

In the session immediate previous, we got a good start on "the case we are," and I'm eager that we hang in with it for its high potential for learnings. As I indicated in the double-convex-lens diagram at the end of that session, the easiest place to go wrong is the start either of the planning process or of the evaluation process: "situation definition." This form serves to sharpen, thus, what we did last session in, roughly, a round of speeches: where are we in the case we are? If we agree on where we are, there's a good chance we can agree to start off together--from the same place.

The following is a two-step focusing discipline. The second step requires oral instruction, but you may proceed immediately to the first step:

1. In one sentence, here is where I say we are: this is my definition of our situation at this 21st session of the seminar:

2. If....

PLANNING

1. Here is my list of our options:

2. Here is my choice, and my arguments for it:

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*We rejected the seminar's seminar design and have not evolved one of our own. [INSTRUCTION for '2" on #779: If your first situation-definition did not have "we" or the "seminar" for subject, do so now.]

1. Our situation is that from session 2 onward, the atmosphere predominating-- though occasionally alleviated by bursts of high productivity--has been that of grumpy, unfocused rebellion with low productivity and high frustration. Potential productivity is high if we cease drifting, for all of us [1] have had extensive experience of grumbling stasis in voluntary institutions, especially the churches, and have accordingly developed some salvage skills, and [2] have some opening on grace, and some will to self-rescue in spite of some will, in at least some, to failure, i.e. to continued self-defeat ["self" here being collective, viz. the seminar]. [I.e., theological analysis sees, in addition to the human, both divine and demonic forces at work in the seminar.]

2. Condition met in situation-definition 1 [above]. But here's a "we"-er:*

HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE:

At the first session, the givens were provided in the form of the "Work Sheet," which contained staff-carefully-crafted-and-balanced integration-seminar values. Briefly, I explained the philosophy of objective/subjective compromise, including the strategy of interfacing "ways of being religious" and your own preparation-life-ministry, as well as the direct addressing of your ministry through the case method....At the second session, this design was disrupted by somebody's announcing that he did not write the interface [#317] and would not do so either in future. At this crisis point, the group faced these options: [1] Pressure on the dissident to go along with the group; [2] Isolation of the dissident by unresponsiveness or by granting him the freedom of nonconformity; [3] Agreeing with the dissident. The third option obtained, the atmosphere of rebellion cooled the group for listening to those who shared their writing on how their own experience of "personal encounter with the Holy" interfaced with the readings of that section of Streng. I felt this as a deep tragedy. One of you could have told the story of his healing conversion, as dramatic as anything in this section of Streng...but he was depressed by what had happened, and said nothing....Since in that 2nd session the group did not evolve an alternative for interfacing Streng and their own preparation-life-ministry, we opened the "Ways" hour in session 3 in open fashion: anyone was free to interface anyway he choose. We sat in awkward silence for about two minutes; after that, no one pointed to any intersection of his preparation-life-ministry with anything in Streng. In the hope of generating your engines, I lectured on Way #1; but your response to this was sullenness, then explosive rejection. At that point I got rough, and one left....Subsequently, there've been occasional bursts of creativity, but nothing like the productivity a spine process would have provided. [The image that came to my mind was this: My father died of rotten spine. The xray showed four vertebrae missing. His upper and lower halves moved independently, and he stared at the ceiling for eight months and just died of a useless body. Has the seminar not been staring at the ceiling, from lack of spine?]

HEURISTIC MODELS:

Biblical rebellion-models might prove illuminating: [1] Korah's [Num.16; 26.9-11]; [2] The atavistic leeks-and-garlic "murmuring," wandering in the wilderness, along with the golden calf. For a focused, productive rebellion: the American Revolution.

COMPETITIVE, LARGELY SUBCONSCIOUS MODELS:

[1] The colleague group [which ought to be required of you, on your turf]; [2] The personal group [NTS, HP, et al]; [3] The workshop; [4] The open group; [5]....

PRESENT OPTIONS: [1] Return to original design; [2]....