

I AM AN IMPURE THINKER

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INTRODUCTION BY

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CHAPTER 5

THE QUADRILATERAL OF HUMAN LOGIC¹



Cogito, ergo sum;
audio, ut fiam;

mensuror, quia existo;
*respondeo, etsi mutabor.*²

THE CARTESIAN REVIVAL OF the Aristotelian tradition is useless for those processes of thought which do not deal with objects only, but with ourselves. Their limitation to the two logical links of "therefore" (*ergo*) and "because" (*quia*) restricts their usefulness to the classes of either subject or object.

No connection between subjects can ever be explained on these premises. By a logical self-betrayal, thinkers have spoken of a *res cogitans*, a thinking thing, for man. But between an object thought and a listener, no bridge can be established. The phrase *res cogitans* is a pious lie. By definition, things are the objects spoken of, never are they spoken to without ceasing to be *res*, or object. Any transition from "thing" to "listener" or "speaker" is unwarranted and impermissible. That I weigh 150 pounds and that I can be weighed in for this amount is totally unrelated to the verity that I may speak, in the least propitious moment.

It is, however, this pious lie which has enabled the rationalist to pose as a thinker during the last 300 years; for the pre-

¹ A paper contributed by Rosenstock-Huessy to a symposium on his thought held at the Center for the Study of Religion and Social Issues, Woods Hole, Mass., 1965.

² I think, therefore I am; I will be measured because I exist; I hear so that I may come to exist; I respond although I will be changed.

ceding 1500 years, it always was admitted that the two classes of objects and subjects are quite insufficient to cope with any serious question of life and death. Dead things, Cartesius could try to understand, and the mentality needed for their understanding he could define. His relations to his Dutch sweetheart and their illegitimate child were quite outside the Cartesian world of understanding. He only underwent them, but did not understand them.

Since, however, even today the average layman is a Cartesian, I have explicitly added two more guiding sentences on those statements which have nothing to do with a subject or an object but which concern us as fellows of other men. And the thought processes and statements which prevail between people are obviously divided into those by which I am told by others who can demand that I listen to them and into those by which I am entitled to tell others what I think of them.

The "Harken, Israel" is the most general command or description of our duty to listen to others. And I have only reworded it in a concession to the egocentric Cartesian formula, by writing: *audio ut fiam* in the place of "Harken, thou man." To be called by his true name is part of any listener's process of becoming his true self. We have to receive a name by others; this is part of the process of being fully born. The United States of America did not exist before they were called the United States of America. This remains understandable to a Greek mind. And the Cartesian blindness to this reality of names disfigures most investigations of psychologists, sociologists and historians who do not know that they are paralyzed by their Cartesian origins.

So far we have introduced three conjunctions into our analysis: *ergo, quia, ut*. These conjunctions in themselves offer nothing spectacular. "Therefore," "because" and "so that" do not transcend the prose of everyday logic. It is different with the term *etsi*, "although." No pagan logic admits the "although." The Christian era has added this step into novelty and continued creation. Newness is not man-made. Manufacturing combines known things by "because," "therefore," and "so that." But that we may become changed men, *although* we

suffer, *although* we have to suffer, aye, even to die, is incomprehensible to a Greek mind and yet it is the everyday experience of any living soul.

In the *respondeo*, although I may be changed, the scientific mentality is transcended. Already the scholastics, especially Bonaventura, saw clearly the insufficiency of the Greek mind. The Greeks tried to judge us from things; hence, their apes could coin the ridiculous phrase of a *res cogitans*. Creativity comes to self-forgetfulness. He who remains inside his own consciousness is impotent, incapable of experiencing real newness. The old consciousness must die, must be abandoned, must be forgotten in the passionate surrender to an unforeseen situation. Necessity overcomes the impossible. That which hitherto has been deemed impossible demonstrates the prison walls of today's consciousness. It is by the strange conjunction of "although" that the new necessity overwhelms the most reactionary part of our organism, *id est*, our obstinate "consciousness."

"Our little systems have their day." Our own regeneration, the regeneration of knowledge, and the progress of science are conditioned by the application of the non-Greek conjunction, "although." Although nobody has thought this possible hitherto, it is true just the same, is the most general formula for the continuous renewal of human thinking. In this grammatical form, consciousness takes second seat and stands corrected by the martyr, the discoverer, the naive, and the good Samaritan. All these types act "although" that which they do has never been done before and therefore is classified as impossible.

Most of modern methodology skips this test of originality, the courage to say "although." To the Christian Era, only this mind may be said to belong, who has the guts to defy his own consciousness by the nobility of his passion, by the energy of his research, by the selfless courage of the Billy Mitchells.³ The chain of events which we call the history of science is formed by these steps which, in complete self-forgetfulness, lead man beyond his self-consciousness.

³ A famous flyer of World War I who accepted being courtmartialled for his bold criticism of the Air Force.

Of "disinterestedness," much has been said in the 19th century. The term will not do in an era of monetary corruption. "I respond although this will demand my own transformation," my own loss of position, is the only methodological protection against the cheap research of the modern masses of academic proletarians. They must be left behind; their naive interest in themselves is not good enough.

Our old Adam, our inherited mentality, has to be shed and left behind by the *etsi*, the "although." Bonaventura has called this "an excess of the mind," a getting beside ourselves. It is the condition of any progress. *The quadrilateral of man as thinking, as being an extended substance, as being a listener, only is completed when we make room inside ourselves for being made over.* The term "creative" nowadays is the fashion. It is meaningless, as we certainly are not God almighty, but very mortal, very corrupt and terribly stupid. The term "creative" will lead the people astray, unless they recognize that we only may become creative by transcending the boundaries of our own yesterday-logic, by responding to a need although it demands our own abandon.

The reader has found at the beginning of this essay the quadrilateral of a revised logic. The two times, from the beginning to me, and from the end to me, are represented by the *audio ut fiam* (listening completes my historical existence) and the *respondeo etsi mutabor*.

As "subject" and "object" are conceived in the Greek versions *cogito ergo sum*, *mensuror quia existo*, so we may label the heroes of the second pair of statements "traject" and "preject." The Quadrilateral, the Cross of Reality, to sum it all up, demands and requires that we remain willing to be alternately "object," "subject," "traject," "preject." And we may add that there are four religions possible, according to the priority given to any of these four attitudes of man.

CHAPTER 6

THE TWELVE TONES OF THE SPIRIT¹



SPIRIT AND LOVE ARE STRONGER than death. Hence, we cannot do without them unless we condemn ourselves to sterile futility. For to love means to become fruitful, and to be inspired means to overcome and to limit death. When the body dies, the spirit remains. The spirit proves itself to be divine whenever the trails blazed by creative, loveable lives are travelled by deliberate successors, heirs, pupils, followers, or when devilish trails are renounced and abandoned by warning posts: No trespassing!

Hence, the ultimate test of the spirit is the heritage of newly acquired faculties which future generations gratefully receive and accept. All the various expressions of our faith: presence of God, future, regeneration, adoption, children of God, not of Man, the very terms liberty, God, Spirit, Devil, history—have tried to transmit to us this good news that we had predecessors who have endowed us with acquired faculties, acquired by them and bestowed on us if we only respond by accepting them. Also, the good news was contrasted with the bad news. And without the bad news, the good news is ununderstandable. Perhaps the good news will more readily become audible again after we speak explicitly about the bad news. The bad news says that a child is better than a hoary head, that new is better than old, that stimulation and sensation drag us along from day to day as they presume to guarantee us better values. This bad-

¹ An address to members of St. Augustine Church, Santa Monica, California, 1961.

ness is very bad indeed. The truth is that neither is the child better than the old man nor is the old man better than the child. God is incalculable. He makes some children and some adults very good indeed and others, elders or children, very wicked. He is incalculable and certainly is quite indifferent to the date or year at which we are born. It is equally difficult at all times to live the good life.

The good news, in emphasizing this complete indifference of God to the year of our birth or our death, also says that we, in following the trail blazed by the Firstborn Son, may become the people of His inheritance. Hence the good news is related to a perpetual relation of founder and heir, of testator and successors. This truth is obscured today. Even the old term "Imitation of Christ" has been weakened. Too often it is understood not as the inheritance of Christ's acquired faculty but as a pedantic imitation and aping. Let us restate the good news.

Christ has acquired a new faculty, the timing of the Spirit. And he has imparted to us this rightly timed spirit, this power not only to talk, to think, to write, to proclaim, to sing, but also to obey these promptings in God's good time, neither too early nor too late.

Here, I forego the temptation to accuse the naturalists of robbery and plagiarism. I could accuse them of having embezzled all our terms of the Spirit's life, presence, future, heredity, survival, history, acquired faculties. Originally, all these terms of Darwin hail from the Bible. Because only God can be present. Only the children of his inheritance can have a future, only the fruits of the spirit can survive death. And only the apostles can succeed in transmitting the newly acquired faculties of our Savior. But I shall leave it to you to draw these conclusions yourselves.

However, I may perhaps have to remind you that in society, in our historical community, we move as men born through the living Word into our times and places, into our future destiny. We have the singular privilege of contributing to the everlasting survival of acquired faculties which we embrace and to contribute to the everlasting relegation to hell of those acquired faculties which we wish to see extirpated. Thus, Creation is

taking place under our very noses. And nobody can stay neutral in this spiritual war between bequeathing the good qualities to the future through faith or giving up from despair the task of weeding out the diabolical qualities.

The way by which we are threaded into God's creation, day after day, that is into his history, is through the twelve stages or tones of the Spirit. Because God's processes are known to everybody, nobody seems to pay much attention to their beautiful order and ineluctable sequence. No generation seems to have been so callous about this process as ours. Impatiently and with great haste, the whole inspiration is sold to us over the counter. "Inspiration" is advertised, pointed out to us as Inspiration Point, etc. But, alas, inspiration takes time. It must fill ninety or a hundred years of a long life. Is it not highly probable that the Spirit befalls us, through a long life, in very many variations? You know as well as I that the Spirit permeates our carnal bodies in at least three steps: He enters into us. This stage is called childhood. Everything, in this phase, is received by the child with the zest of "first-ness"; "new" equals "inspiration," during childhood.

Then, however, this spirit begins to work in us. He stirs us up. He abides in us and transforms us. This phase we may call adulthood. Lastly, the Spirit being a power cannot be secluded inside of us. He holds forth, he proceeds outside. This stage we may call elderhood, or with the Greek corresponding term, priesthood.

Upward was the Spirit in every child of Adam. Inward he operates in every man or woman when they come of age. Outward from us upon society when we hold office. Today, this tripartition does not suffice. We must be more specific. The numerous processes of the Spirit have not been discerned very clearly since the Reformation. Perhaps, the second article of the Creed, i.e. the sentences on the Savior, have monopolized the labors of theologians. The philosophers, on the other hand, have usurped the first article and by isolating it, they have made it meaningless. But the third article of the Creed is the first article of our experience. The apostles experienced the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. In other words, before God

came upon them as the spirit of Pentecost, neither the Son nor the Father was accessible to them. The strange yearnings of the Pentecostal sects of our times should warn us that an experience of the spirit will have to precede any understanding of either Son or Father in the Trinity. The legitimate Church must fight the Greek arrogance by which our so-called minds are not considered the receptacle, the vehicle, or the carrier of the One Spirit through the ages, but as the free agents of our little atomized, innumerable, different selves.

When we approach the mental processes in ourselves as the process of the Spirit from others usward, within us and from usward to others, an order of three times four spiritual attitudes will become audible. The dying man, when he gives back the spirit to his Creator, is allowed by our laws to leave behind a last will and testament. This is the minimum spiritual honor the community vouchsafes him. Hence, the spiritual life of all of us should be traced from our dying hour backward. While in "nature" birth seems to precede death, and life is described as the sum of all the processes this side of dying, the Spirit reverses this order of naturalism.

In nature, birth precedes death;

In nature, life tries to shun death.

In the spirit, death precedes life;

In the spirit, the founder's death guides his heirs' lives.

Hence, the first spiritual command is: leave a will, endow, bequeath. This is the first command because it gives direction and meaning to all our previous steps. He who experiences his dying day as fulfillment is blessed. Therefore, this person, whatever he believes to be bliss, he will project backwards from his dying day upon his antecedents. He will wish to have this fulfillment from the whole time span of life. Once we unlock this secret door of the spiritual order in Christianity, we suddenly understand why Christ indeed unlocked the gates of death to our soul.

Our dying day and our supreme will and legacy are directed towards future generations; from this fact we may easily illuminate all the previous stages of life. The last commandments

must dominate all earlier ones. After all, they shall enable us to make our perfect will, that ultimate will by which the human inheritance may be increased and by which it may become the fruit of our lives' seed.

The stage of testator therefore will usually be preceded by

prophet or warner
teacher or educator
leader or legislator
sufferer or perseverer
protester or rebel
critic or analyst
doubter or despondent
player or singer
learner or wanderer
reader or conceiver
listener or obeyer

This order has been forgotten in secularism. In application by the secular thinker, the spiritual order is reversed. In secular psychology which begins with the child itself, we are told that it should pull itself up by its own bootstraps and become itself, express itself, live by itself. Of this the inexorable consequence must be that it will have to live and may also have to die by, for and unto itself. A horrid spectacle indeed.

When the learning of speech is seen as the twelfth spiritual tone, i.e. as the first intimate of the Spirit when He enters a newborn soul, then we perceive that this tone wells up, in man's life, so to speak from his death bed. The child's first smile is on the other end at the farthest distance from Jesus' words on the Cross or from the farewell address of George Washington, or from the last speech of Moses. The tone of the spirit reverberates first within us when we obey. The child which is not made to obey is denied the power ever to command. To command, to identify ourselves with God's will, is our perfection, our destination. Any person who makes a will, in any field of human endeavor, commands, or, better still, becomes a command. Lincoln, Cardinal Newman, Moses are commanding figures after death. All their powers seem to have gone into that part

of them which during their lives they could not realize. The greatness of Moses lies in just this, that he did not enter the promised land himself. In this lies the divinity of Christ, that he did not use the Spirit for his own time but gave this spirit to the apostolic succession.

Having thus restored the twelfth command, "listen" or "obey" to its rank as the corollary to the first command, "leave your spirit to posterity," we shall have no trouble in dividing the keyboard between the twelfth command and the first into approximately ten periods of about six years each and three periods of about twenty years each.

- I. Youth or childhood; in society represented by the artist.
 12. obey existential involved
 11. read mental detached
 10. learn selective half involved, half detached
 9. sing all this time, as your hour has not yet come
- II. Adulthood; in society represented by the fighter.
 8. doubt and withhold half involved, half detached
 7. analyze and synthesize detached
 6. speak up and insist get involved
 5. wait and persevere stay engaged
- III. The Elders; the universal priesthood of the believers.
 4. lead and legislate
 3. teach and instruct
 2. prophesy and warn
 1. "testate" endow and bestow

All twelve commandments or tones of the Spirit permeate all the phases of our life. A camp counsellor obviously may be 19 and yet act in the capacity of tone 4 or 3 already. This does not alter the fact that each tone should be given one period of life for its fullest cultivation. When children of 12 are trained for leadership, it only goes to show that the educators, psychologists, politicians heap all the crowns of adult and elder on youngsters who must perish under this burden.

Of each time, a whole book could and might be written. For instance, "teach" is a "must" in any maturing person's life.

Man must teach. Once this is understood, the raising of teachers will appear to be infinitely more difficult than the raising of children or the building of school palaces. Also it will become clear that we teach what our students are meant to do, to carry out, to uphold, to render because we cannot do it all ourselves. In other words, there is a proportion between governors and teachers. The father is the governor, the teacher, and the prophet as well as the testator for the next generation. He leads them into the future, teaches about the future, prophesies the calamities or obstacles on their way into the future, and tries to leave them some means for coping with this future. All this belongs to his priestly office.

Hence commands 1, 2, 3, 4 (testate, prophesy, teach, rule) are one and the same command spelled out in its four aspects! The same is true of the 4 commands for the fighting adults and the four commands of childhood.

Also, at close harkening, the reader may observe that children, adults, elders or artists, fighters, priests—are in a different phase with regard to timing. A child plays and is not yet serious because it “has time,” more precisely because its day has not yet come. The meaning of play is that the play remains this side of the process by which God proceeds in wars, calamities, crises, revolutions.

Children have infinite, more precisely, “undefined” time. Conversely, the fighters press on. They try to be ahead of their times. They are impatient. As a Protestant should try to hurry the coming of the Day of the Lord. Paul wants us to be impatient as well as patient, because we are both children who play before God and fighters who fight for God. The relation of the elder to time again is different. His genius is in the timing. Between the abolitionists (the “adults”) and the indifferent ones (the playboys) Lincoln proved to be the good governor because of his timing. He timed the emancipation of the slaves to perfection, to the perfection prophesied thirty years before by John Quincy Adams. Adams prophesied that the slavery issue after 1828 had reached an impasse which only the commander-in-chief in a time of war could break. This, by the way, is a good illustration of the genuine role of prophecy

in the spiritual process. Prophecy is not prediction or forecasting the weather. Prophecy speaks from the last Judgment Day backwards into our own days. Hence, it always places between our today and our last day some terrible calamity. For the prophet acknowledges that the present generation does not move in the direction of our destiny. Judging the present in the light of our destiny, he knows that the obstacles thrown up by our moving in the wrong direction first must be removed. Prophets then are not predicting how to get rich but prophesying that our heirs will be visited for our own greed or trespassing.

The prophet, then, is as intimately connected with the future as governors, teachers, or testators. Moses, Isaiah, Ecclesiastes, King Jonas, Stephen, John, Luke, Peter, the first four in the Old, the second four in the New Testament are united although we may discern among them kings, teachers, prophets, and testators. Because all of them live out of the future, out of the solidarity of God's creature Man, into their present day.

When we would recognize them as the tones one, two, three, four on the Spirit's harp, the childishness of our educational situation today might easily be conquered. For then it will be seen that a child cannot learn to speak by swallowing nouns, mere words, but only by carrying out orders existentially. The verbs are the root words by which the child is put in action. Our machine age with push button mechanizing is threatening our children because, instead of enacting the verbs go, push, pull, tear, lift, answer, speak, write, move, climb, etc., the child is surrounded by dead things which by one and the same motion can be made to respond.

We cannot become eloquent unless we enact the words spoken to us existentially.