

HUMAN FACTOR

In our times, and in our world, the integrity of individuals is integrally related to the integrity of society. In fact I would even be so bold as to say there is not going to be any new integrity in society unless there is a new integrity in individuals and likewise there's going to be no new integrity in individuals unless there's new integrity in society itself. In the book Person/Planet, Theodore Rozak suggests that perhaps for the first time in human history the destiny of the person and the planet is not to be looked at apart from each other. We have described ourselves as a people concerned with the human factor in world development. It is our job to explore the foundations of human integrity around which the economic, political and cultural processes weave and upon which we can begin to put together the new social forms that represent what our times are requiring. I'm going to talk about four things: first I'm going to talk about the fact that all human beings are born in a sociality. Secondly, I'm going to talk about the fact that all human beings are born either male or female; thirdly, about the fact that all human beings age; and lastly, about the fact that all human beings have the capacity to decide the meaning of life.

In the comforts of another age, one could live and die comfortably placed in a sociality that frequently never extended beyond the town or beyond the nation. But in our times, the pluriformity of humanity and the globality of this earth is a fact. It is as real and practical as trees or the high price of coffee. It doesn't take a great deal of consciousness to know this fact these days. It doesn't take a great deal of education. That's just part of the reality of being alive in 1979. I think the edge of consciousness in sociality has to do with what we have described as the moral issue of our time - that being the disparity that exists between the peoples of the globe. Approximately 15% of the people in every social unit live with full access to the technological advances, the medical care, the educational possibilities and the cultural opportunities that are possible in our time. Those 15% live over against some 85% of the people of this globe and in every social unit who live virtually without access to any of those realities. It is this issue of the 85% that poses a new question for us in the arena of sociality. It is no longer simply a matter of being aware. The more we are aware of living in the world the more we become aware of the disparity that exists between the peoples of the world. And the more we become aware of the widening gap and the alarming rate with which this is continuing, the more we become aware of the fact that it is unnecessary, in this day and time for that to go on. In the face of the challenge to deal with that issue, sociality takes on a whole new meaning. The propensity all too often is to carve out some corner of the world to lay my hands on, something I can get inside of that blocks off the impending urgency to deal with the complexity of our times. Or another propensity is, to resort to simplistic solutions, to solve the world's disparity. I'm an educator by training, and I've been intrigued with what's been going on in this whole movement called "back to

basics." What is intriguing about this is, who can say what the basics are any more? It certainly is not the same as it was in 1921. It's not the same even as it was in 1967. What are the basics of what it means to live today? That movement for me is an example of taking ahold of a relatively simplistic solution and not probing the complexities of the issue. To dare to care today, and stand before the society we have on our hands, requires a decision to deal with the complexity of our times. Any attempt at creating selfhood, outside of this complexity, and outside of the disparity that exists, between the 85% and the 15% of the people of the world is but an attempt to create a caricature of self. It is not an attempt to create selfhood that is relevant to our times. And I mean that on whatever level of society one spends their time. Be it in the home, the community, the school, the workplace, social clubs, organizations, and wherever else selfhood is expended. Life itself has forced us to re-think the primal relationship that is fundamental to all of humanity.

The double yin yang, an ancient Chinese symbol, represents what I like to call a complimentary dualism. In that symbol you see two symmetrical tears nestled near each other, creating the images of perfect balance and harmony in the art form itself, that depicts something foundational to society itself. Whether negatively or positively, depending on how you interpret what is going on with men and women today, I think it is fair to say that, humanity is struggling with how to create balance and the co-dependence in the male/female relationship that the yin yang symbol reflects. The depth issue here is co-partnership; the depth issue is not actualizing self; it's not "How to get mine,"; it's not how to keep things like they are or how to change things just so they can be different. The issue is co-partnership. You see, what happens is that society suffers when it does not enjoy the benefits of both the male and the female dynamic. Aside from any personal conflict that may be created in a man or a woman's life, it is society that suffers from not having the gift of both of those dynamics present in an active relationship with each other. Authentic male and female participation is required at every level of society from family to international structures and organizations. And it is only as men and women are willing to recreate the images of the male and the female that society will once again experience those two factors in harmony. I was recently very privileged to attend a Global Women's Forum that involved Congressional women, wives of Congressmen, ambassadorial women, and women in high positions in the public and private sector of international agencies and organizations in Washington, D. C. One of the things that struck me happened after the forum. One woman who was the director of an international agency said, "The problem that women in my position continue to wrestle with is the problem of having no female image of how to be what I have managed to become. And so the choice that is left to her, is to mimic what she has always seen in the men who are and have been in such positions." It is very clear to her that what is required as she participates in society at the executive level is a new projection of something that has been missing, rather than simply enjoying the benefits of having "made it". I think that too often, the response in this area, is to try and figure out who is to blame for this whole frustrating situation. And the way you hear it, is like this.

The more traditional women say, "If those radical women would just keep their mouths shut, we'd probably get along all right." The more radical women say, "If these traditional women would just stop settling for things

as they are, we could get somewhere." And the more conservative men keep saying "It's those liberal men who have given up on the role of the man." And the more liberal man says, "Conservative men are holding on to some cherished kingdom of the past." The men are blaming the women, and the women are blaming the men, and back and forth people are blaming each other, trying to decide who's at fault. Well, I have an announcement for you. The question is not who's at fault. In fact, there is nobody at fault. The only thing that is at fault, is the times we live in and life itself. That's who's at fault. The question is how to get ourselves off this preoccupation with blame in order to move ahead in the task of recreating male/female images that are relevant in our time. Otherwise we may very well be in store for something that George Gilder called "sexual suicide" in his book bearing the same name. That may actually be an option unless we pick up this challenge. Self-confident men and women find that they can work with men and women. Self-confident women can work with men and other women. Self-confident men can work with women and other men. Selfhood relative to society and what society requires of us in this arena has to do with creating the images that release a creative collegiality between men and women, between women and women, and between men and men. For sure a new kind of courage is going to be required relative to the whole journey that men and women experience in this fascinating reality of life.

I am becoming more and more clear that it really is right to talk about life as a journey. Creativity in this journey, whether one dies at the age of three or 99, is dependent on the intercourse between all phases of life. Some have suggested that there are many phases. I would like to propose to you that there are four. In Phase I, roughly between the ages of 0 and 19, one is preoccupied with questioning and experimenting. You have doubts that the way things have always been is the way they should always be. In the ages between 20 and 39, life begins to take a shift. One becomes preoccupied with figuring out how to make things work, figuring out how to build solutions and answers to deal with the questions that haunted them in the earlier years of their lives. This is the major energy force of society. Between the ages of 40 and 59 life takes on a whole different face. One is established in particular roles and careers, and patterns of how to relate to life and other human beings. This is the established adulthood period. You become concerned with preserving some sense of order over against the chaos that life is. And then from 60 to the end of life, a person becomes consumed with wisdom that they have been allowed to experience and witness. When you're 60, 65, or 70, you've been around long enough to know a few things. You have a feel after what's going to last and what's not going to last, and what's an interesting side occupation and what's really related to selfhood. You've been around long enough to have some wisdom stored up. The tragedy, in our time, is that we cut off the Phase I dimension of life and the Phase IV dimension of life because society has a preoccupation with "production capacity" being that which signifies life. Therefore the extent to which you can produce for society, or produce in the context of the social fabric determines your relevance to society. Youth and children in Phase I just have not acquired much skill. They are raw resources. They haven't been refined and they have not acquired the skills or the sophistication. The elders energy is somewhat lessened or gone. They require a new rhythm in life. The aging process has left its mark. Because they are not actively productive our tendency is to cut them off. The challenge for us is in this arena--how to insure that all of the gifts of the four Phases are part of society itself.

Society needs the benefits of the questions that nobody wants to have raised. We would just assume that they go away. But questioning that established order is a dynamic that society must ever stand present to. Experimentation is critical to the health and vitality of society itself. The energy to conceive and throw oneself into producing solutions is vital to the health of society. To be willing to invest your wildest dreams in the creation of a new way, a new answer, a new perspective, keeps society alive and dynamic. The propensity to shout, "Hey, wait a minute!", and point out the flaws of wild experimentation is critical to the healthful functioning of society as well. And the wisdom to see through what is deeply related to authentic life and what is a passing fancy is critical to society. All four phases make for a healthy functioning. The trap that we often fall into that perpetuates the old images and allows us to cut off youth and elders is the "I'm too young," or "I'm too old" story. Up until 40, you're too young. You're too busy, you have to establish a career, you have to go to school, you have to get some money, you have to travel. You're too young to invest yourself in society. And then after 40, you're too old. "I have worked for 20 years, and I have done my share." You have all this going on and you have to have more time to keep it all going. "I have to plan my retirement. It's time for someone else to do their bit. I'm too old." And so the story of being too young and too old perpetuates our confusion over what to do and our frustration over what we are. The key is, to figure out how to live the one life that each of us has and to fully engage in each phase. It has to do with figuring out how to create and interject the structures in society that call forth the participation and the creativity of each phase of life. The real hard issue here relative to selfhood and integrity is "letting go." In each one of these phases, there is a death. You are faced with having to let go, time and time again. This is one of the things I like about the images in the book Passages. The author rehearses the various passages within a phase where you struggle with this issue of letting go. But once you get into the pattern of being the one who is always pointing out what's wrong, of being one who's always raising the question, always delving into this or that experimentation, it is hard to say "I'm finished with that, it's time to move on." And once you figure out the place that you can live a relevant and significant life in society, it's hard to say I'm going to let go and move on. I think that this is the issue of integrity as it relates to the phases. The courage it requires to let go, to create a legacy of how to engage in life in every phase of life and to let go and let those who are in that phase pick it up. And what you know is, the next generation will look at some of the patterns we've set and say, "This does not make sense any more." That's part of the journey of what life is all about. The decision to "let go" allows one to see freedom that you can borrow from any phase, at any point of your life.

Lastly, let me talk about trans-rationality. Life clearly teaches us that reality changes. And it requires us to continually formulate new responses to deal with change. In Ivy City, the community where I work, reality has changed. People no longer can say, "It's not worth while to live here anymore." Or, "Nobody cares." Or, "Nothing is going on here." The reason they no longer have this excuse is because some people have decided to move on rebuilding Ivy City. So reality in that neighborhood has changed. Reality does in fact change. I'm not talking about great eschatons in history, but the day in and day out, new dimensions of life are revealed; new energy and activity are poured into new facets of life and life changes.

To think about the 80's is to be preoccupied with mystery and wonder. Does it come to you that way? It seems the 80's represent the possibility of a breakloose in all the struggles of the past two decades. This

is true for the conscious, the semi-conscious and the unconscious. The 80's just hold mystery. Trans-rationality is about winning in relationship to the unknown mystery of the future. It's about winning in the midst of the reality shifting. Trans-rationality is creating images, stories and mythology that allows human beings to move in whatever situation is given. Trans-rationality is a critical part of the constancy that is true of life and has been throughout all of civilization. Let me give you a little formula. You take a human being and have that person live through archaic images, out-dated irrelevant mythologies, and irrelevant stories of what life is all about, and what you have is an archaic, out-dated, irrelevant human being. The times and the prospects of the 80's presents an overwhelming challenge for recreating the meaning of life at every level. It's the ability and capacity--no, it's the decision to act out the capacity to create meaning for our age that will separate the winners from the losers. The tendency is to deny one's capacity to do this. It's easier to say, "There is someone more capable than I; someone else is more capable of thinking through what will work or won't work; somebody else is more capable of keeping the total picture of the world before them; somebody else is more capable of inventing a way to respond to our times." It's always easier to have somebody else risk their intuition than to risk our own. Winners know that you have no possibility of dealing with the new unless you risk. So often we resort to the tried and true. Probably we resort more to the tried, because it's the true that wins. Truth is what wins. But we resort to the tried, that which we have done, that which we have seen, that which we have said, that which we have acted out and that which we feel competent to do. Selfhood, relative to trans-rationality is trusting your intuitions. That's a tricky thing! Trusting your intuitions doesn't mean flying off with the latest insight that pops into your head. The way that you trust your intuitions is to give them form. In giving form to them, you allow history to test out whether your intuitions are valid or not. This dynamic of intuition, and putting form on intuition is what changes history. This dynamic of risking intuition, and putting form on it is what is being cried for at every level of society today. You hear of people talking a lot about survival these days. It's very interesting. It used to be that only the poor talked about survival, or the people who lived outside of the mainstream of society; but everybody talks about survival these days! I believe that transrationality is at the heart of survival.

Let me tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a group of amoeba, and they were very happy swimming around in the pond that comprised the sociality of their lives. Then one day the wind shifted and the pond grew cold. Some amoeba said, "Something's different about this pond." Others said, "Oh, nothing's different. We just have to wait this little shift out and things will once again be just like they've always been." Others said "It's just not right for the pond to be cold!", and they just whined and whined. Still others said, "Why doesn't someone do something about this cold pond? Who's in charge of this pond any way?" Some became panic-stricken and frustrated and began to destroy other amoeba. Others just gave up hope that significant life could ever be lived again in the cold pond and they swam to a corner and finally died. Then one amoeba said, "To hell with all this! I'm going to recreate what amoebahood is so that there's a chance to live authentically in this cold pond. I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to grow some hair." So this courageous little amoeba grew some hair. Then as it swam around the pond, it began to notice other amoeba who had grown hair. Now, a lot of the hairless amoeba laughed and scorned the hairy amoeba. But together the hairy amoeba created a story and a demonstration

of the gift of being hairy. Soon other amoeba saw what was happening. They decided they were going to grow hair too. Finally a whole new life form was created.

That's what is going on in our times. The amoeba that grows the hair are the ones who win. It's not for their sakes that they win. Rather, they win to preserve amoebahood. In our age, humankind at every level of society is dependent upon a rethinking of the foundational images of what it means to be authentically human relative to the sociality we live in, relative to the maleness and femaleness, relative to the phases of life and relative to the new reality that we experience, what ever our situation is.