

The Sandstone Foundation for Community Systems Research, Inc.



The Kirkrige Conferences

Abstracts of presentations delivered at
The 1970 and 1980 Kirkrige Conferences on new
lifestyles and changing community
to
a concerned group of key leaders
from the sciences, religions,
industry and education.

by

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SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL STABILITY 1970

The past decade has witnessed an enormous increase in the pool of human knowledge. Information and theory from many unrelated fields is beginning to merge and provide a fertile soil for new developments. Much of this material is now coming into focus with respect to the so-called human condition, and a number of challenging new concepts have emerged which relate directly to mankind's collective social behavior.

As an open commentary on studies and models of social process, it seems both topical and pertinent here to present some philosophical structure relating the neglected and controversial question of open, unrestricted sexuality to the present social conditions, and negative changes which confront us all.

In our present society, we can easily see an ongoing problem of ever increasing magnitude. The process is characterized and made painfully clear by social violence, self and other destructiveness, individual and group alienation, a dangerously unbalanced ecology, and confused and irrelevant leadership at all levels.

In the overview, it looks as if collective society has the morbid intent of not only destroying itself but the entire living world as well. Mankind today has the unfortunate capacity to do exactly that, and seems gripped in the fear of overwhelming inevitability. It would appear to almost everyone concerned that society is running chaotically unregulated despite a great deal of frenzied effort to halt the rush. So what, you might ask, has all this to do with open sexuality? Isn't this just part of if not the basic reason for "moral decay?"

Well, as mankind's knowledge of its own genesis and behavior increases, a most pertinent relationship develops. It is well established now, that far from a loose collection of independent creatures more or less held together and guided by an omnipotent deity, society, in fact, comprises a special kind of system classified as open ended. In order for this kind of system to remain alive and healthy, it must maintain dynamic stability.

It must grow in size, but not too large for its environment. It becomes more complex, but not so rapidly that it "forgets" its purpose. These considerations hold true for all life forms and their reflected aggregates, and are maintained through self-correcting regulation.

One of the laws that determines the process and form of society in this context is that the degree of regulation required for viable stability is a function of the system's gross size, and that the degree of regulation that can be achieved is limited by the degree of communication between the member elements of the system.

Another important aspect of a large open system is that in times of relative stability, a small random disturbance can be amplified by the system over time and through the medium of meaningful environment to the system's worst detriment. Human notions of right, wrong, or guiding intelligence simply aren't part of the equation.

The system, society and the individual within society, can alter this inevitable situation only through real, pragmatic “self” awareness of the process and action that is appropriate to the system laws. Humans are the only known organisms that have the capacity to alter their own destinies to their own ends. With appropriately applied knowledge, it can be their ultimate blessing. By acting on rigid ignorance and mythical tradition, they will utterly defeat themselves.

It does seem clear in light of modern knowledge, that a potentially disastrous disturbance occurred within the social system some centuries ago that led to increasingly amplified anti-life behavior. A prominent, action-based view of mankind as inherently “evil” came into being along with the compensating notion of redemption through control, suppression, and elimination of this “evil.” Paradoxically, the cultural imperative toward excessive breeding was also incorporated into this marvelously irrational model of humankind. Whatever rationale or justification for this “evil” model one chooses really doesn’t matter because it doesn’t enter into the equations of social process.

In any event, the question of whether humans are basically “evil” or “good” or both is rather immaterial at this point. What is important is that we recognize ourselves, our society, and our ecology as being in near term danger of extinction. We must also, in the system sense, come to realize that we, alone as individuals, are totally responsible for ourselves and, as parts of a larger whole, all share equally in the creation or destruction of our world and our society.

In your experience with simple man-made laws, you have no doubt discovered the old trite phrase that ignorance is no excuse. Within the body of physical laws that govern our existence, that principle is absolute and without appeal. If you would learn the rules of driving, for instance, which would assure you a safe, pleasant trip from one place to another. So it would make sense to learn the rules of living process. Or, at least, look at an up-to-date roadmap.

So let’s take a concise look at where we are. Emphatically, we are all important, and responsible parts of a large, complex system. The system is in danger of a complete breakdown within a relatively short period of time because it is out of control. It is out of control for two critical inter-related reasons. First, it is far too large for available communication among member elements to be effective in terms of self-regulation. Secondly, communication between member elements is extremely restricted by cultural factors.

These two conditions derive from a common constellation of behavioral models that include the suppression or destruction of almost everything displaying life characteristics, and the imperative toward population increase at any cost.

The landmark of over population and the reasons are adequately described and well known today. The ideas concerning communication among people are not presented or understood nearly as well. Briefly, it appears that although mankind generally places

almost total emphasis on aural/verbal communication, this mode, at best, constitutes less than ten percent of the total communication capacity available.

This is also the mode most subject to distortion through symbolic fantasy, dishonesty, and plain lack of skill. The remaining ninety odd percent of possible communication involves the visual/emotive and kinesthetic modes. The visual/emotive channel contributes perhaps twenty-five percent to total communication and necessitates seeing the body in its entirety and movement. This channel of communication is not easily distorted but its use is highly suppressed by the “evil” model syndrome.

The fullest, most encompassing and least distorted mode of communication is the kinesthetic. This mode involves touch, body contact, and most importantly, sex. We all know the intense degree of suppression surrounding kinesthetic communication. Drawing from this knowledge, one can conclude that, other factors being equal (these factors can be debated ad nauseum), full communication between people will occur only during a lively act of sex in broad daylight with all our senses tuned in to the act.

As mentioned earlier, the self regulating characteristics of large open systems depends only on the degree of communication achieved among its constituent parts. In human terms this implies that if we wish to have quality living and provide a world for our children to flourish in, we must re-align and focus our energies on the two basic problems of system size and internal communication rather than on a complex infinity of symptoms. The recurring symptoms will vanish only when the basic problems are solved.

One step toward improving the system stability is to drastically reduce the human population. Many available methods come to mind ranging from individual self responsibility for birth control to worldwide nuclear destruction. Size reduction will be enforced by system laws, The choice of method will be by the consensus of humanity.

The other major effort required of people is to get on with improving communication among themselves because ten percent efficiency simply won't make it. Hiding one's body and denying one's sexuality to one's neighbors and associates is complete, fatal nonsense. The system laws force one to relate to many others. It is a human choice again, however, that will determine whether these relationships will be violence in the service of reducing population or honest feelings and open sexuality in the service of social stability.

Despite a tone of despair in this overview, it is another aspect of large open systems that provides some hope. That is that the guidelines needed to get a faltering system back in order can usually be found in the “leading edge” of system change. If the system is to survive, it will take the form of this new growth and reject the old. Today's “leading edge” is the sensitivity, communal lifestyle, and open sexuality “movement.”

As members of this “leading edge” movement, it is our responsibility to make others aware of the positive lifestyles and value systems as a result of our transformations. This could be done by publishing a magazine, or more appropriately an e-zine, that

encompasses all aspects of that lifestyle, not just specific behavior patterns such as casual nudity, birth control or open sexuality. We must also give others the opportunity to realize the positive benefits of these lifestyles experientially, and show them ways to incorporate those benefits into their daily lives.

CHANGING SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CHANGE 1980

In attempting to address my current thoughts and goals to this 1980 Kirkridge Colloquy, I reviewed some of the convictions crystallized here a decade ago. Those convictions helped shape my own dedication as well as the direction of the Sandstone Foundation. Distilled from the exciting brew of “opposites” assembled at Kirkridge 1970, they are even more relevant today.

Although there have been significant changes in the cultural world views in the last ten years, those changes have been primarily a process of consolidation: sorting through the trivia to discover the essence – the unquestionable fact that human beings as a species are in serious trouble.

The hard facts of social trends uncovered by philosophy, religion, sociology, psychology, ethology and other disciplines dealing with the state of humankind all point to this central condition; we are immersed in a self-made chaotic environment of increasing violence, dehumanized economics and uncaring politics. Our public and social institutions are seemingly unable to meet our simplest needs.

We continue to exploit the all-to-human capacity for self-deception despite the growing awareness that this capacity is limited. Humanity has nearly exhausted its fantasy of “well being”, and is increasingly disturbed by the intrusion of reality.

In response to reality, we collectively feel helpless, alone and fearful. We react with rage, despondency or insanity. We want changes in politics, education and community, but adhere to tradition instead by applying worn-out, impotent solutions to problems. Most of our energy is expended in condemnation of all manner of things as the source of our misery.

Every pain, discomfort and unhappiness we experience is felt to be inflicted by some external power beyond our control. We cannot accept the fact that our condition, both personally and collectively, is the direct consequence of our own inappropriate action or inaction.

In the past we have had legitimate reason for ignorance in matters of cause and effect. We no longer have that excuse. Today we have enough knowledge, tools and necessary techniques to examine and change ourselves. And only through fundamental change can we hope to minimize our destructiveness, relate effectively to others, enjoy freedom and dignity and ultimately live a life of more joyous fulfillment.

The valid question today is not “what new research is needed to solve our dilemma?” but “how do we apply the information we already know in order that large numbers of us

may integrate within our own person, with others and with reality?" This question does not require a complex answer, but simply action and efficient use of resources.

We are part of a larger society which has an effect on us, and we have an effect on this society. To different degrees, society therefore depends on us. We must seek our individual purpose, contribution and direction within this relationship.

In the early sixties, a synthesis of data and personal experimentation led me to project that the mid-seventies would be a time of turbulent polarization and the beginning of massive human regression and fragmentation to more simplistic "tribal" states. I was also convinced that the regression would occur despite the intervention of any traditional factors.

I saw a critical branch point for social evolution in the nature and timing of the regression. One branch seemed to lead to the end limit of wholesale destruction followed by a general loss of technology, social integration and life affirming values; a period of "dark ages" during which the norm would be a struggle to survive and re-accumulate lost knowledge.

Another offered the potential for a quantum leap toward a socially integrated "entity" of consciousness that would provide a new order of support for its individual members, allowing them to more fully discover and fulfill the function of humanness.

I strongly feel the potential of this branch cannot be realized with taking the values, experience and knowledge back into the regressed "tribal" state. I believe that with the improved feedback and integration regressed "tribal" organization, this body of knowledge can be used to directly aid rather than endanger continued evolution.

A second major realization was that Western science has not developed an adequate process model of human behavior. (Process by definition is a natural phenomenon marked by gradual changes that lead toward a particular result.) It is essential to have a model in order to provide a concept of the language, energy, and interrelatedness of dynamic process.

I feel change techniques advocated by current schools of consciousness and behavior modification are not fully effective in transforming individuals from form to energy perceivers much less energy manipulators. This latter seems to be requisite for viable "tribal" organization or group consciousness. Existing "tribal" structures lacking a conscious process awareness of themselves as energy manipulators are an evolutionary artifact with limited social usefulness.

Sandstone Foundation was founded upon the philosophical premise that non-structured experiential processes contribute significantly to process awareness, and that this awareness enhances integration, creativity, and communication. These factors, in turn, create stronger bonds between others, society and environment, eventually encouraging responsible participation in nature's on-going creation.

The main purpose of Sandstone Foundation was to explore beyond the symptomatic into root causes of personal and social malfunction and to design and apply, where practical, corrective change mechanisms.

So, in accordance with my personal “world view” of society being or nearly being at a crucial turning point on its road to a future destiny largely determined by the willingness of individuals to become aware and give transcendental participation within nature’s evolutionary guidelines, I offer the following concrete proposals for consideration. I feel these are action oriented and pragmatically directed toward a foundation for the “social engineering” needed.

The first proposal is to form a small “kline” of those persons who accept the principle and responsibility of a consciously creative segment of society actively exploring, facilitating and mobilizing those evolutionary forces of nature; who see the forces not as something to be opposed but as perhaps the only inexhaustible, spiritually centered resources we have left.

A prototype for this “kline” formation would resemble in some measure today’s “group” of humanists who are loosely united only through what I would call “abstractions of identity.” I propose drawing key individuals from this pool of human concern and increasing their effective power and unity through coordinated communication and interaction with the larger body of society.

One of the present weaknesses of “humanism” which needs to be left behind is the subtle posture of a revolutionary movement – such as Woman’s Liberation maintains. This stance tends to marshal the more diffuse energy of individual discontent and invariably leads to distancing of the movement from mainstream society, reflected for example, in the academic tendency to publish for the benefit of peers rather than a general audience. The result is serious loss of effectiveness in achieving the desired goals of social change.

Without going through all the formal trappings of a new “association” or “society” except perhaps for tax purposes, a focused “Kline” formation would be developed by accelerating conventional informal meetings designed to improve Tran disciplinary creativity in mutual goal setting and project management

The second proposal is the creation of a new for-profit publishing or media division within a well established firm. This would be an operation dedicated to providing a more immediate grass roots understanding of developments in science and technology as they affect us individually and socially; developments for instance such as cloning, gene manipulation and nuclear and fusion power.

I am suggesting we do this in order to offset present public awareness and sentiment, a powerful social shaping force, toward science and technology. This is now influenced predominately by “scare headline” reports of new developments and the often confusing science articles of a few do-it-yourself and science interest periodicals. The headline

approach tends to emphasize the often ill-conceived negative aspects of scientific development. The science interest type of article is usually devoid of life connectedness.

I believe there is an urgent need to communicate the humanness and visions and dreams of our scientists to the public. And I believe there is commercial viability in this. The trend of sales by the Brownoski and Sagan genre are ample evidence for both these premises. There are simply no better qualified persons than the scientists themselves to present their work in socially relevant human terms – after all, this is the ground against which they are motivated to pioneer and produce.

Three significant conditions prevent such presentation in the real world. One is the tendency of universities and professional associations to reinforce the individual's need to find status among peers by supporting increasingly technical one-upmanship and an almost Olympian detachment from feelings in published material. The second condition, arising from the first, is that the average scientist has never been trained or encouraged to write with interesting, comprehensible and feeling style. Nor are they, as a group encouraged to direct themselves to the public. The last and most troublesome obstacle the scientist must face in publishing is competition with novelists for the publisher's interest, money and production schedules.

I believe these conditions can only be circumvented by creation of a publishing house dedicated to providing not only the usual support given an author but by commissioning appropriate work in the first place, then “wedding” a good scientist with a good writer who has a sound insight into the social relevance of the scientist's work.

In other words, what is called for is a publishing house able to create “best sellers” based on clearly defined market needs and specific, appropriate response to those needs. To this end I suggest that a viable standard business plan, including financial projections, be packaged. Assuming this package is a commercially acceptable venture, I would then suggest a “call to arms” paper be written and widely circulated within the scientific community.

The third proposal is to intensify research into human sexuality as it affects both individual psycho-social development and the ontogenetic processes of society. I have reasons, too complex to discuss here, to believe that the results of all our present inquiries are almost in and ready to be synthesized.

I suggest we begin creating new funding sources to support this work because there is increasing evidence that even tentative conclusions about the role of sexuality in human development today are so threatening to our established “institutions” that traditional support money will be seriously affected. Now is also the time to increase public awareness and participation in the sexual evolution through appropriate inroads into the mass, as well as new, media.

We need to provide a huge existing market for sexual information with material that is positive, integrative, and supportive of dignity. And I might add that this approach can be

as commercially profitable, if not more so in the long run, than the negative, destructive, “pornographic” material directed to this market today.

CONCLUSION: The decade of the eighties provides an optimum ground for picking up the reins of a social process going wild, providing we explore and become responsible to the natural constraints of that process.

A better foundation for “engineering” the future can and must be built by closing the gap between the public and the scientific communities; and by simultaneously speeding up public acceptance of the integrative effects of appropriate sexual lifestyles.

The appearance of social change as revolution can and must be minimized by using or creating financial vehicles and information channels within mainstream society.