

FORUM INTERNATIONAL

GEMEINNÜTZIGER VEREIN

To whom it may concern:

With great concern and sorrow I have come to know about certain difficulties of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and the community of Rajneeshpuram-Antelope, Oregon.

With all due respect and some consideration--but without hesitation--let me present to you some reflections, images and ideas that may be of help to you to arrive at your own conclusions. In this context it may--or may not--be of importance that neither myself, nor anyone of the Board of Directors of the organization that I represent, is a Sannyasin her- or himself. At the very end of this letter you will find a short description of the activities that FORUM INTERNATIONAL is engaged in.

Having in mind the latest conclusions in epistemology (Bateson, Bohm, Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, etc.), and the theory of sciences, especially the work on the structure of changes in sciences (Kuhn and Lakatos), and on scientific method (Feyerabend), it can be said without hesitation that the work of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is to be considered of the highest value for the advancement of knowledge in epistemology and/or the social sciences. With the scientific debate on this subject pending, the letter will not allow for going into this argument in depth, and since I would like to reflect upon the one aspect of Rajneeshpuram that is truly unique, let me give you a short list of references that describe best the epistemology upon which the scientific relevance of Rajneeshpuram and the work of its initiator and founder, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, is based. 1)

Looking at a complex phenomenon people tend to use images to make sense of what they are looking at, to establish a feeling of continuity and context. Different people (with different interests, different priorities and different levels of maturity) prefer one or more of these images. I can think of immediately at least ten 2) images (some "serious", some "profane"), but only one of which is

FORUM FÜR HUMANISTISCHE PSYCHOLOGIE + PSYCHOTHERAPIE E.V. · POSTFACH 2841 · D-7000 STUTTGART 1. *kr*

X Konferenzkoordination
und Geschäftsführung
Knut Pflughaupt, Rablstr. 16
D-8000 München 80, Tel. (089) 48 64 32

Seminerkoordination
und Forum-Magazin
Frank Köchling, Elisabethenstr. 38
D-7000 Stuttgart 1, Tel. (07 11) 63 58 72

Presse- und
Öffentlichkeitsarbeit
Elke Herzog, Valpichlerstr. 78
D-8000 München 21, Tel. (089) 56 70 03

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truly unique in this respect. The image is the image of a University, and to my knowledge Rajneeshpuram may be considered the only university (in the original sense of the word!) in the western hemisphere, today. To clarify this seemingly outrageous statement, a few words about the origin of the university are necessary. In order to do this one has to adopt a historical perspective.

The university was founded in the Middle Ages to find and orchestrate all methods and systems of knowledge leading to the one God, as the term universus--turned to the one--reveals. The students chose/appointed their professors, those who professed a way to attain this aim, according to their interests and motivations and not in view to obtain academical degrees.

Thus the medieval university realized that learning, experience, the progress of information, are aspects of the main purpose of human existence, an idea that has recently been verified physiologically and psychologically. As soon as Man stops learning he regresses physiologically and undergoes a "psychological death". Our brain according to its neuron structure could assimilate knowledge for 180 years continuously.

However to assimilate knowledge the mind has to be prepared. Therefore soon education became the second purpose of the university, to attain the status of a magister/master as a precondition to participate actively in the evolution of civilization; the doctor had to make an original contribution. This meant the appearance of examinations and diplomas and a hierarchization of learning, in tune with the feudal order of society.

At the end of the Middle Ages, when religion grew apologetic through the schisma between protestants and catholics, static adaptation to the local creed supplanted dynamic studies. And in modern times, the task of education for attaining a social position has superseded research as well as free dialogue; training for a given status is paramount.

Thus the actual university is no longer a place where one chooses the person from whom to learn, but an extension of secondary schooling. The striving for personal growth, for meaning in life, for spiritual adventure and union with God is practically banished from academic learning. It reappeared during the last twenty years

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outside of the university as the "Human Potential Movement", taking growth instead of adaptation to the existing social order as the criterion of human wellness (Cf. Maslow, Rogers, et al.).

Founded against the established (academic) society, the accent was on alternative life-styles. But actually more and more people "inside" the existing social order realize that in the face of the impending social, political and ecological disasters to survive as a human species, a real and new understanding and conception of Man in relation to the whole must be the focus of human endeavour, and especially that of the sciences. To achieve this, the resurrection of the medieval European spirit with all its implications could serve as a focus for the development of the kind of consciousness that is needed today. It is my conviction that the "leading edge" of this pioneering scientific work is done in Rajneeshpuram, and it goes without saying that it would not have been done without the participation of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

"Mere purposive rationality unaided by such phenomena as art, religion, dreams and the like, is necessarily pathogenic and destructive of life; and ... its virulence springs specifically from the circumstance that life depends upon interlocking circuits of contingency, while consciousness can see only such short arcs of such circuits as human purpose may direct ...

"That is the sort of world we live in--a world of circuit structures--and love can survive only if wisdom (i.e. a sense of recognition of the fact of circuitry) has an effective voice."

--Gregory Bateson, "Style, Grace and Information", in Steps to an Ecology of Mind

It is this general attitude--which only seems to be "new"--3) that creates the atmosphere that is needed in order to facilitate a learning process that our universities in the West can only dream about. The above quoted world-famous anthropologist and information theorist, Gregory Bateson, called it Learning III. And if anything at all is happening in Rajneeshpuram, it is this kind of learning.

I do hope that this short letter will help you to arrive at the right conclusions. Let me assure you that it is my deep persuasion that to have a center like Rajneeshpuram in your country, and a person like Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, can be considered a great gift.

Munich, July 19, 1983

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Knut-Rainer Pflughaupt,
Program-Director and Conference-Coord.,
FORUM INTERNATIONAL

FORUM INTERNATIONAL is a scientific organization that unites individuals of different nationalities, professions and philosophical or spiritual persuasion who share a humanistic and/or transpersonal orientation. This means that using specific methods and observations of their areas of interest, they are moving toward or have arrived at the recognition of the fundamental unity underlying the world of separate beings and objects, and are applying this understanding in their respective fields.

FORUM INTERNATIONAL supports efforts to bridge gaps existing at present between various disciplines and to formulate a comprehensive and integrative image of human nature. It facilitates the development of new scientific paradigms synthesizing previously disparate or contradictory approaches, emphasizing the unity of mind, body and spirit, and is seeking to describe human beings in their complex interpersonal, social, ecological and cosmic context.

In practice, FORUM INTERNATIONAL encourages application of emerging principles and conceptual frameworks to therapy, education, economy, ecology, politics, religion, the arts, and other areas of human life by means of seminars, workshops and international conferences. Both theoretically and practically oriented scientists from different disciplines are invited to examine the most urgent problems of our times and, in doing this, to throw light on the essential and important aspects common to all.

NOTES:

- 1) Gregory Bateson, Steps to an Ecology of Mind (1972), and Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity (1980); David Bohm, Wholeness and the Implicate Order (1980); Michel Foucault, L'archéologie du savoir (1969); Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques (1968); Ilya Prigogine, The New Alliance (1982).
T.S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962); Imre Lakatos and Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge (1970); Paul K. Feyerabend, Against Method (1975).
- 2) Other images that immediately come to mind are more of an aesthetic nature: i.e. "games" (a): One can define Rajneeshpuram as a pattern of interrelated "games" of therapeutic, serious or other nature, with the goal to develop or arrive at qualitatively "higher" games (cf. Hesse's Glass Bead Game).

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- 2 cont'd) (b) Rajneeshpuram is frequently and can be interpreted as a "Mystical Quest", or as a collective alchemical marriage. (c) Many people would prefer to look at it in terms of a "community", enriched through the presence of children. (d) "Images and Dance". It can easily be interpreted as a pattern of aesthetic images or as a dance of energies. (e) Some people may prefer to interpret Rajneeshpuram as energy in an abstract form, as spiral, hierarchy, matrix, torus, network, polyhedron, tensegrity, knot, mandala, etc. (f) The energy at Rajneeshpuram could also be described in the terminology of any symbol system, i.e. the I Ching, astrology, any pantheon. (g) One could also interpret it in terms of a psychocultural analysis, including the archetypal confrontations. (h) "Information Processing": it could also be interpreted as a complex bio-mathematical computer, processing and storing different kinds of information, or (i) as I have done it, under a learning aspect as a university.
3. And it is precisely this richness, this many-facet-quality, that lifts the place Rajneeshpuram and its founder so high above the average in the final analysis, that truly combines the qualities of philosophy, science, the arts and religion in precisely the way it used to be done prior to the Renaissance in Europe.

KRP.

Knut-rainer Pflughaupt