

Let The Culture Speak

Some personal impressions written by Stig Zandrén October 2007

First time I experienced "Let the Culture Speak" was in 1997. In the group there were about 50 people. Me – a man with an engineering background –together with a majority of women and psychotherapists.

Earlier I had used what I thought was dialogue as a tool in groups. The aim was to increase awareness of working conditions and the need for improvements. Let the Culture Speak addresses awareness on a much deeper level. It was a personal challenge and – initially – scarring.

I wanted to know more and read the book Koinonia by Pat de Mare et al. His definition of 'koinonia' still summarizes my understanding of dialogue: "an atmosphere of impersonal fellowship rather than personal friendship, of spiritual-cum-human participation in which people can speak, hear, see, and think freely, a form of togetherness and amity that brings a pooling of resources". Dialogue does not presuppose friendship or personal liking.

Ten years later both the group and myself feels very different. The group is smaller and much more diverse. The facilitator is the same, Teresa. I have grown as a person. My preferences and defences are much the same but I recognize them and I think I am able to be more open about them. I take more responsibility for myself in the group. For instance I raise my voice when my inner self is in protest.

I like to describe the dialogue phenomena as a mode of communication - allowing, expecting, and caring. Getting into this mode requires a conscious effort – a clear time and space structure, professional facilitation, and me willing to connect to my inner self. Once in this dialogue mode I feel connected to my self as well as to other individuals in the group. I also feel connected to the outside world – a strong experience of 'here and now'.

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