

CONSCIOUSNESS OF HOPE BEYOND HOPE

Without the consciousness of profound consciousness no new society will actually be built. Consciousness of profound consciousness is like iron rods that are driven into the bedrock of reality. The so-called Iron Man is made entirely out of the consciousness of profound consciousness. At the deepest level of humanness there are just three strengths; there are just three fundamental dynamics of authentic humanness: One is called Faith, one is called Hope and one is called Love. The greatest of these is Love.

Tonight we are going to talk about Hope. Hope appears when Love and Faith have already become conscious in your life. Man is Faith, Hope and Love in his essential timeless reality before he becomes conscious of it. Consciousness of Faith, Hope and Love happens first in faith and love; and then and only then, does the consciousness of hope appear. Usually, I think it is Belief that the conscious creature first stumbles upon. When you come to the end of the road in your life of faith, the Mystery of life itself reaches through the end of the road and believes you into believing that living life just as it is, is worthwhile. This happens not because life has changed in any way, but because I have changed when I became conscious of the fact that I just believe.

Then I become conscious that I care. It is not that I ought to care, or that if I try hard enough, I can care. I just care. Care grips you and takes you on a rough trip to the place where you care so much that you wish you did not care. I remember watching a television program about an ex-missionary from Brazil. He was accused of associating with Communists, was locked up in prison and tortured. He told about his experiences of being tortured in that prison. He described how electric shocks were tied onto various parts of his body, about flames set off in his head, how they hung him by his hands all night so he would be a little less capable of resisting the next day. When he finished this long description he said, "Well, by some miracle, and with State Department assistance, I got out. But there are tens of thousands still in Brazil undergoing the same treatment."

At this point I found myself standing in front of the television set and yelling a loud NO! This treatment of human beings could not go on. The old psalm about Babylon and the dashing of heads of children against the rocks-- that kind of mood prevailed. That kind of care is not a welcome visit. It is the kind of care that drives you all the time. You are latently angry at things all the time. For example, a colleague cannot get up in the morning and I am suddenly angry. I hear that anger down inside saying, "What do you mean you cannot get out of bed this morning? How are you going to end the tyranny of

Brazil if you can't even get up?" Of course, that is not usually an appropriate response. You have to take that horrible care inside of you and with it create a modest tactical response to that situation. Maybe you will be in Brazil someday and there too, you would have to create a very careful response to act out your dreadful care.

Care is not a welcome thing. It puts pressure on your life. It puts so much pressure on your life, that it seems your faith has undergone a crisis. We have talked about the heavy load of care as a ten-ton crane. Care becomes such a heavy load that you think life is not worth living after all. Trust is the gift that is given to you in such a moment. It is the trust that you can go on caring and that you can act out your care. It is trust that life is livable in the midst of such care. It is trust that the load pressing on you from one side and the care that is pressing upon you from the other side are not too much to bear, although they both seem overwhelming. This is an active abandonment to care. It is the trust of being.

You may find that you are also experiencing power--power to actualize your care, to go ahead and do the undoable. Some days, you find yourself crying out, "Have mercy on me, I can't go on." The answer you hear is "All right, here is mercy. Go on." And you do go on. That kind of power is present.

When care and power are in the midst of your life, then, bubbling up between them, is Peace. There are just no problems. Sixteen new demands walk in the door and you say, "Put them on the table. I will deal with them as soon as I can." The terror that you may, after all, fail, enters the room. You say, "All right, Mr. Terror, sit down right here. Welcome to the party." Sleepiness, that longing for death, enters the room, and you say, "All right, Mr. Death-Urge, your place is right over here. Sit down and behave yourself." There are no problems. The peace of life handles every conceivable problem.

What bubbles up between belief and trust is Certainty. This is the assurance that life will go on being life forever. Life is a mysterious thing and no one understands it. But I know this mysterious thing, and I have been made able to believe in it. I know the mysterious life in which I am placing my feet, I know that life will come up to meet every footstep that I put down into the future. Life is forever new and forever alien to me to believe and enable me to trust, and because of this knowledge, I experience this strange assurance bubbling up between my belief and my trust.

Hope appears in the gap between Faith and Love. It appears in the gap between assurance and problemlessness. If consciousness of Faith and consciousness of Love are not present, then there is no consciousness of hope.

Faith is a struggle with the alien image. The alien image breaks in upon you and tears up every sense of truth you ever had. It blocks out all of your trust. It puts you into total blackout, and that inverts your posture on life. In struggling the struggle of faith, you are involved in changing your mind.

You are changing your mind about the whole of life. You are changing your deep understanding about all of life. Love is the struggle with the strange fire of searing care. The fire of care becomes a fire of strange, awful power to carry out your care. You are falling in love. You are falling in love with the whole show. You are focusing your passion. Now Hope is the final struggle. It is the struggle of nothingness. It will involve you in a total commitment to nothingness. You might say that hope is a "wipe-out" in which you give your entire self. Hope has to do with becoming nothing--becoming a zero. There is something overwhelmingly wondrous and overwhelmingly dreadful about Hope at one and the same time. It is very much like this poem that you know so well. I think this is on Hope: "Ah, when it is nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, then it is everything."

What a relief to be wiped out! Most of your everyday understandings of hope have already been wiped out by the time you grasp hold of faith and love. You had hoped that you would be secure, content and intellectually certain. It is obvious that those hopes have been tampered with. Well, all right. Life is insecure and uncertain, but within those boundaries, I will continue to hope: hope my children grow up to be fine, responsible revolutionaries. That is a fine hope, but it is not the hope that will never disappoint. I hope that my husband comes around and sees that he, too, can be a spirit person. That is a fine hope. But it is not the hope that will never disappoint. I hope that my local community becomes a sign of resurgence for all mankind. That is a fine hope too, but it is not the hope that will never disappoint. I hope that the world will be better in the next twenty years after we have worked so hard. That is a fine hope, too. But it is not the hope that will never disappoint.

The Hope that does not disappoint does not depend upon any external situation remaining the same or any external situation changing into what we are working for. The Hope that does not disappoint begins where every hope in any temporal results and conditions is wiped out. The Hope beyond hope appears when all has been given up.

All of us know that our hopes for our children are really anxieties. We are worried that things will not turn out well. My hope for my spouse is an anxiety. We are anxious because it may not work out the way we hope. Our hope for our community and our world are actually our deepest anxieties. We are deeply aware that it may not work out for the best. He who lives in temporal hope, therefore, lives in anxiety. The Hope beyond hope is the Hope in which there is no anxiety whatsoever about the future. The Hope beyond hope involves an unconditional surrendering of your anxieties about the future. If you do not have any temporal hope, you do not have any anxieties about the future. Blessed relief.

Most of us expend a lot of spiritual energy trying to make our relationships solid. That is one dimension of Hope. We want our relationships to be solid. Another dimension is that we want our dreams to come true. So we burn up a lot of spiritual energy trying to make our dreams come true. Or maybe we want our sense of well being now. We want our fondest desires to be fulfilled.

The biggest truth about life is that no relationship is solid. My relationship to my children, to my wife, to the Movement, to the nation, to all my colleagues is not solid. The only solid relationship is the relationship to the Mystery, and that really means that there is no solid relationship. For the Mystery is precisely that which terrifies all of my solid relationships. A skyscraper can go up in flame, and some of my favorite people can be in it. A nation can crumble to the ground. A shark can rise up out of the abyss and chop off a leg. Life is really spooky! It is spooky even when no calamities occur.

In Australia we held an Academy outdoors, at a camp, and I was fascinated by the different kinds of birds. A rain bird haunted our tent. Rain birds live at the top of tall trees and make sounds that can be heard for miles. They always do this before it is going to rain. I was fascinated, searching and looking everywhere, trying to find a rainbird to see how he made his sound. I finally found one. The secret is that he gives his whole self to it. His whole being seems to contract and a hoot comes out and pierces the world. There were other birds in Australia that spooked me--the Kuckaburra birds. They always seem to work in pairs. Two of them fly in and land on top of the telephone poles, turn back their heads and start going like they go. They make noise so loud that a seminar is wiped out for miles around until they stop. All you can hear at the zoo in Australia are these birds. I never saw such noisy birds. Life is just spooky. I was so fascinated with birds when I got to India that I watched birds some more. There is a crow in India. But he doesn't look like out crow--he has a grey front. He is very adventurous and very daring, this crow. I had a tremendous conversation with crows for a good while there. I believe that if any bird in the whole world is conscious, it is this Indian crow.

Another thing that spooked me was the platypus. I began to realize that the platypus was a great stage in evolution. The issue, at that time, was whether you were going to carry your eggs or leave them on the ground. The platypus lays his eggs, hatches them, and then the little platypuses crawl up into the pouch. He is a very early marsupial. He couldn't quite decide whether to lay eggs or not. Anyhow, I was struck by what a mysterious thing the evolutionary process has been. Can you imagine experimenting with such crucial things as not laying eggs anymore? The platypus moved into an entirely new way of caring for the young.

That reminded me, that there was a time in the evolutionary process when one or two particular apes got spooked by the mysteriousness of life. Can you image what it must have been like for the first ape who was contemplating birds and who was aware of the terrors of consciousness, who experienced Faith, Hope, and Love and could not tell anybody about it--all of his grandmothers, aunts, uncles and cousins with their ape-mouths grinning, hearing nothing he had to say. What a lonely, awful, dreadful experience it must have been for the first spooked ape.

I am interested in this experience because I realize that I am a spooked ape. I see nothing but the Mystery everywhere I look. All of my relationships are spooked by the Mystery. There is nothing I am except that relationship to the Mystery. Every visitor is the appearance of angels. Every mundane space and time situation is a place where awe and Mystery are present.

That is what it means to be the chosen one. I am the chosen one. Mystery has chosen me to behold Mystery wherever I look. I am that relationship to the Mystery. This is not credit to me. This is who I always was and who I always will be. One day, in the midst of my Faith, in the midst of my Love, it just appeared. The Mystery has chosen me to be his. The Mystery is always going on in my whole life. I am conscious of being related to the Mystery. I am nothing else but relationship to Mystery. No relationship whatsoever is solid. All of my relationships are spooked. I am the chosen one. And in this I can rest assured: That this relationship I have with the Mystery won't be taken away. Any attempts I make to get rid of it will destroy me. In this relationship I have a hope that does not disappoint. I am maintained by the Mystery itself.

The presence of Being is the active side of Profound Hope. When you are doing your temporal hopes, you are trying to make your dreams come true. Sometimes we make our dreams come true, but they do not tarry long. And if any dreams that do come true, do stay for a while, we discover that they do not adequately satisfy, so we dream on into the future with other dreams. There is nothing wrong with temporal hope, with dreaming dreams, with working hard to fulfill our dreams. It is just a part of life. But if I live in these temporal hopes, I am a paralyzed creature. For temporal hope is really anxiety; and even dreams that do come true, do not finally make our lives sure. We are rightly anxious about the new society we are trying to build, and when this society does come, we will find ourselves anxious about the next one. This is one of the most tragic insights I have encountered in my life. When we get through building the New Social Vehicle, we will look around and see suffering and difficulty, and the injustice that will appear to us at that time will seem no less than what we see at this moment, before we begin. How many societies have been built before? How many have come and then gone?

An Indian Myth tells of a king who asked that question in pride, because he saw himself building the greatest society ever built. A little boy appeared to him and talked about the ants that were coming across the floor. Ants were coming across the floor four abreast. They came clear across the long room and went out the other side. They kept coming in and going out. The king said, "What are those ants?" The boy smiled and said, "They are all the previous civilization builders." and the king collapsed. He stopped building civilizations until a little more ministry was done to him. That is the nature of all temporal hope. It is overwhelmed by the endless change. It is overwhelmed by the immensity of the flux of time. Profound Hope is the hope that does not disappoint.

Here is my clue to what the doing pole of Profound Hope is like: when you are with it, IT will be with you. When your deeds are with it, IT will be with your deeds. When your words are with it, IT will be with your words. This is

like a resonance in a room. (Clap, echo) When you are with it, IT will be with you. Some of you have had this thing happen to you. If any of us have successfully pulled off a desent lecture, a good seminar, or brought a really fine model into a troubled situation, then you know that when you are with it, IT will be with you. Haven't you been amazed when your puny activity was accompanied by the presence of Being.

Think of yourself assigned to India. You must go and do what needs to be done. You hope you can understand India, but you know you never will. You hope you can make a contribution, but you know it will seem like one insignificant bean-sprout in a desert of need. You hope you can stand during the period of your assignment; that you will not collapse in the heat and the hard work. But you know that even that hope can disappoint. The Hope that does not disappoint, the Hope that sustains you in doing impossible deeds, is the Hope in the presence of Being. If you are with it, IT will be with you.

One of my colleagues was telling me that these days you could make 25 years of commitments in one afternoon. How frightening it is to live out of the knowledge that you can not sustain what you have already launched. Someone has asked this colleague, "Now, just how long do you intend to stay here?" And some muse of wonderous clairvoyance must have overtaken her, because she said right back, "I intend to be here forever." She was counting big on the presence of Being. When you do indeed, participate in the great sweep of history, the echo goes on forever.

Between the called one, and the presence of Being, bubbles up the joy of life. A tremendous relief goes along with giving up all temporal hopes. This struggle hardly needs to be described, for you and I know of the good spiritual energy that we have burned up trying to make our fondest dreams come true and stay true. When we have submitted all of our hope to the nothing that is; when you know that all your hopes are really anxieties, and have given up all of your great anxieties into the great sea of being, then a tremendous relief settles in upon your life. The emptying out of all temporal hope leaves a big receptacle for the joy of life.

This is a very ordinary life happening. You do not have to be the world's leading mystic to understand the joy of life. And yet, it does seem to be an inward secret, a profoundly inward bliss that you are talking about here, a bliss which not even poetry could express. It is like an immediate appreciation of authentic consciousness and of all the mundane conditions in which your profound consciousness has to live. It is gratitude and delight so inward that no neighbor is sought to share it with. It would be perfectly fine to stay in a cell alone for the rest of one's life if this bliss would remain. But, of course, bliss-filled consciousness must get out of bed, do the dishes, carry out the garbage, and deal with an entire world of despair. And this it is perfectly able to do because no tremor in the world can reach into the deeps where this bliss exists. I will read a little poem here:

In the silence of the dark night
Was heard the voice of all creation
Praising Mystery in hushed cries of somber awe.

In the stillness of the long march
Was seen the dance of essential man
Embracing all creation and in its invisible origin

Unseen and unhead came the blissful knowledge
That the voice of assurance and the dance of peace
Had no ending.

Like faith and love, Hope is established by life itself; it just comes. When Hope appears in the midst of Faith and Love, it seems to be nothing at all. Yet, it is like the hermitism within the most radical hermit. It is like the most radical engagement deep within all radical engagement with life. It has something to do with our most accurate intuition and our most amazing creativity. Yet, it is not the salt of the earth. Love is the salt of the earth. Love is the greatest. Love enters time and serves the realm of existing, despairing men. Love is the deed of bringing temporal hope and eternal Hope to the hopeless.

There are just three great struggles in life, just three great strengths in life, just three fundamental dynamics of humanness--Faith, and Hope and Love. But the greatest of these is Love.

----Gene Marshall

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