integrity. I will never forget World War II when I was out on a little island in the Pacific fairly close to the front lines -- close enough so that machine gun bullets were flying over you and mortars were coming down -- artillery was pouring in, and you were down in your fox hole making sure that your head was below ground level. Suddenly some crazy Marine came crawling through the midst of the three divisions and cried, "Stop them, stop them." We could tell he was falling apart. All he had was a 45 revolver in his hand. "Give me a cigarette!" One of us gave him a cigarette. Then someone asked, "Where's your rifle, Sergeant!" By this time we were huddled on the far side of the fox hole. He stood alone and yelled, "Gotta get them! Gotta get them!" And he went, over the edge. Later on, we heard that that small revolver in relation to mortars and artillery shells had killed eighteen of the enemy. They awarded him, posthumously, the Medal of Honor. That man had integrity. He had integrity in relationship to his nation. And I tell you I WAS GLAD OF IT! I did not care how crazy he was -- I was glad to have that man standing there. However, if you shove the cause you serve on out to all things from the beginning of time to the end of time, or the totality of your relationships, then integrity is laid bare. It becomes Radical Integrity. Integrity has to do with standing in relationship to that center of value which is now the totality of everything. That is Radical Integrity. Or to put it another way- some of our colleagues seem crazy. Now some of your colleagues may be intellectually lazy, or spiritually lazy, and some of the others are just physically lazy, but when you are getting ready to walk into the machine guns out there, they are standing with you. That is what you mean by Integrity -- that kind of standing. Now the lucidity you are up against in this relationship is just a given in our time.

And, oh, the providence or the crushing impact of that! When you learn to live your life -- you had a great appreciation for just being alive. That does not mean you do not know life is tragic for you do. Yet, it is permeated with an ever-mysterious delight about life. At the same time, you have the chance to participate in the suffering of life. You have a human sympathy and a warmth for it. Your cares, concerns and compassion are there. But in the midst of that, something happens that drives you to the end of that understanding. For instance, late one evening last summer, as a colleague of mine was walking down one of these streets near here, three fellows came toward him. The way they were looking, he knew something was up; his intuitions sent danger signals. But they walked by. Just as he was breathing with relief, we turned around and saw that they were after an elderly woman behind him. They jumped on that elderly woman to get her purse. She refused to give it up, so they began to beat on her and knock her down. She began to scream, though he said that it was more like a haunted cry of an animal than any scream he had heard before. And he said, "I just kept walking." "When you hear that, all your self-righteousness wells up in you: Why didn't he protect that woman, But I could not get the way he described that scream out of my mind: How many times have you awakened to the screams of life that you block out and say "No" to? The screams of life wind everything up and throw it at you. The whole world is there! And it is never just one woman but everything from the beginning of time.

When the world falls on you like that, you are crushed to your knees. At this point, you do not ask where it comes from; you do not even care where it comes from. The pain is not the world falling on your back. The pain is that of integrity. The world did not happen to hit you. Rather the world has got your name on it. It is almost as if the whole universe had an election and decided that you were going to carry it. It elected you to bear the burden of the world.

It does not do any good to hear the whimper or the cry. It is a givenness. A friend of mine was in an automobile accident and lost his arm. You knew that because his arm was gone. All his life he said he had to come to terms over and over again with the fact that he had lost his arm. Here you have to come to terms with the fact that you have lost your life underneath that world. That is the way it is -- it has just fallen on you. The whole world is there -- not just a chosen part of it. In the play Night of the Iguana the leading character finds himself in a huge steaming city of Latin America. He walks out toward the dump where there are acres and acres of manure. People are out on those piles of manure, trying to find little pieces of food that had passed undigested through the body in order to live a few hours longer. When that happens, the world falls on him. The rest of the play deals with his retreat to a village in Mexico where he tries to come to terms with that impact. But there is no escape for that well-to-do Episcopalian priest. He has a nice little villa with a number of servants, but every time he looks at those servants, it ties him to the rest of Latin America. No matter where you go, Latin America will still be there, or Africa, or the West Side of Chicago, or wherever you live. The whole world is there.

How did Latin America get where it is? That is the burden. Where is Latin America going? That is the burden. That is part of the world that is on your back. You want to take just a part of it, and say I will relate to this or I will relate to that. But the whole world is on your back.

In the movie, The Man With the Golden Arm, made in the early fifties, there was a man who was a drug addict. The whole story was about his effort to get this "monkey" off his back. The self-righteous people told him, "You ought to get that monkey off your back." Finally he did get that monkey off his back, but then someone in the movie said, "Yes, he got that monkey off his back. But everybody has a monkey on his back." Your monkey is the world. That is what is on your back. All you have to deal with for the rest of your life is that Inescapable Absolute. There is no escape, no blotting it out, no other way to live. Life will not take "no" for an answer.

You become aware of the horrible struggle you are in. Slowly it turns into a deadly strife. You know you are fighting for your life! Before you had a little freedom to do what you wanted. You had a little rest and comfort. Even now you want to be left alone part of the time. I had a fellow who came out of RS-1 just a little while ago, saying, "I would like to come with you, but I cannot stand those structures." I wanted to tell him, "I cannot stand them either" The world is on your back. And yet there is no other way to live -- for it is not a dead weight. It has become a monster, and it is that monster that is whipping you-lash after lash. You get adjusted slightly and you think you will make it, and then, another lash! That is the kind of wrestling you are engaged in. There wells up a deep hatred that you never dreamed existed. You are filled with a wild, hatefilled defiant passion. You would have to kill that monster even if it got off your back. One of you has to die! Time goes on, as Kierkegaard puts it, time feels like centuries. There is not strength left, but you have to go on.

You wake up with that enemy and discover -- that monster is yourself. You are being forced to invent the self that dares to carry the world. You have to create the self that stands forever with the world on its back. It is the whole burden upon your life. You have to create humanness. That is the enemy of the whole self, of the essentials. You come to see the horrifying elements that are present.

One day, I woke up feeling really well. I understood what freedom was. I knew how to transcend my neuroses to a certain extent. - I felt a little relaxed. But now, the whole world falls on me. The rest of my life is nothing but slavery! I have all sorts of things bubbling in me -- and suddenly, I am crushed to death. I am going to have every ounce squeezed out of me.

How many of us like to feel clean in a situation? We have good jobs. Most of us live most of our lives on the light side. We have high ideals. We keep a certain good conscience. We have not transgressed too much. So you might say we feel clean most of the time -- or at least, some of the time. But no longer. Now you are forever dirty. Look at what has gone on in Viet Nam. How that has scarred our psyche. We can not forget that kind of going-on-ness -- wherever your country, your race, your family is refusing to meet the world, as in Latin America or the Philippines. How can you block that out? Dirty! You had a little joy, but now there is nothing left but deep suffering for the rest of your life.

There are levels of suffering. First, self-depreciation or not liking yourself, hanging onto the things that have hurt you. Oh, that is real suffering. Still you can find ways to get out of it. That does not even touch the kind of suffering I mean here. Once the world falls on you every ounce of suffering in the world is laid on you. And

there is no escape from that weight. Once, you felt at home. This world is one place you can feel at home, or comfortable. In society you could sit down with a nice book, a nice drink, a nice movie, and good friends, and at least feel a little bit at home. Now, there is nothing but eternal alienation. You see that all your life is alienation -- your blindness, deserts, apostasy, rebellion. You become aware that the world has been like that from the beginning. You do not have a choice. If you leave this world or try to blank it out, you become a zombie, a shell, a walking lifeless bag of bones. Or, if you leave the world on your back, then you're crushed to death. The rest of your life, every minute of your day, is a hard total giving of yourself. If you run from your own lucidity, it is going to burn you up. But if you stay there, you are going to be burned up anyway. So you are dead either way.

One of the youth not long ago was talking to me about leaving the Order. He spelled it out very clearly. I was about ready to ask him where he would go, when he said, "I don't know where I would go. -Maybe I could go live in the dormitories at college, but that is not any different. But if I stay here I have to get up at 4:30 every morning. I have to do this. I have to do that! What am I going to do?" Before I could answer that, he said, "I don't know." And he added, "I have thought about this a lot of times." All the while I am nodding, "Yes, yes. Yes, I see." Then he says, "Well, I guess I will stay." It is almost like, "It's so difficult to pack up my bags, I am going to stay."

You rise up and get your sword out and make a big decision in life. You just pick your life up and hand it over to the situation. You give yourself up. You surrender. And in the end, you become aware of what is going on. Once you have surrendered your life, you see that the essence you are out to invent was invented since the beginning of the world. That was the self that was moving in on you, that was the self that was assaulting you. To be human, is to carry the whole world on your back.

You know that you have that world on your back and you are relating to it. But that relationship is not just weight. That relationship includes all the relationships, all of your slavery, deadness, dirtiness, suffering, and alienation. Here you invent yourself. You are going to be that self. You create that one who will live that relationship. That is what selfhood is all about from the beginning of time to the end.

After your surrender, that rebellion begins to accentuate. In other words, you give up your struggle against Radical Integrity. You embrace hell itself. You plough through life as it is given to you and take that hell into yourself, accepting the burden of the world. Now the rest of your life is struggle. But it is struggle in Radical Integrity instead of against Radical Integrity. The man of integrity does not get free of the struggle, but now his struggle is not directed at himself and against the world. Rather, he struggles as one who is now in struggle with the whole world. Over and over for the rest of his life, he has one demand -- Radical Integrity.

And he has radical permission to have Radical Humiliation and the Eternal Struggle at the center. He sees what he already knows about the self -- that to create the self is to create the future. The world has to be re-created. He has the Endless Task of loving the world. Not one cry or sob goes unheeded. Not one dull, silent sufferer goes overlooked. Not one glassy-eyed zombie is left out. The whole world shifts from being on his hands to being in his hands.

At the same time that he loves this world, he loves this world's history. Every imbalance is dealt with, every trend discerned, every contradiction assaulted. In addition, he loves the depths of humanness. And where they are not released, he moves. You see how he loves the phases in all their lostness and gives permission to each to live the role they have to live with the total engagement of the world. He gives back to those who have lost their vocation their birthright -- to serve the world anew. He gives back to the male and the female the new possibility for engaging in the ontological tension that lies between them, so that they may create and act out the genuine role that sparks consciousness over and over again in humanness. He gives back rationality to people in order that they may see the story, rite and symbol incorporated in their lives afresh -- so that they may grasp the humanness they are. He gives them a community in which to participate in bearing the burden of the world, so that they may be nourished, sustained and engaged at every point. To be constantly in this process, over and over and over again and remain faithful to that -- is Radical Integrity.

-- Joseph Slicker

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<p style="text-align: center;">THE CONCEPT (the Lucidity)</p>	<p>I THE LUCID AWARENESS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The One World 2. The Other World 3. The Selfhood Relation 4. The Integrity Dynamics
<p style="text-align: center;">THE CONCRETION (the Involvement)</p>	<p>II THE AWFUL PROVIDENCE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Crushing Impact 2. The Compelling Election 3. The Total Responsibility 4. The Inescapable Absolute
<p style="text-align: center;">THE INTERIOR (the Inwardness)</p>	<p>III THE MORTAL COMBAT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Deadly Strife 2. The Last Defense 3. The Real Enemy 4. The Unbearable Cost
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