

Ready for the CD Rom

The New Individual And The New Society
 Men's Section
 Oklahoma City
 February 18, 1972

CULTURAL LECTURE (IV)

I was thinking earlier today of what I'd say, and I decided maybe candor would be the context. I stand before you as a somewhat classic example of the economic animal. When I got out of the service in world War II, I went to work. I was 19. This morning one or more of you mentioned the Puritan ethic. The Protestant ethic is mine. I've lived out of that all my life. I'm a hard worker, successful. I spend -- I was going to say half my life -- I average 100,000 miles a year on airplanes. I'm a sales manager. And would you believe I'm going to talk to you about culture?

I'm going to tell you two things before I tell you about culture. One is that I'm extremely enthusiastic about the subject. I'm sincere. And because of my background or lack of it, I'm being to have weave myself though the culture lecture. I looked up culture in the dictionary a week ago, because after working with this course for a few weeks, I wasn't sure what that word meant. I found that, at least in the dictionary I looked in, it had a very qualitative meaning. It talked about the stage or state of a civilization's advance. It said culture included the characteristics and the attainment of a people, improved discipline, improved education, and a refinement of moral and intellectual nature of life.

We talk about the cultural process in this course as I will do now. We will be dealing with the cultural triangle, which has symbols or myths at the top, which Mr. Campbell whom we mentioned earlier, says direct or evoke the psychological energy of a people. He says that symbols and myths express the attitude toward life, death of the universe, of a people. Wisdom, of course, accumulated knowledge which a people has. The style is how the people act out the use of their wisdom, and how they act out the symbols and myths and self-stores which they tell themselves. We are familiar today with the word style. I remember not more than six or seven months ago, Fortune magazine had a lead article on life style.

Now we know -- sorry, that article in Fortune was on corporate style. That is kind of a common thing, to see the word style used. What is the context of our style? If style is acting out what we call our culture, what are our symbols and myths that we are acting out? How have we used our wisdom? History says, you talk about the old civilization, the Egyptian civilization, the Greek civilization, the Roman civilization, the great civilizations of history had great cultures, and great style. They had unbelievable myths and symbols. Today if we were to go back - I point to Campbell again -- and try to find a myth and symbol in this country -- he takes us back to the opening of the West -- go West young man, and for a fleeting moment Pearl Harbor.

Those were the last symbols, the last stories that this country could tell itself, that held some kind of community together in the United States. There were others in the Western World, like the RAF in World War II did it for England. But: really today there is a dearth of that part of cultural life. We don't have stories to tell ourselves about what it means to be in our civilization today.

But there is a stirring, a very definite knowledge on the part of many people in our society today that something is missing. You have heard it alluded to this weekend as "the other". There is something else to your life, beside the economic and political, some way to get meaning in our lives that we are not able to come to grips with easily.

I'd like to tell you a story about people I know. One of them, a very good friend of mine, I've known him all my life, he lives in New York. This name is Jack. Although he is not my brother: he is close to me. I had dinner with Jack a couple of months ago. He knows that I am doing something weird. He knows that our family is -- to use his word -- odd balls; that we live a chaotic life. When Jack and I had dinner, we had a couple of martinis, to kind of help us start to talk to each other. Before we started he had decided that he was going to push me. He said, "I'm going to push you, Don. You are going to tell me just what you are doing so I understand it."

Spiced them up and served them

He is a very, very sharp, smart, hard guy. He is a sales manager, too, Jack owns three houses. One out in West Hampton out in Long Island, a forty thousand dollar summer home. He owns a \$68,000 home in Bronxville, New York, which he didn't like because his wife didn't like the neighbors. He had just purchased a 75,000 dollar house Bronxville and he doesn't make that much money. He was up tight.

That was the context he was working out of. He not only wanted to know what I was doing just so he could get the story put together. He was having a little bit of a struggle himself in terms of what he was doing at age 46, with his life. I told him in about 20 seconds that if I just netted it out, made some German statements about what our family was really like, what it meant to us, I could reduce it to the very minimum with which he could not argue, they were: that I was getting a good education -- never having had a good education. I have been enthralled with the opportunity. I was detached.

While Jack was struggling with 70, 100, whatever some 180,000 dollars of real estate, I told Jack, we were selling our house, which we are doing this spring, and we are trying to find a blue collar apartment, which is convenient for my wife to go down to the Institute and for me to get to my office. I have a '67 Jeep, and a '55 Ford. That's my only wheels. Jack has two new cars besides the house, I told him that I was free, that I thought my life had meaning and significance, because I was detached from the values which I had had, and he still did have - in the economic, and I told him that I tried to literally live for something outside my family and outside myself. And I told him it was exciting.

He asked me to make it a little clearer to him.. I told him that the only way I could describe it was to say I was able to get outside where I had been, to look at my life and realize that I had been living in a very closed environment, along with obviously a supporting peer group, and that I had thought it was airless, and although I wasn't conscious of it at the time, having made a dramatic switch for someone like me. I had a certain objectivity about what I was doing and I found had a life to be lived that was not tied down anywhere, the economic, the family, job, houses, care, kids, you name it. Only then was I able to say that I had a kind of freedom to be able to go back to my job, back to my kids, back to my money, or whatever I was doing.

Jack said that if that is true, that is fantastic -- I am in awe of that. He told me, "This is the first conversation I've had in a long time that had any kind of meaning". Naturally I felt good about that. I used a story to tell Jack about myself, not about him, that in retrospect, I had been riding on a track, an economic track, that society had laid out for me, for people, a train that I called vocation, and we are headed for a stations that are made of accomplishment. What I found was that I got off at a station, I didn't stay where I was. That wasn't where I was obviously bound. Sometimes maybe you don't even get off. But the point that I was making to Jack about myself was that there wasn't any station. I was not going to get there.

To end that story, I was so impressed with my conversation with Jack that I've had other conversations like that with my peers, guys I can talk to that way. I'll say more about that later.

I'd like to look just for a moment at the relationships in what we call the cultural process. I was very interested in reading social anthropology recently, which is new for me too, to find that the social anthropologists -- symbols and myths is their bag, too. That's what they would point to as being the guts of the civilization. They, at least the one that I read, says when you go to a foreign land where you don't know the language and don't know the culture, don't know the civilization, the first two years you learn their language, and you push and prod to find out what the symbols and myths mean in that odd culture you are visiting. He gave several examples of the one truth that he held to be absolutely the sound and solid, was that there are no symbols in any culture unless they had power. If they are no good, the culture drops them and gets rid of them. Sometimes not as soon as they should.

The symbols and myths that are there are not weird manifestations of the culture or social life. They are there for a reason. In one instance, exogamy, where a certain tribe's culture and customs precluded men marrying women from that tribe. The reason for that was that it precluded the possibility of any jealousy within the tribe amongst the men relative to their own women. They had to marry outside the tribe. That kept peace, because you

kept a bond between them with the tribe with which the inter-marriage took place. In other words there was a definite rationale for the customs and symbols.

Wisdom -- there is a reason for the symbols being created, And it comes out of a man's wisdom; the wisdom creates the symbols. And the myths. The style portion of culture is obviously where the use of the wisdom creates the myths and the self-stories is lived out, the style of the culture has lived out. It is the son or the offspring of the mother and father, wisdom and symbol.

Right now we have heard a lot about the economic tyrant which has resulted in the negation of culture. Just for the sake of making a point I'm going to at least offer the possibility that the culture part of the social process triangle is like a gyroscope. It should be what gives the social process meaning. It should be what gives the social process ends. It should be where it is going. Within the negated cultural part of the social process, today, there is a tyrant also. The tyrant obviously is wisdom, because the wisdom that the society uses to create culture is all used up in the technical, the economic domination of men's minds, for instance, negated philosophy. I don't think I'll speak for myself -- I don't know anyone who knows anything about philosophy. If they did know anything about it it was 25 years ago when they were in school. They haven't thought about it, read about it or used it since. Philosophy mean 'love of wisdom'. It is gone. Men's technical proficient mind is fantastic. But he isn't using wisdom anymore to tell him what this fantastic machine he put together is going to do. It's like we have this great ship of state that we call our social process, running pretty efficiently, good motors, fast, amazingly fast, you know that, but there is no gyroscope operating to give that ship any kind of direction. Where is it going? The style that comes out of this distortion is deforming. There is no way to have style when your wisdom is not used to create some kind of ends, which you are going to act out with your style. As a result of this distortion that is taking place with us as Western men, he does not have any way to have style. It is impossible.

I had dinner with a guy last week, as a matter of fact, my wife was present at the dinner -- he's a business associate. Talking to John about the Institute -- he's going to take RS-I -- my wife asked him, when did you last have a conversation that you thought had meaning? He alluded to the fact the previously that he was having a interesting conversation with us. He said, "I can't remember. I just cannot remember." That rang bells with me because I so vividly remember my conversation with Jack. I don't think these are unusual. Men just don't talk with other people about anything that has any meaning or depth to it, normally today in the secular world.

What is happening in our land today is that the roles that we are going to act out are in utter chaos. The youth is shouting out his concerns, not only here but all over the world. He is calling out society, world society into question. The elders are restless. There are more of them. They are not respected the way they used to be. They are farmed out. They are drifting, yet there is a little glimmer in their eyes. Their gums are flapping. They want a piece of the action. They don't want to be nobody.

While the establishment, or the adults, are frantically trying to keep the lid on the youth, this problem with the elders, they are raising the kind of concerns that Jack expressed. They are frustrated. It doesn't make any difference who they are economically. That is not relevant. It doesn't make any difference. Something is wrong. Something is missing. They are concerned about find some kind of meaning in their lives which are absolutely symbol and myth. Void. They don't have any story to tell themselves about their lives. They are frustrated. They are upset.

There are many trends. One of the things we talked about this weekend which is obviously going on is that the youth are questioning the educational system. They are questioning the use of the their wisdom. They don't like what is happening to them in our educational structures. They are traveling. They are exposing themselves to other cultures, to other possibilities. They're tough. As a matter of fact I have nothing but admiration for the miracles that have been wrought by the youth with all the fringe problems that have gone with that in the last 15 years. I think it is the greatest thing that has happened to this country, and I think it could be said of many others. They are throwing hard questions at a society which doesn't know where it is going. The very fact that they are doing that is a gift. With the established adults there some things that are happening that are very encouraging.. There is a trend on the part of many American corporations. Western Electric, as an example, has spent a tremendous amount of money sending its men to courses in the humanities. I don't know how many 100's of 1,000's of dollars they spend in a

year sending their different levels of management to very fine humanities courses – philosophy, the Great Books, anthropology – a tremendous thing. We mentioned Xerox which gave 100 men leave for a year at their regular salary to work in some social cause. My next door neighbor was an overseas manager for Ford Motor Company, in Germany. So when they had these meetings with the German employees, all the conversations were in English because the Americans couldn't speak German. This man decided finally knowing how difficult it was to carry on a dialogue with someone when you didn't really speak the language, he could learn German. He took a 90-day leave; took a blitz course, went to a German monastery for 30 days to put the finishing touches on, and he could speak German. Then he could have dialogue with the people he worked with. He thinks it is an absolute necessity in the future for multi-national concern to have. Never mind the fact that everybody can speak English. He says the imperative on us is to learn to speak the language of the countries where we have plants.

There are some good trends. There is an awareness, backed up by signal events which show that people are aware of the possibility of doing something about things.

Coming back to our domestic life now, we are pretty well trained quite consistently at school and on the job. In the wisdom arena, we are trained to develop skills, skills which can be put to use in the economic arena. We have become serfs of this one-sided input to our educational process. We are given data and not models. We are given how to do things, not why to do things, that is, in the larger context of why. Our families in this day and age reflect the same emptiness that is in our society. I don't think that in the normal family there is the opportunity to use your wisdom in the family, to have conversations, to discuss objects that have depth and meaning, any more than there is the unit, the greater the potential there would be to have meaning, to create dialogue, to reach understanding, to create a new life, or whatever – I'm thinking of an individual family unity. It makes sense to me to think that with a very, very small number of people you have some powers. Those people changing things, trying to get hold of living together as demanded. I think what really happens, it's like Mission Impossible, that small and closed unit that self-destructs. Instead of getting something done that is good and positive, because it is a small reduced unit, whatever their distortions were in the way they were thinking, are magnified and enhanced by being closed in on themselves. So the family sinks, or blows up if it stays in its own circle.

The roles in the family have certainly — the same as in society- are all messed up. I have lived through hell in my own family, with my wife being involved missionally, working full time, her duties neglected -- groceries, house, bed -- my God. When she went away for a weekend or longer, on a teaching trip, it was a whole new world opened up. I didn't have to clean up after her! “There is no place like home” – no place! On the other side of this I would like to say that I admire my wife, no matter, because on the other side of this is Jack's wife, who never leaves home. She does nothing but wait for him, with the slippers and the martinis and all that stuff. And bitches! I used to confront my wife with a list of her faults and omissions relative to these menial duties which I thought were her responsibility. I soon became aware of a new tactic that she had which was called, “that's your problem not my problem”. You're being upset with me because I leave this house in a mess is your problem not my problem. I finally either put that aside or attacked from a new angle. I found out that all she was doing was on my behalf. She was pushing me to be a man and live in a totally different family relationship than I have ever experienced, or anybody like me ever experienced. Somebody here mentioned about women being good at details. Twice I've heard about it as a feminine characteristic. I am an exception.

One of the manifestations of our age is a different relation to our covenants. You want to live together but you want to live together with everybody taking their step, and you take your step, and there is some kind of balance. That is supposed to come out of this covenant. For me it is a kind of reduced image of marriage—that is a covenant where two people decide to live together, in partnership. If you put a period there, there is trouble. It would manifest itself in trouble. If that is the way two people live together, if that is the reason, is each other, or the family, period, I think that is a problem. Even if you talk, and I'll just skim over this lightly, about sex, if your relationship to your wife, your physical, sexual relationship with your wife is just that, that is the context, you're in trouble. Or your family, or your immediate little group, where you want full appreciation for whatever it is you are doing, you're in trouble. One of the things I am still famous for, is my checklists. I have lists of everything. I really believe in them. That is the way I remember things. This is probably the biggest area of disagreement that my wife and I still have. But I still make lists and give them to her. If any of you meet her this weekend and ask

her - cold, straight turkey - watch her face. Purple. Absolutely no way to come to my side with that. I can't push her with checklists.

Anyway, in the home today the king of the castle, and castles are hard to come by, as you know, is not a king anymore. That bygone time is gone. There is a cartoon, I think, called The Roadrunner. I think it is a rabbit, and there is a poor wolf chasing him. One of the things that almost happens, at least in some of the sequences, the rabbit somehow gets across a great gorge or chasm, and the wolf blindly follows, and in mid-air he knows he isn't going to make it, and he gets that funny look on his face. Just before he goes down, and I think a lot of men feel that way today, about their life or their family life. They look around and there are a whole flock of wolves who are doing the same thing.

If I had to say to you or anybody else in one sentence what I thought would hold the frustrations of life that so many of our contemporaries have, I would call it a devastating feeling of irrelevance. You know, like, life is almost a joke. It is a drifting process, and the insidious part of it is that there seems to be a suicidal tendency to accept it, to not fight it, or at least to not fight it any way except to stay where you are and bitch or complain. It that speaks to you, so be it. I really do believe that Jack would say to me, "My life is devastatingly irrelevant."

Now, what can you do? I'll speak for myself. I don't want to make out that I was a desperately unhappy guy, but I was like what we were talking about. Then everybody has some little thing happen to them. What happened to me was—right now I would say that I learned how to accept the ambiguity of life. Another way to put it is that the past is received. Or, as they say in RS-1, I am accepted. But I think in terms of what we are talking about here, it goes beyond that. Your life is accepted, your situation, your job is accepted, your wife is accepted, everything, jut like it is, has to be accepted. And I don't think anything is going to change until I learn to say that, over and over and over again, and to understand that the only reality is change. If that happens, I thinks that a person has a change to expand his style. If that happens, your community - which let's say, is Dallas, and your family, if that was your community, then the world is your community, once you decide that it is. It is no big deal. It is not like, as Steve and David discussed with you earlier, that is just the way it is. You don't live in the globe because that is a trick thing to say. That is where you live, period. I don't think anyone can be objective about anything if he stands in the middle of it. I think that is a pretty well-chosen fact. You cannot be objective about anything if you are inside it. You have to get outside to look at it, like other people, to be objective. And I'd say that is true about your life. You have to let air in. You have to let your life be what it can be, and not let circumstances shove you in a little box and then you try to live there. You don't have to. That's the beauty of it. I don't care who anybody is. They can get out of that box and just decide, just like that, that they have a life to live. Talk about a crummy job. Somebody could make that decision but then it comes, "I have to go back to that same office Monday morning. I don't like the company, I don't like my boss. I don't like what I do." Well, I submit that you can go back to that job and make that job a stage for whatever your expanded style is going to be. Period. One little thing—it isn't funny, to me it isn't our company, our staff meetings, start at 6:30 am. The president cooks breakfast and we are using 4 x 4s that you guys are all familiar with. I have stolen everything I can get from this latch-up, because it is good, it is valid. The message that this course is trying to bring people is: however well done or not well done it is, it is telling a person that he can have an expanded style, he can go back to that job wherever it is, and decide to have a new relationship to it. He can make changes whatever his responsibility is. Then your vocation is subservient to your life - it doesn't t run your life. The same thing with your family. You have the same kind of possibility. It is like having a secret. All of a sudden you have a secret thing going. You have a new way to talk about life, and it is all yours. I an even get excited just thinking about it. But it does demand participation. You can" just think that and let it go; you have to put out. You have to decide to live that expanded style, not just play with it. When your blood starts to run, you can even call yourself an adventurer like you used to, with your kids, when you pretended you were all kinds of things. I can still do that.

One of the things that happens in a marriage - at least it happened in our marriage - we fight all the time. There" no way out of that. I understand that. But what happened is an absolute miracle, an absolute miracle. What we used to have is that when we would have an argument, it didn't make any difference about the subject, that was totally irrelevant because we were both out to win. Every time, someone would come out not winning in that argument. Very seldom do you have a draw. You have someone with their nose out of joint. They get hurt, bad, whatever. Then there would be that kind of delicious victory of holding it for two or three days, hours, - hold your

invective, hold your hurt, hold your anger, whatever your petty reaction was. We don't have time to do that anymore. If I am ticked off at Mary Warren, and she gets just as ticked off at me, within 20 minutes we have to do something together or something happens, and there is just no time left. So our recovery rate is fantastic.

You won't believe this - well, maybe you will believe this, but it's true. Two years ago my wife told me she was going to go overseas teaching. This meant maybe two weeks. Obviously you don't fly to Hong Kong for a three day weekend. So I said, "You have to be kidding. Whom are you going overseas with, a bunch of men? You leave me for a couple of weeks while you weave around the world with a bunch of these guys from the zoo!?" I was deadly serious. And do you know that my wife took two trips? On one trip she literally took a trip with three men from the Institute, and was gone five weeks. I don't know what your experience has been with this kind of story. When I tell that story to Jack, I mean there is no way for our peer groups even to understand that kind of freedom and honor. No way, no way. I honestly can tell you that I have accepted that. I really have. And I am extremely proud. I really am. I take all my steps one at a time, and that was a giant leap.

Something happens, the kind of honor, trust, of relationship, security, which I can say that that is OK. I feel, as I have all along, in whatever some of those anecdotes that I have made mention of tonight, you understand that every time that I do something that would be called "good", with my money, my time, my wife, or whatever, the only time you do any good is when your sacrifice. That's the image we have. You do something good, like give money to the Church, and there is a connotation that that is a sacrifice. If you spend 13 out of 16 weekends, as I have recently working, not on my sob, but on this kind of stuff, that is a sacrifice. By the way we measure things, that is a sacrifice. That is like giving something up. The miracle of it is that that isn't what happens. You don't sacrifice anything. You get back so much more if you are living - I don't want to sound like a converted whatever - but you get back so much more if you give of yourself that isn't in that little hold that we had drawn on the board earlier, if you are smart you do it. If you are selfish, you are self-less. That is one of the things I told Jack. He likes trick phraseology. I told him that if you are self-less, you are selfishly satisfied. And that has certainly been the experience I think with a lot of people.

Certainly as far as our marriage goes, using it as an example, we never had a bad marriage. But we have a recreated marriage now. There is no question about that in either of our minds, in every way you can think of. Our family is, well, I feel more of a man, my wife feels more of a woman. We really have a common mission. Our ring, our bond of marriage, means something to us that it never did before. Our kids, this is an aside, which might be of some interest, we have never shoved our kids into the movement. There are 17 and 13. I can tell you that was my decision. We talked about freedom, and I insisted that at that age we were not going to decide that they really were not free to decide, and as a result they have not participated in the movement to the extent that the youth of the other people that are involved with the Institute in Chicago.

But let me tell you what has happened. Both of these kids, they have all kinds of funny stories to tell about what we do about our life, the whole bit, they admire their mother. I know that. And I hope they admire their father. Because when they get through making fun of what we do, I know that they tell their peers about what we do, with pride. They are proud of it. No longer is it a funny inconvenience, that is, our life style. Moff, the older, who is out of high school, he is just 17, is down at the Academy now, of his own choice, for a month, and having a fantastic time. But he made that decision. Jimmy, he's a little guy in what I call a holding pattern. He will decide what he wants to do.

I think in the end, what I am really trying to talk about, under man and his culture and what it means for an individual human being to get hold of that, is to come back somehow to grips with authenticity. That subject was brought up today in one of the conversations or one of the workshops. I think that that is what man really wants to find. Maybe the old word was integrity or authentic integrity. He wants to feel authentic, that he is somebody. Man has been called today to the cross roads - everyman. He has been called to the mark, uniquely in our society, with a tremendous demand on him to make a decision, an obvious decision, a decision to lead his life in such a way that he can appreciate the possibility, or appropriate the possibility of his life, and he can only do that if he lives outside of himself. There is no other way to do that. In so doing he will contribute to tomorrow's history. He will affect the future. He will find reward. He will become an adventurer, just by deciding. He can appropriate the gifts

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that he has had that he has boxed up for so long, and create a new culture, and use his wisdom to create the symbols and myths that he can live by and that all men can live by.

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