

The Times and Social Demonstration

We are going to work far more practically on social methods this time than in the Social Methods School we had last March. We have a brand new creation this time, as well as a shift in images. We are going to see how to build primal community for the purpose of bringing off social demonstration.

I want to begin by talking about the essential dimensions of social demonstration: why it is necessary, its dynamics, and then outline the course of the school.

Social demonstration expresses something that is not ordinarily the way we talk about what goes on. Its unique distinction is that it is a category for a moment in history. Possibly the closest analogy from the past would be Plato's "essences" or "forms." A social demonstration is as utterly unique and individual as "form," yet just as complex.

Social demonstration is certainly not acting or demonstrating socially. It is not creating a moral, social act. It is not doing something "good" in society. All of us have been burned by those definitions of social demonstration. Furthermore, social demonstration is not acting out some need to fill up our lives with significance, or some need to express our humanness in relation to some situation.

In *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, Miss Miller had to do something to care for Mountain because of her need, and she would have destroyed him had there not been outside intervention. Whatever else it is, social demonstration is not out to do something. It is not out to fulfill our significance or fill a need in our lives.

Social demonstration is doing the necessary deed for all humanity. Social demonstration is doing the necessary deed now. First of all, it is an action. It is not thinking, ideas, talking, preaching, or anything else but action. It is an activity, an event, a happening, a going-on-ness. It is a sociological action. Now obviously, it could be wherever two or three people are gathered together. That would be sociological action. It could be wherever a family is moving or acting.

But that is not where I would point to explain what we mean by social demonstration today. It is that civilizing process beyond the family and the individual, in the context of which families and individuals can exist and participate in the thrust of humanness. Sometimes we call it the neighborhood; sometimes a parish, a village, a city-state, or a task.

I want to list four things which point to the essential meaning of social demonstration. First of all, it is a universal action. It is an activity that attempts to respond to the All, to the All that is, to All at once. It is action that honors the fact that all the earth belongs to all the people, that all the goods belong to all the people; all the goods of nature, the decisions of history, the inventions of man. It is action that responds to everything that is, that has been and will be. That is the kind of universal action that is social demonstration.

Secondly, social demonstration is profound action. It is action, not to respond to some tidbit, but to respond to the deep waves of history itself. It responds to the ontological given -- in the depths of life, to the basic structures of society and its trends, to the depth structures of humanness. In other words, it is profound in being the basic, primal, depth action of life.

Third, social demonstration is perpetual action. No matter where you come across it, the social process is always imbalanced. Every effort to rebalance it finally fails. We know as we look at the balance that emerges out of imbalance, that it will be imbalanced from the perspective of the new balance that is required.

For example, the present economic system must die in order that a new economic system can be born. Thus, a balancing will take place. But in that balancing, a new imbalance will appear. The new system, including the new economic system will have to die in order to correct this new imbalance. That is perpetual revolution, or perpetual action in the midst of history.

Fourth, social demonstration is paradoxical action. It is that which is "in but not of." We have enough lucidity about suffering in the world to be frightened to death of getting near the structures which perpetuate suffering. Yet, with lucidity about suffering in the world, social demonstration embraces the structures of society which perpetuate and intensify that suffering. It enters into changing those structures, and it stands outside the structures to require a recreation, death and resurrection, in order to move the structures into the future.

Paradoxical action does not lose itself to the doom of the world by succumbing to cynicism even as it participates in the doom of the world and its cynicism. Nor does it abstract itself from the world, or try to escape from the world's cynicism. It is in but not of. It embraces the structures of injustice while daring to break them loose and recreate them as it moves into the future.

Another dimension of social demonstration is that it is catalytic action. Social demonstration is never head on assault. It is always catalytic action, that is a sign. It is always action that breaks open new possibility, that opens things to the future. This school is catalytic action. We hope to train ourselves so that we can train others to do social demonstration, which elicits a call to others to do social demonstration.

So, we intend to create a chain of catalytic action as we move into the future. These are the essential dynamics of social demonstration.

Why social demonstration at this time? Why did we not have it before? Certainly social demonstration has existed for the past ten years. As you look back in history, the church, whether it used that name or not, has always used an evangelistic battering ram against the world in which it lived. Why social demonstration today in what we are doing.

The times are calling for social demonstration. If we listen to what the world is saying and what the times are saying, we have no choice. There are radical upheavals and we have attempted to name the great waves of history. We know the world has arrived at an economic maturity and we can see that a cadre of leadership is responding around the world. This economic maturity is not an isolated happening which only a few people see. It is a happening that everyone, regardless of economic situation, can participate in-- and the people of the world are demanding that opportunity.

The horrifying deluge of government downfalls these past few months has signaled to the world, as if with semaphore flags, the inadequacy of known polity systems and the demands of local man to participate in the decision-making processes of his society.

Another wave of history is the emergence of a global culture. The global village today has become an operating reality. Everyone understands what it means to be radically interrelated to the rest of the world. No longer can anyone expect a private, isolated act to have any demonstrative effect if it is limited to anything less than the globe. Therefore, any sign must be done as social demonstration. It cannot be effective as a good act or a moral deed. The concern for ecology, the technological revolution, are global phenomena, demanding social demonstration.

You can see that mankind is participating in resurgence. It is not that a few of us have gathered together and are resurging. The world itself, humanity itself, is in a great objective thrust into the future with its absurdity and with its resurgence.

Resurgence is rebalancing the social process. It is redirecting the economic dynamic. It is re-empowering the political dynamic to stand up against the economic. It is revitalizing the political dynamic so that human beings can grasp themselves as peoples with unique cultures. It is overcoming the malaises born of the imbalances. It is moving them from the psychological cul-de-sac into which they have fallen, on into the sociological, so that people can see their genuine opportunity to engage, and use their creativity on behalf of history vocationally.

There is an opportunity to create meaning out of the shambles of society and mark it for the future. People who are pushing into the depths of society and humanness itself, are saying that no matter what age a person is, every moment in life is significant now. Every age can be recovered through an understanding of phasiality.

In the tension of sexuality, between the adventuring, risking dynamic and the bubbling, conserving, creating dynamic, the world is experiencing a joint pioneering of the future. Men and women are recovering anew the humanness of each other which allows them to stand in a dynamical tension.

Rationality is being redefined as an opportunity to make sense of every mundane moment of life, to revitalize the transparency of life. Man shows up as a caring human being. Perhaps it is care for your family, your workmates or your country. You stumble across yourself just caring. It is not that you ought to care; you just realize that you do care for the whole world. Resurgence is the possibility of creating within yourself the one who sees that he cares for the whole globe. Resurgence is the recovery of the fulfilled life, the life that is filled full of possibility for expenditure of ourselves.

Today you can see our society struggling in what has been called "radical upheaval." A few years ago a third world emerged between East and West. Now a "fourth world" has become evident. It consists of a dispossessed, deprived, wretched, tromped down

group of people who have no chance whatsoever in the world. But they are not going to lie there, and you and I cannot allow them to remain there.

Yet, there are 450 million people starving from malnutrition today. Whole nations are just being wiped out of existence. These are not little nations with 2 million people; the eighth largest nation in the world is in danger of being wiped out because it cannot feed itself.

I have never seen an ice floe, except in movies. Resurgence reminds me of one of those horrifying, terrifying experiences of an ice flow, where ice as big as this building moves out and begins to break into huge blocks, splatters over everything and destroys everything in sight as it plunges into the dark, cold water. It is that kind of situation we see today. And it is creating unimaginable human suffering.

Back in the 60's, the United Nations decided to do something about the trend of rich nations becoming richer and poor nations becoming poorer. The World Council of Churches joined in that concern two or three years later. I read recently that the trend has not been reversed. Instead, the gap has continued to grow wider and the trend has begun to set in concrete. There is a horrifying tension in the upheavals exploding in society. The upheavals have caused a corresponding implosion within human beings. There is a tearing and ripping loose of humanness itself.

For fifty years we have talked about the break-up of western civilization and the confrontation of non-being experienced in the question, "Who am I?" When everything passes away, who am I? In the fifties and sixties, we were confronted instead with a world of overwhelming possibilities and demands descending upon us. The scream inside of us was, "What do I?" Now another shift is taking place and we are confronted with Being itself. The internal cry is now, "How can I?" The global news of starvation, inflation, ecological and political collapses has raised the question, "How can I live now?"

No one doubts any longer that something must be done. People seem eager to grab hold and move into the future, but how can they? This question is, of course, a cry of engagement, but it is a double-edged sword. It can only be solved with social demonstration because you cannot tell people, "Here is something in which you ought to engage." We are too far gone for that.

I will never forget an experience in the early days of 5th City. I was in a garage in the neighborhood late at night, with one dimly lit lamp hanging down. A swirl of darkness, smoke and haziness filled the room. Fifteen of us were sitting around the table asking what the problems were.

One woman had her head down on the table and was shaking it back and forth. I said, "Go ahead, what are the problems?" I thought, perhaps she was frightened, but she just shook her head. Then I thought maybe she is angry. "What is wrong? Go ahead." I continued. "No." "Well, at least you live in this neighborhood. No one else knows the problems like you do. Share them with us." "No." "Well, why?" "It wouldn't do any good anyway."

You can tell people all the time that they should do something, but if they are convinced they can't, they scream from the bowels of their lives is "How can I?" The only way to break that loose is through social demonstration, or actualization of possibility in the midst of history. Today is different from the sixties, although we are still feeling the weight of our bodies as terrifying and enervating. Yet, people are filled full. They have to respond. They just explode,

We read in the papers about a burglary. The proprietor ran after the escaping burglar and tackled him on the sidewalk. A crowd gathered and tore the burglar away from the proprietor. They began to cut him up until finally they just stripped him into threads. Man today is going to act. Whether his actions blind him or bind him in the enervating squalor of sitting in his own juice, or whether he is driven wild with fury, he is going to act. How can he be released to act so that what he does demonstrates possibility?

We are the ones who must decide to move into the wasteland of the future to devise models and methods of actualization, to do the necessary deed and to do it now. The primal community experiment is a response to our times which demand social demonstration. Sociologically, the primal community experiment is the key to social demonstration. Primal community is not just two or three people; it is not the family. It is a community beyond the family which allows the whole civilizing process to be present as a sign to the whole community, whatever that sign is for our time.

Primal community is able to hit all the pressure points, to hit society dramatically, in a way that would be very difficult for any smaller group. Society will take notice when you take a hunk of the civilizing process and hold it out for society to examine.

If primal community is the arena in which social demonstration takes place, then the key to creating primal community is in the local church dynamic. The church dynamic contains the shaman activity which breaks community open to the universal. Shaman activity is that which breaks life open to the profound, which keeps the perpetual revolution going, and keeps the paradoxical present in the midst of life.

The church dynamic includes the cultic, which provides the myths, rites and symbols that allow the community to grasp its humanness. It is the context-setting dynamic that establishes the symbol system, feeds in the piety or the glue and recreates the formal religion out of which a community lives.

The church dynamic is also the human settlement dynamic-- an overlay of care on the social process that lets new structures of justice come into being and new modes of action to take place. Wherever structures of humanness are being devised, it is only the church that can conduct social demonstration. It is only the church that can renew primal community, for it is only the church whose dynamic can do that. It is only the church which has the needed tools.

What are the operating principles behind social demonstration? The first operating principle is composed of the 5th City presuppositions: de-limited geographical area, to avoid oozing like a wet mop all over the city; all the problems in an area, not just to do some good little thing here and there; all the ages; because unless all ages are hit, the circle of symbolic relationships breaks down and nothing happens; the key point of paralysis, the depth human problem where a community's anxieties are manifested. Last, the key to all the presuppositions is that symbols are what recreate the social situation.

The second operating principle is effective methods. The first of these is tactical thinking. We have all been imbued with analytical thinking, which is primarily a closed system. Whenever you start thinking analytically, you have already cut off the wave of the future. Tactical thinking allows the great waves of society impinging on your own life to bubble up out of the deeps. The happenings that you can only hazily touch and pull into focus, are released to allow the future to take form within you.

A second method is corporate action. Everyone takes part in corporate action, but radical intentionality or intensification is lacking. Adding this element is like turning a switch. People move. Things happen.

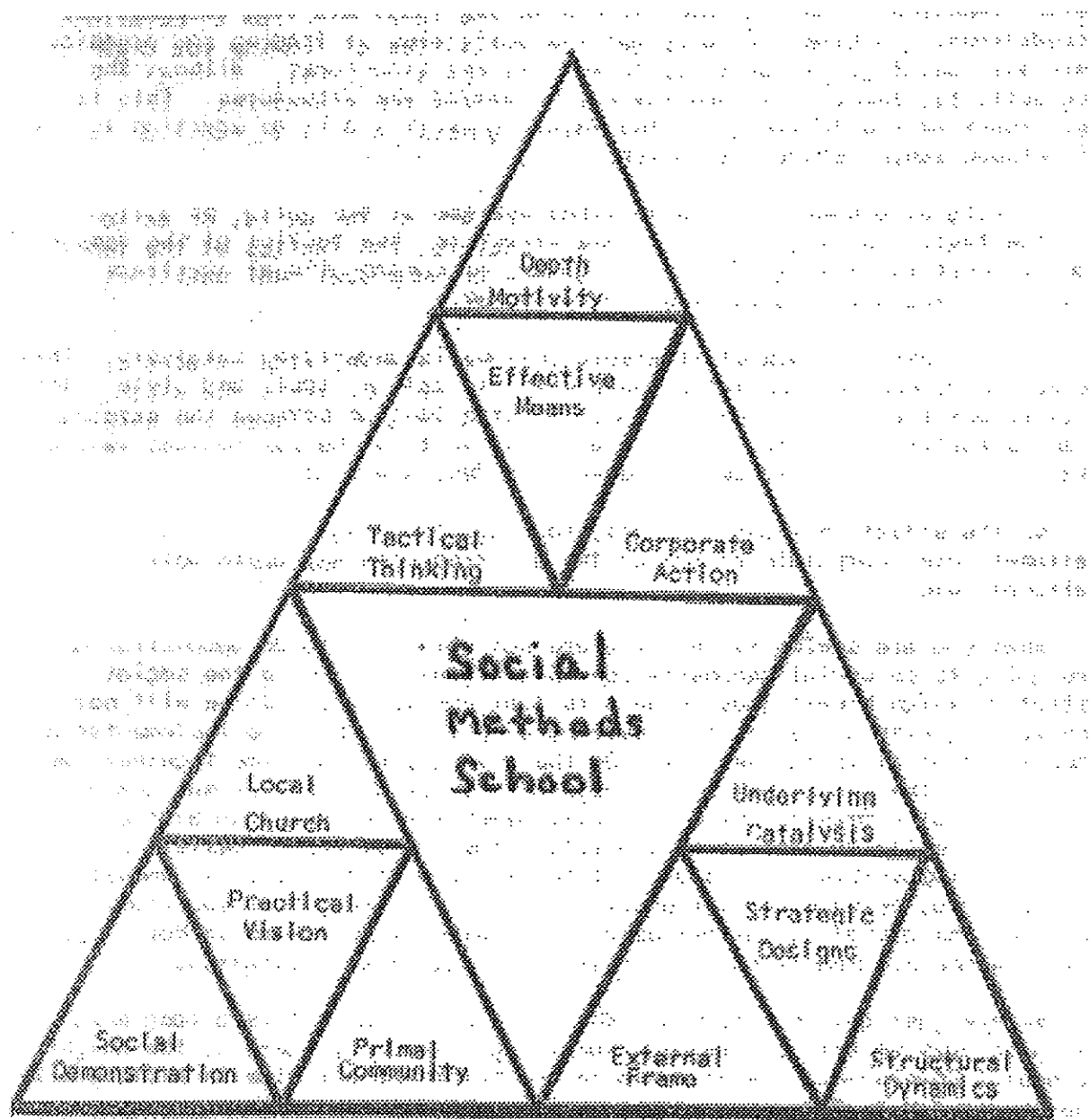
There is also depth motivity. Most of us are burned-out cases. So are the people with whom you work. You cannot motivate them by offering rewards. You can only motivate them with total humanness, which is to live finally over against the mystery itself. Corporate motivity methods offer creative expenditure through tactical thinking tied to corporate action.

Operating principles are that which you can fall back upon. We created models out of nothing. A model is always being judged. Suppose your whole practical vision collapses. You would fall back on the methods of tactical thinking. Suppose your whole structural model blows up. The methods of corporate action are needed to recreate it. And all that rests on depth motivity, which allows you to be patient and nonchalant while moving with ease into the future.

The third operating principle is that you always work within the structures. This principle is an integral part of social demonstration. In the sixties, most of us romantically maintained that you always stand outside the structures and criticize, or demonstrate. You call the evil structures into question, but do not participate. Today society has shifted. It is necessary to work within the structures to move them into the future.

Social demonstrations must be reduplicable, anywhere on the globe. Although you work in a particular primal community, finally you say to hell with my primal community. Not only does that provide a great deal of detachment and nonchalance, it enables genuine creation of primal community as a global act, as social demonstration aimed at the globe in a particular situation.

Finally, I would like to walk through the model of social methods with which we will be working. On the foundational pole is the practical vision. On the ordering pole is the strategic design. On the illuminating pole are the effective means. The question in the foundational pole is what is to be done? On the organizing pole it is how will it be done? On the illuminating pole, what is the key to doing it? On the foundational pole of practical vision is social demonstration, on the order pole is primal community and on the rational pole is the local church.



On the foundational pole of strategic design is the external frame. We have to be careful with that name, "frame." Framing means activity. It means action. When you talk about the external frame of the strategic design of the social demonstration model, you are talking about something that is happening, going on, that is practical. As a not-for-profit organization, we are not out to make money from social demonstration, but to use both the public and private sectors, to get authorization from the local, the regional, the universal or inclusive dimension. Funding comes from both the local and from corporations and foundations. In order to carry out the activities of framing you organize economic and social groups as a way to work in the structures. Without the framing activity, there is no genuine way to affect the structures. This is the key aspect of the follow-up to the Majuro consult and is an addition to the social methods school since last March.

Structural dynamics is the tactical systems of the guild, or action group. The tactics of the stake, or care structure, the tactics of the temple or symbolic nurture; the tactics of the galaxy or congregational auxiliary. At this point, you are creating the radically new.

On the rational pole of strategic designs is underlying catalysis. This is the action dimension, the metro cadre with its action, tools and style. This is-to carry out the presence which comes from the tension between the external frame and structural dynamics. When you are present in the paradoxical tension of catalytic activity, it raises the question, "Who are you?"

On the effective means triangle, tactical thinking is on the foundational pole, corporate action on the ordering pole and depth motivity on the rational pole.

What you are seeing is that you are not going out to do demonstration. You are going to be social demonstration in a situation. To be the social demonstration which breaks loose others to that possibility. So we will not only be working with a vision of recovering effectivity, but the implementation and embodiment of it in the network. On the last day of our time together, we will pick up on the global net. The image of the world with a primal community here and a primal community there, a social demonstration here and another there, takes a while to connect in people's minds. They cannot believe globality. It seems just impossible, but we are out to set up a ring of social demonstrations around the world, perhaps one for every hour, so that every hour you could ring the bell for the global social demonstration taking place. Here in North America, we will have one hundred primal communities and social demonstrations.

We are just getting started. Where are we going? It is a long march. One of these days we will be branded, something like Don Quixote as the Knight of the Woeful Countenance. What would be the twist for our time in history like the one he did for that figure? Maybe it is the caring ones, the ones who care. And that is not different from anyone else - because everybody cares. It is our fate to care today. It is our fate to live in the 20th century.

It is objectively our givenness, like Chardin when he talks about the noosphere as a belt of consciousness around the world. There is a belt of humanness around the world, human beings that are conscious, who are pouring their consciousness into the world in which they live. And those human beings are pouring out their care. There is a belt of care around the world. I don't know what kind of sphere you would call that. It has engulfed us all. That is who we are, and you and I have the great possibility of creating who we are. The peculiar thing about it is that we find we are eternally creating things at every moment. That is to recreate universal benevolence. Creating ourselves, and creating social demonstrations at every moment. I guess that at the bottom of our lives, that is what we have said is radical integrity, to be doing what it means to be a human being, At the same time to know that life is given to social demonstration, to sociological action, universal action, profound action, perpetual action, paradoxical action.

There is no way to leave this long march that we are on. However comfortable, however you felt you were at ease before, it is gone. You and I are travelers in a strange country. How would you ever be at home in a strange country where every step is something new, something strange, something unknowable? To be the people who care is to have no alternative but to be rootless, for if you close off into some rootedness, you destroy your care. Your greatness is the heart of the rootlessness that you are.

And the ineffectivity. You work with something like 5th City or primal community or the galaxy, trying to get the guild off the ground, and how many people take notice of it? If you do all these great things, every elementary that we have worked out for the next hundred years there is going to be just as much trouble, just as much radical upheaval. The ineffectivity that builds creation is upon us. The miracle is that you and I can serve, that we can care, that we can brave the universal benevolence that is our lives. And then you see that nothing is ever created unless it is created from that standpoint. Your ineffectivity is your creativity.

I was a little facetious a while ago when I said that you had burned out your people. Sure you are going to burn them out, and if you haven't burned out yourself, you will. And you wonder how you can make it with all the things you have to do. The darts that are thrown at you don't even stick in your skin anymore. They flip right off. There is no straw that breaks the camel's back, because you can't stick any more straw on you. That is your gift. You are Universal Care. To be burned out is a great gift, if you can decide how you are going to exercise that care, where you are going to put that care. When you flip that care, you flip universal care into that situation. And you put into it all the strength that you have. So your weariness, the very depletedness that you are, is your presence, your illumination in life. How can you ever be fulfilled in this work where you have to exercise care for every person? It is impossible, yet the strange thing that turns around on you is that you cannot be fulfilled in anything save you exercise universal care. You see that everything fulfills your life. The mundane, the ordinary, nothing can take place that is not significant. All contributes to your well-being. It is almost like you now have inherited the earth. It has all been given to you. And those strange words come out of history: "Be fruitful and multiply." Maybe now, multiply social demonstrations or, given the population explosion, say "have dominion over the earth." You then see that the glory is yours. The glory is as objective as the care. It is the glory that is given to

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you, like humanness itself. It is the glory you walk in, participate in, drink in fully, and take upon yourself. We are going to have a great journey. It is the journey of the long march. We are going to take the first step now.

--Joseph Slicker
12/13/74