

GLOBAL COMMUNITY FORUM

Several years ago, I thought the most effective method to change history was to delineate a set of universal symbols that deal with the ultimate questions of consciousness in such a way that people would so adequately appropriate that symbolic system that they would be inspired to go out and genuinely serve the world through the adequate suggestions involved in the course that had presented a set of new possibilities for them. I had not thought out fully the practical implications of getting 3.5 billion people to do this, and did not have a tactical system for getting millions of people through a 44-hour course that was required for the symbol system to be thoroughly explicated and dramatized.

Without depreciating that effort, and hoping to continue that method on as many fronts as possible as long as possible, the recent world-wide "turn to the world" by the movement, and the subsequent intensification of consciousness, have led me to see that the new tool of Global Community Forum, or Town Meeting, has much more potential for affecting the world population -- that, at the rate of 200 people per GCF, it would take only 175,000 systematically scheduled meetings to touch 1% of the globe -- which is the percentage Mao said did the revolutionary job in his situation in China.

Abstractly stated, this new tool of GCF is predicated on the ontological fact that persons are created by a community or combination of communities, and that every community comprises individual persons so created. It is further predicated on the fact that individual consciousnesses can and do change through events that comprehensively challenge reduced images. A third predication is the fact that the ultimate potential of consciousness is the state relating to the polar tension between the awareness of one's own freedom and (because he anticipates the end of his consciousness) the necessary deeds that are incumbent upon him in any present moment. Fourthly, the GCF is based upon the human experience that, whenever consciousness is impacted by the comprehensive, futuristic, intentional, and archaic dimensions of reality, one is potentiated from his present state into his unique and ever-changing state of corporate being.

To change history, I used to think that people would have to be able to understand and interpret the above mystical experience before they could effectively enact what I perceived as worthy plans for mankind. The GCF has demonstrated that life itself forces people to respond in this process whether they can interpret it adequately or not, and that they do not need to be able to interpret this mystery with any particular set of symbols in order to maintain authentic responsibility, day-to-day. The GCF is a profound construct that makes a person aware, in his own symbols, that he has had an experience of authenticity which he hopes will be reduplicated again and again, despite the necessary pain element in the process.

What happens in a Global Community Forum - Town Meeting - is that the person, to start off the day is asked to look at the challenges facing his community. What are the challenges in his community? You begin to see that the very mystery of life itself is addressing him when he started to

try to deal with that question of the challenges. That is to say, one is being faced with the kind of care one already has coming up into his consciousness. One is being faced with the bursting of illusions by the comprehensive, the futuristic, the intentional, and the archaic. He has before him the design that you invented in the summers called the Social Process Triangles which keep the discussion about what his community actually is challenged by, face to face. One's nose is up against the mystery of life itself by having the whole comprehensive social process out there by which he has to try to deal with his questions in terms of the future.

We have said many times, when the comprehensive, the futuristic, the intentional and the archaic impact you, you have been impacted by the mystery of life. Or, to use religious symbols you have been impacted by God. For example, to have an illusion that some irritant about potholes in the street you want palavered about in the Town Meeting raised up as the thing and how some politician ought to fill them or something like that while the whole social process triangle is staring you right in the face. That whole social process says, "No, you have got to be the creature that you are in your total situation." One is profoundly addressed by the comprehensive in the social process triangles, and the future orientation of what challenges you, immediately invades your illusion of getting the potholes blown up into the most important thing that the people ought to be concerned about in your community. People think at the end of Town Meetings that "I just never thought any such thing could happen, that we could get together and talk like this and keep objective." That is because of the profound work that went into the social process triangles over the years.

And then at lunchtime, they come to the point of praise. They have been absolved by life itself, not by a symbolic pronouncement, as is frequently helpful and necessary, but by life. They have been absolved without anybody saying so, but life itself says, "All right, now, these are the challenges as you are willing to face them, outside of some reduced illusion, in the face of the comprehensive. Life absolves you!" People wonder, why there is such a celebration at lunch. It is because those people, many of them for the first time in their lives, have said as a community what they are actually facing. They have come up against God, they have come up against consciousness of the final mystery of life in this very profound way.

Then in the afternoon they work out the proposals for their community. As they begin to work these things out, they are faced with tension between freedom and necessity that Bonhoeffer spells out so well in the paper called "Freedom" that some of us have studied. What a human is, is a being that lives in that tension between freedom and necessity, or he calls it freedom and obedience. Speaking sociologically, obedience; speaking abstractly, freedom and necessity. But he has to come up finally with doing the necessary deed, as you know. In the afternoon, those people participate in a very profound experience that that is what being human is, working out these proposals. And, then, on their behalf, one group representationally creates a song, a symbol, a story, and a slogan for that community. And they put it all together so that in one big dramatic moment at the end of the day, people celebrate the fact that they have been authentic people for one day. By being persons in community living out the impingement of the mystery of life upon them, and

working out the human situation in the tension between obedience and freedom that always goes on with a human being. They have had a tremendous experience they now celebrate. That is what their life is all about. And you wonder why do they want to have other town meetings? I know why they want to have other town meetings. Because they have a deep chromosome they inherited from the amoeba, or wherever, to be a human being and not just to be a continuing digestive system. And there are a number in the world who are great big 6-foot tall continuing digestive systems who have never become human beings as well as whole communities, as in America, the consumer society. This is not to knock them. It is simply to say that if we want to change history, we can change those digestive system societies to be human with this one profound tool called Global Community Forum.

The underlying strategy of the Global Community Forum is one of catalysis. That is, we are not out to tell those people what to think at all. Catalysis means that you are willing to let a person -- how does Bonhoeffer put it -- be left alone. I think the most profound experiences of consciousness that I have had were when I was up against otherness and I was just left alone. There was not anybody around giving me good advice. You ought to praise whatever you want to call the Mystery that you are a part of a community in which the people are willing to just leave you alone with your struggle with the Mystery. We do a lot of articulation about this, being left alone with your own struggle up against the Mystery, having been impacted by a community that knows what you are up against. Every one of them is up against the same thing, and nobody has some kind of a thing they want to promote. I am indeed profoundly grateful for having been given the opportunity to live in that kind of a situation.

What I am trying to say is, catalysis is going to be doubly hard for a movement of people that have been geared toward a pedagogical way of doing things or a guru-type way of doing things that has designs upon a person in addition to their experiencing their profound freedom. The tension is between freedom and necessity that one experiences, and letting the Mystery of life itself deal with them in the Global Community Forum. For example, in one that I was just at recently the people had finally come up with a challenge that they were facing. They just brainstormed out a challenge and stated it as the lack of Judeo-Christian principles being taught in their community. They did not have anything, either in the church or in the synagogue or in the schools, that was carrying on the tradition. They were struggling with what they would propose to do about that. And some guy who is connected with the movement happened to be in the group and he said, "Well, why don't we have a community Academy?" That was a fine suggestion, but the man does not live in that community at all. He does not reside there. It is his business what is going on there because he does live in the world, but those people were struggling through before the mystery of life what they would propose to do about that challenge. Of course, if we want to provide them later on with all kinds of tools, like we have got Academies and courses and all kinds of help that we could give them, but they need to struggle to say what it is they are going to do. That is the very important thing, because catalysis includes the presupposition that the meeting itself is an end in itself.

We are not very interested in the results of a Town Meeting or, in the long range, whether or not you can formulate people. We have other tools for this. If we do not get our heads screwed on we will ruin the Town Meeting by the very suggestion of what we think they should concretely do. Do you see

that? The RS-I and the PLC went along fine and people encouraged other people to go as soon as they had been to one. But, when people started thinking that RS-I was a gimmick to hook people into the movement (called human absorption in Bonhoeffer's terms), you know what happened; recruitment took a nosedive. Nobody is going to be hooked that way; People are too alert and too astute to pay attention to somebody's manipulative devices, use that unsophisticatedly, if you will. Anyway, the point is, catalysis presumes that ~~those~~ people are left alone with their struggle before the Mystery and are not dependent on our capacity to reflect upon and interpret their experience for them, nor to teach them our way of interpreting experience. It is not whether you are going to trust local man, the question is whether you will trust God to do the job that He very well knows how to do and does with them all the time. And leave yourself out there like Jesus, a good example, I think, of somebody who used catalysis. What people are interested in is their own community's solitary experience of living with their consciousness of how the Mystery is affecting them in their own actual challenges and the proposals they would make about them.

-Joseph Pierce

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