

THE ACTION OF THE WAY

This is the fourth of five talks on the Way and is titled The Action of the Way. There are four points: engagement on the Way; all, the action of the Way; you are the action of the Way; the guardian of the Way of all. Let me put those four points differently: engagement on the Way, or the Way wins; second, all, the action of the Way, or all is all; third, you are the action of the Way, or old hands; fourth, guardian of the Way of all, or all on the Way.

First, some poetry.

It became a grave game in which he gradually forgot to be angry with his teacher. When the bamboo fell with unexpected ingenuity and landed full and hard, his first thought was in admiration: I am proud of my adversary. Then no longer did he merely pass through a door thinking of something else. It became an act of dangerous importance. Nor did he round a corner unthinkingly, approach the top of a hill blithely, nor pass closely by a tree. Reverie was replaced by exquisite attention to what he was doing. Each act called for total concentration if he was to avoid pain, a fall of pride and the tattoo of a bruise. So, to avoid hurt, he learned to perceive Everything that is Now.

Later, there were times when he came to sense that which he could not perceive. He stood long minutes outside the dark door somehow certain that there was a raised and waiting stick within. He stood motionless for two then three, five then ten minutes, and at last realizing he was a fool to hesitate all night outside an empty room, shrugged, entered and fell beneath an outraged blow that repeated itself with mounting fury as the old voice grated, "You knew, you knew, and yet you used this door! Damn you, at least try to keep me interested in holding school!"

So he walked more softly and he broke up the patterns of shortness, ease and opportunity that are deadly habit. If the stick waited at some turning that he always took, he changed the route and went some longer, less expected way. Time was not important. And he learned to still his humming as he moved about his chores. There was no need to sing when his spirits rose, no need to make himself known to the forest world. The vanity of carving his name in air gave way to the pleasure of unwatched watching.

Unknown to him, the boy became quieter within as well. Concentration does not permit of fancies and debates, poetries and orations in one's inner auditorium when the stick might fall at any time. He stilled his quarrelsome mind so that he could hear the world outside, and he deeply liked the things he heard. Not my song, but yours.

The big man pulled back and pressed against the wall. He murmured as if stunned: "But I was so sure of my direction!"

The other whispered, "It will take again as long to make a path down there."

The big man said, "Oh, no."

The young man looked at him: "But we must, we can't stop here."

The Ronin walked to the fire: "No, let's have the duel and get

it over."

The young voice was loud with anger: "I can't finish this alone! It's not my work!"

"It's anyone's. Let them," and he began to walk away. "Bring the swords and let's get out of here. It might cave in."

The young Daimyo didn't move: "But you can't just leave it like this! Come back here and I'll help. Time's cheap."

The big figure was striding naked toward the other light: "Not mine! No more! Not me!"

The young man screamed after him: "But you can't leave a thing like this undone! It's wrong not to finish what you start!"

And the big voice echoed from a vast distance in the dark, "The hell with it!"

Engagement of the Way is engagement of history. I like the image that we are just beginning to insert our model into history. The problem is that history's basic response to models is that it rips them to shreds. You never win. But you do experience being on the Way. Your doubt has never been stronger; you experience always being slightly off balance, but you also experience that you are on the Way, stronger than you ever have been. The Way is dangerous business. This past year I caught up on every thing I had ever missed. I was on the faculty of a Human Development Training School, did consults and even helped publish the document. These activities filled up my whole life. I laid down a lot of my life. My house burned down with all of my stuff in it. I am loosing my little six year old girl to the Philippines. She speaks better Cebuano now than English; she even dreams in Cebuano. When I get mad at her, she even speaks back to me in Cebuano. She is also a great translator. When we go in a Jeepney, on Mactan, it is tremendous; she whispers in my ear, "They are all talking about you. They say your nose is very long." I have had to give up a lot of my old ways of how you do a project. I even had to lay down my project.

This year I am glad to be here. I am just glad to be here - physically. The capstone which made all of my experiences of laying down my life paltry was one I had right before I came to Chicago. I went to Langub, our Philippine project in the South, to be of help and to find out first hand about the new Mountain Cluster and the four consults being held. These new villages are way out in the sticks. In fact, the project director gave me a tour on a motor cycle over carabow trails. He casually mentioned to me that I should hold on and proceeded to go straight up a mountain side, down through gullies, over ridges with straight dropoffs into the mountain side, until we came to thirty houses on a beautiful hill. This was La Paz, with a tent in the center where the consult team and fifty people were working on proposals.

Then we went on to Magtued which was even worse - through mud ponds with ruts. I kept saying to myself, "You have got to be kidding me." The villages are out of this world; they are excited to be demonstration villages. Sunday afternoon, we went back to take one of our colleagues from Hong Kong on a tour. This time, we got a government jeep and a driver to take us up to see the villages. Afterwards, we brought another colleague down with a malfunctioning generator. As we were going carefully down the trail with high bushes and trees on both sides, ten men suddenly appeared out of the bushes with rifles and with

hand grenades strapped to their chests, just like in the movies. They kept yelling at the driver and he finally stopped. I was sitting in the middle of the front seat of the jeep with the driver and one of our development colleagues, who happens to be 6' 4" tall. When the men stopped us, he started sliding down in his seat. Here were these ten men with rifles pointed at us and hand grenades all over them, and as Jim could not get what the men said, he decided to use his development approach with them, which was head-on style. He turned around and said, "What is going on here?" They questioned the driver, then let us go. Finally, after we had come down from the hill, we found out what had happened. They had wanted us to get out of the jeep, but we did not know that, as they were talking in Cebuano. However, the driver was so scared that he could not say anything. When he finally got courage to talk he said, "These are Americans, and they do not understand." They believed him. We still did not know what was going on, except that the driver was going too fast for the trail.

As we rode into Magtuod, the people were out in the road and the women were crying and extremely distraught. Fear was written all over their faces. I thought the driver was going to drive right through, but his boss was standing in the middle of the road, so we stopped. We found out that the ten guerillas had just come from the village where they had terrified everyone. It is hard to talk about what happens when you run up against just absolute fear. We got out of the jeep, and all of these people were yelling at us about how they had been frightened. The whole thing was really out of hand. While we were all standing there, somebody yelled, "They are coming back!" I knew the wild fear that they all had in their eyes. What do you do? We sprinted to the elementary school about a hundred yards from the road and hid in a school room that had no windows and a door with a hole in it. What a joke! We were totally helpless. Unbelievable things run through your mind at such a time. We talk about really laying down our life, but I was not prepared for this. It came as a shock. They did not come back, and we had a party that night. I have never laughed so hard. The Way is the way in which real lives are laid down.

The action of the Way is doing the all; doing the all is doing all. It is a numbers game. It is three billion people. It is 977 people in 177 families in Sudtonggan who live in five stakes, that are made up of five teams. Except that now I have 3047 people who live in 647 families located in five villages, with thirty-seven stakes. That is as far as my all is right now. However, next year there will be twenty-one villages with 12,642 souls. The all is concrete. It is hard to talk about, but to love the all is not an abstraction. I keep thinking I have the comprehensive, but it keeps getting bigger; always beyond your reach. I think that I have the whole thing; but it keeps growing. All is the action of the Way; and the tool of the all is the forum. Doing 222 forums took my all and just kicked the bottom out of it. My all went from five villages to a whole island. My all grew, was thrown open, was blown out, pulled through. You could feel it. There was no longer strange land, there was my land.

I used to go through the countryside of the Philippines, and everybody said, "Hey Joe." When they do not know you everybody that is white is a "Joe." But after the forums, nobody said Joe. Everybody said, "Hey Dick." There was

no longer strange land, there was my land. Now as you go through the countryside you see Mrs. Jones' sari, sari store. It used to be that you did not see Mrs. Jones' sari, sari store. You just saw a building that sat there. It is no longer a strange land. It is your land - you know it; you feel comfortable in the land: that is what the forum does to you. When we did 222 forums, we went from having just a village to having an island on our hands. The forum is a methodology of gaining the all.

The all takes care of you; it takes care of your time. You have no time to have your favorite village program, no time for getting up front. Somebody has to hold the wheel to keep the ship on an even keel. You have no time for good ideas, you have no time for complexities, only simplicity. There is no time to feel sorry for yourself.

In the middle of January, our house burned down during the second consult. We had just gotten a new kerosene refrigerator and something went wrong. Actually we did not know what to do with modern scientific methodologies. Simplicity is the key. We had a Nepa roof and it went up just like that; in forty-five minutes, everything was gone. About an hour after the fire, the firetruck came and got to spray the ashes. One of the great heroes of the day was one of our youth who is fourteen years old. Here my wife was madly trying to put out the fire while Cindy had enough sense to start throwing everything she could find out the windows. She saved all of our records, all of our finance records. It was tremendous. The only thing that she missed were the three girls' school books - strange! I arrived a half an hour after the fire. You have to picture the scene. All of the villagers are standing around weeping and wailing. In the center, my wife and the three girls are standing laughing. You could not believe the conversation about what a great development story this was going to be for raising money. An hour later, I was back in Malingin. The pressure of the task does not allow for grief, or time to dwell on your misfortunes. There are problems, huge ones, and there are failures. There is too much going on to stop for failures or collapses or bad times. A year ago the fire would have crushed us. Your only enemy is attachment to anything. Tunnel vision is doing only one thing, whether it is one project, four projects, or 235 projects.

The old lady Sudtonggan is mad at us. "Where are those eighteen staff members who used to serve me, patching up my old dress, combing my hair, brushing my teeth? I am not ready to go and meet the world. First finish wiring me up. Hey, my kids are not well. And you are not keeping my white rocks white. My craft industry has just started, not off the ground yet. Give me another six months."

"No! Out to the world with you! The time is now!"

"Okay, okay, but stop stealing all my children. At least stop taking everyone - three families to Langub, three buri workers to surrounding villages, four preschool teachers to the outside, four people teaching in the Human Development Training School. Stop it! We have only sixty-five children in our preschool. You promised me at least one hundred. You think that it is safe for our own people to do the books?"

"Old lady, you now have four young sisters, and you must care for them. You are the first of many."

Third, you are the action of the Way. We are old hands at this work. You know, we are an old group of people. I have been here for ten years, ten long years. We have been at human development for twenty-five years. We are an old movement. We have gone through periods of time when we were studying action, and we have just finished a time of doing action. But now, we are turning to a time of being action. The action of the Way is just action. It is not thought of, it is not just done, it is the action of the void. One of the phrases that has sustained me comes from some materials one of our colleagues mailed to me: "Our job is to do massive Town Meeting - not to ask why or how. That comes later." That is absolutely critical. You are the action of the Way. There is nothing left to know about action. We know it all. We have done it all. We have done social demonstration projects. We know them to the depth. We have done forums to the depth. We have done thousands. We have sweated through projects and we know the keys, the rationale, the setup, the followup; we know it to the core. We not only know it, we have done it to the core. We are now ready to do battle. The forums and the projects are our being. I am global social demonstration. I am community forum. We are ready to fight with history. We are equipped with the finest tools possible.

We were asked one day to come into the office of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development to a special projects office. We were asked to help them in a resettlement project in the mountains of Cebu that they were very worried about. In the setting up of this one billion pesos project (\$164,000,000), Mr. Romi said that the director of the Ministry Committee had suggested that we could be of great help in working with the people in that watershed area. It was startling that in thirty minutes we had laid out a six month model that would have the grass roots actively planning and participating in making this a demonstration resettlement project for all the Philippines. We even came up with the mythology for the project: "The Caretakers of the Forest." It was startling to realize that we know our stuff. We laid out the saturation models, the Human Development Training School, and the consult model. The man was sold. We were good. We know what we are doing. We are very, very good. The action of the Way is strange. The action of the Way is just action. It is not even your action. It is the action that is beyond yourself. It is the action of the Way. It is the action that is no action, that is not thinking through moves. You are just action.

The final point is the guardian of the way of all. This past year, we did amazing things with our blue shirt villagers. We had ten people from each village come to the training school for six weeks. At the end of the six weeks, they were ready to go home. We told them, "Look, we need to have a council."

"Okay, just three days."

"Alright, you can go home after that for Christmas and then come back for a week for consult preparation at the school. Then, we will inkind materials and get the villages all set up."

"Okay," they replied, and at the end of the week, they were ready to go home.

"Take two days, and then we will all meet in San Miguel and come back to Sudtonggan for two days, and then we will write the document. Then we will do the Malingin Consult and then we will do two consults by splitting into two

teams of twenty people each. Then we are finished."

"That was really great, wasn't it? Wasn't that really great? You are ready to go home. So am I. But you know, we have been thinking about this whole thing - this month, we have got to get these villages moving all at once, with the speed of light. What if we formed four taskforces and set up a buri industry, a health care system, a preschool, and utilities, as well as four houses, one in each village, to be the constant presence. Each task force will stay in each village one week and get the program going. How does that sound? Yes, I know that it was just for six weeks."

"That was great, wasn't it? Not bad, not bad at all. Now look at what we have done. We have set up four industries; we have a total employment of 181 people; we have 400 children in preschool; we have twenty trained teachers; we have curriculum; we have twenty trained health workers, we have twenty stake caretakers; we have the doctors set up. I bet that you are ready to go home. You have been on the road for three months solid. I know, six weeks. I bet that you are homesick. But you see, we have been thinking. You know, you have done so well, that we need to get the word out to the other villages and we were thinking of spending two weeks with you and your village leadership doing forums. But you can go home and do it with your surrounding villages, two a day for five days. Then we will have a big report and celebration time. We will have a training session to train you for the Global Women's Forum, the Global Youth Forum, and the Global Economic Forum, and a special school forum. Two forums a day for the next week. Then we will end the whole thing with an assembly."

"Great! That was exciting, wasn't it? And you got to stay at home. Oh, you were so tired that when you got home you could barely crawl into bed? I know what you mean. It is a little much. This is great. All this time we have had together! November, December, January, February, March. It seems like just yesterday we all came together for the training school, for six weeks. It is time to get to work in our villages. You see, we have only four months to finish. Now, in April we do economic maneuvers, and in May we do living environment maneuvers, in June we focus on human vitality and in July, corporate patterns. We will have a big feast at the end of July and then we will start the next sixteen projects. Do you remember the sixteen villages we will choose at the end of the forums? Sounds great, doesn't it? Oh, come on, it is no big thing. Well, good-bye, it has been nice this last five months. Oh yes, I forgot: we think we need four of you for the training school. All of the people from Langub are coming. The other thing is that if you can hurry with those maneuvers in the Mactan villages, we would like about ten of you to go to Langub and do the four consults down there. Oh, yes, I know about your mother, and your girl friend, and your wife, and your children and your clothes. What do you mean you want to know where your home is? You need to go to Suba Panas and finish their preschool."

I want to say, they lived the Way.