



One Dance: Uncovering Human Magnificence Through Conversation

By Arun Wakhlu and Alan Stewart

Energising Organisations through Wholesome Leadership

Abstract

This article is about human magnificence: What it is and how to assist in bringing it forth. Our aim is to bring to your attention a way of recognizing and supporting the emergence of the magnificence inherent in our humanity. We have produced this article particularly for those who appreciate that this is at the core of their professional practice.

Our thinking has arisen from a remarkable happening during a particular event and from our subsequent conversations. The 'happening' was the creation of a diagram in the midst of an event which we were co-facilitating. We wish now to bring this diagram to your notice together with comments on how you may interpret it and also background ideas that underpin how you may use the ideas in your own practice.

There are elements in the diagram and its possible meanings which are drawn from both Eastern and Western perspectives of our humanity. Our hope is that you may see 'something' which you find illuminating, inspiring and very practical for your purposes.

To The Reader

Have you ever wondered about the true essence of our humanity? An essence which is often covered up by the busyness, banality, babble and brutality of life. Or, about the common thread that runs through our work/play as healers, facilitators, transformers, light workers and agents of planetary evolution.

How may this essence be revealed and harnessed for the benefit of us all and of the ecosystem of which we are an integral part? How may we all join hands and hearts in this dance called Life? And, what could be your role in this process?

This article is addressed to people who know and notice the great joy experienced by those who feel truly respected, listened to and honored for whoever they are. It is for all those whose professional practice is opening spaces and contexts in which people nominate their own agendas and questions for addressing things that matter to them. Spaces in which all voices are heard, and in which participation is purely voluntary.

It may well be that what you discover here could make a world of difference through extending your current perceptions and understanding of what you have been doing –and will be in the future.

Our article has likely come to your notice through your being a practitioner of what we call 'conversational' or 'interactive' processes. The main ones that we are familiar with are Open Space Technology (OST), The World Café (TWC) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI). But if you don't see yourself as linked to these – yet – don't feel excluded.

At the core of the article is a diagram which could be a very useful metaphorical way of describing – and accounting for – the purposes and outcomes of conversations. We put forward the diagram as a simple and elegant way of capturing the essence of what can be achieved through conversation – whether this is through a coach interacting with an individual or through interaction among participants in a group in contexts co-created by a facilitator or 'host'.

There is plenty here for all to savor. Please do this!

Our Invitation

We invite you to look carefully at the diagram, the centre piece of the article, and on explanatory and supporting material which could assist you to appreciate what the significance of what you read could be for you.

We put these ideas to you in the spirit expressed by a person whose work and ideas we greatly admire and appreciate.

Take it or leave it.

I don't want to sell anything to anyone.

I don't want to persuade any human being.

I only want to draw attention.

The only thing I want is to draw attention.

~ Heinz von Foerster

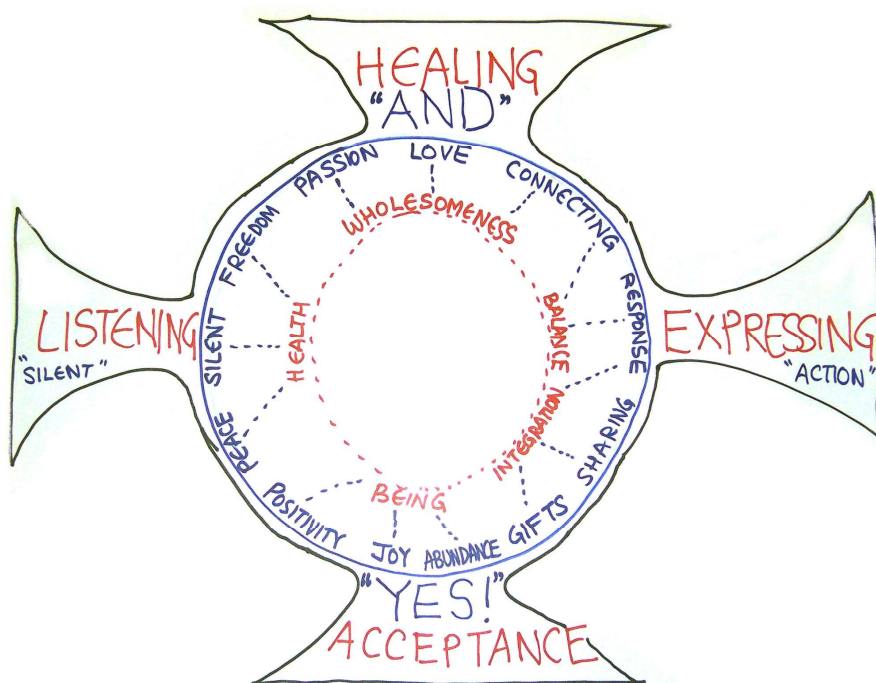
The Diagram

Have a close look at what you see here.

And jot down whatever thoughts and impressions come to your mind.

What do you notice? What shapes, colours, spaces, linkages, words?

Then go on to consider: What do you think the total structure of the diagram represents?



And begin to wonder: Does this reflect my perception of myself, of people I see as individual clients and of people with whom I associate when working in groups? Could it be 'me', 'you' and 'them'? This requires a leap of imagination to switch from one perspective to another depending on the context. As we hope you come to appreciate, this is possible!

From doing these you may come to glimpse that the diagram illustrates for you a wealth of connections and possibilities.

Some of which you may not have been aware of. And from what you read of our descriptions of the origins of the diagram, what is contained in it and its potential significance, you may come to see remarkable implications.

How The Diagram And This Article Came Into Being

A brief history of the origins of the diagram ...

It 'emerged' during a workshop in Pune in India in July 2006. The theme: 'The Conversational Foundation of Organizational Transformation.'

We were co-facilitating an afternoon's gathering in which participants had the opportunity to experience three conversational processes: Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Open Space Technology (OST) and the World Café (TWC).

Amidst the hubbub of this lively session, Arun picked up a piece of A3 paper and three pens, went by himself to a table, in the middle of the room, and silently drew the diagram. He just took 'time out' and produced it.

While being driven to Mumbai (about a three hour journey) the next day, we recorded a conversation on our reflections of our time together and particularly, on what was in Arun's mind when he drew the diagram.

Alan posed questions and Arun shared his understanding of what had emerged.

In the process of doing this, we realized that something rather profound had emerged. We had this recording transcribed. Which meant that, we had a first draft, with the thought that we would produce a paper for your inspection.

For several months we pondered how this would be done.

Until Arun took the initiative to say 'I would wish to come to Hong Kong for a few days so that we can look at we have produced and come to a convergence.'

This happened in April 2007. We made copious notes and had long conversations on what further insights we had noticed. This was followed by an exchange of emails through which we achieved more clarity of just what was there and what were its possible implications.

And so here it is for you to have a look to see what meaning emerges for you.

We would, naturally, be delighted to hear your feedback including any suggestions on how to make what we have produced more accessible to a wide audience.

And on anything that you 'see' that you have found personally valuable.

What The Diagram Indicates

Arun's Notes:

I think all that was in my mind when I drew the diagram was an invitation to the universe to manifest through this body mind anything that may be of use in trying to understand the connecting principles and connecting ideas between Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space Technology, the World Café and also other conversational processes such as Attitudinal Healing.

I wanted to get some insight on what the common elements and common themes are and how it all hangs together. Very spontaneously and naturally, from a very silent and peaceful space, this diagram emerged. I will now attempt to share what it means to me.

The space in the middle represents the space of spirit, the space of total silence, total emptiness and total being. You can give it any name you like, but it's really the inner most I Am, the innermost peace that passes understanding. When you are that space, when you are that silence, then everything in life is one beautiful mysterious dance. It is one whole and there is no separation between spirit and all of life. All of life becomes a dance of spirit.

All of life is spirit. All of life is an incredibly beautiful, intelligent, miraculous and perfect dance. It is so amazing and so beautiful that one is left completely wondering about its beauty, its simplicity, its grace and its incredible perfection. While the space inside looks empty and silent, it is also full.

For me it is the mystery which is both empty and full, both nothing and everything, both the silent being of awareness and the fullness of life co-existing paradoxically at the same time. This spirit is at the very heart of Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space, World Café and Attitudinal Healing.

This diagram captures the essence of this spirit at play. A few thoughts on this: It is all about healing or making whole, connecting diverse perspectives, connecting paradoxical views into a coherent whole. If breathing in is good and breathing out is also good, this might appear paradoxical.... but then that's how life is! So healing, which is one of the wings, is about the field where polarities can be held together, where diversity is welcome and all is held together in balance and integration. I think all these four conversational processes are very healing. They connect me to myself; they connect me to other people. They connect me to nature and I am left feel more whole after they are over.

I think, as you have been saying Alan, the essence of these processes is also listening, deep listening. When we are very silent inside, we listen and when we listen we enlist. All these three words have the same letters in them i.e., Silent, Listen and Enlist. Even Tinsel... all of them have the same letters! It is about deep listening in a way that empowers people, inspires people, that makes them feel respected, makes them feel wanted, makes them feel heard. It is also equally about the opposite of that, which is expressing, of sharing from the heart, of being assertive, of standing up for what I really care about and expressing that. So these are the two wings of the horizontal plane.

I feel that the one common element in all these four conversational processes (which is also one of the elements in a life fully lived or a spiritual life) is the element of acceptance. It is the big "Yes!".... yes to people, yes to ideas, yes to whatever happens, yes to whoever comes, yes to whatever is bubbling up, yes to all feelings, yes to all perspectives. The very act of acceptance puts me at peace.

I don't fight things. I don't say it should be this, or should not be this. I am deeply present in the moment with an open heart and open mind. I am deeply trusting of whatever the universe is bringing me with the full faith that whatever the universe brings is a gift, that everything in the universe will nurture me, everything in the universe will support me and my evolution. All people are my teachers, all events are my teachers, and even disappointments that hurt me are also my teachers.

Everything that life is sending me is my teacher, is my guide. So I say a big "Yes" to whatever this beautiful wholeness of life brings me, take it as a gift and as a blessing.

So these are the four common elements I see. Inside the blue circle I put in some words (such as passion, love, connecting, sharing, gifts, abundance and joy) which bubbled up. These are different ways of looking at the fullness of life. They are different facets of the same wholeness which is life, which is spirit. If we say the spirit and wholeness of life is like the sun, then all these things in the blue circle are like its rays: freedom, peace, positivity, joy, abundance, responsiveness, action, seeing the big picture, seeing wholeness.

The inner red circle contains words about things which are more generic, a bit more generative. Like health and peace for example. These are so important to people. These are all words, and I wouldn't get stuck with them. Just play with the inner parts as symbols to describe this incredible, indescribable mystery called life. These are some thoughts as we converse. I am sure something more will emerge from the conversation.

Human 'magnificence' is characterized by new found experience or observation of the features outlined in the two circles. The red 'elements' are 'strengthened' and the blue elements are given increasing expression.

The red and blue elements are all manifestations of a "full life", or a Wholesome Life... one lived from the Centre, a free expression of human magnificence.

One can expect to find more joy, peace and abundance etc. in such a life.

The 'trigger' for this to happen is a spontaneous and natural 'exchange' at one of the four interfaces:

YES! Acceptance:

Personal recognition that whatever happens is the only thing that could have and that our response depends on assuming responsibility for the interpretation we place on our experience. This is also a function of being in the now, with no references from past memory, or future desires or imaginings.

(Any moment we are free to act towards a future we desire.)

Heinz von Foerster *

***Whether we like it or not,
whether we approve of it or not,
whether it makes sense or not,
things are the only way they can be
given all that came before.
And if in the process we realize
that what we do right now
is what will come before next,
we discover our power, and dwell
in a calm sense of possibility.***

Jack Ricchiuto

EXPRESSION, Action

Personal recognition that 'I' do well to express what is 'in me.' Speaking the truth, with respect for myself and others.

("I once said, rather fancifully but it is something I believe, that the central arena in history is one human being talking to another and listening of course. That's exchange.")

Athol Fugard, South African playwright

LISTENING, Silence

Personal recognition of the importance of creating a space within, which is respectful and receptive. Seeing the practice of listening as one of the most important elements of conversation and human interaction. Seeing the process of conversation as one generative and silent essence both creating and receiving the message.

(When we listen from inner silence, it empowers and inspires people. It makes them feel respected, wanted and heard. Listening from an empty space inside creates a field of compassion which the speaker can feel.)

Arun Wakhlu

HEALING, And

Personal recognition of what happens when we treat others with respect and when we experience this. Connecting, appreciating, joining together and giving space to unwind, discharge and freeing oneself. Returning home to wholeness.

(The greatest compliment that was ever paid to me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer.)

H D Thoreau Life Without Principle 1863

All these four wings work in tandem with each other. When I deeply Listen and Accept another and create a space in which the other can freely Express, Healing happens. When I have been freed of my burdens, unblocked and Healed, I am freed up to Listen, Express, and Accept. These four dances together expand the unfolding of more love, peace and creative intelligence. This is at the heart of uncovering human magnificence.

***These items in parentheses can be thought of as an underpinning of the particular recognition.**

Processes By Which Our Human Magnificence Is Uncovered

Margaret Wheatley, author of 'A Simpler Way', writes "Our behaviors change only if we decide to belong together differently."

For us, this is the heart of the matter. When we alter the notion of who we are, our "boundary" changes. It's scope of inclusion changes. When the boundary of my definition of who I am expands, I relate to "others" differently. To use Margaret's words, we begin to belong together differently.

When I am the essence, I have no boundary. I am whole. All are my own. I am one with all. This is the goal of evolution. Conversation progressively expands my notion of who I am, until one day; it ripens into Love/ Emptiness/ Fullness/ Being! The ego (false sense of separateness) dissolves into oneness, like a doll made of salt who goes out for a swim in the sea!

The essence of the diverse workshops and training programs we offer (and of 'conversational' processes which underpin them) is to enable people to experience 'being differently' with others and to then decide to act on the realization of what is possible through 'belonging together' in what we would describe as 'more wholesome' ways.

Conversational processes are the alpha and the omega of the diagram! That means that they both originate from the creative centre and lead us back to the same creative centre. The four wings are the processes that happen in this dance. They are like breathing in and breathing out. A pulsating movement that flows from, and to the wholeness of the now. Good facilitators and coaches enable individuals to recognize the magnificence of who they truly are.

Human magnificence is symbolized by the empty centre of the diagram. It encompasses, pervades and is the whole of Life. Our I Am, the mystery of existence, which is neither empty nor full, is all there is! This is a space of immense creativity, peace and joy. It is abundance. Its "manifestation" is actually a progressive uncovering or developing of that which is already and eternally there. All that happens is that our sight changes. We begin to see differently because of progressively expanding who we are. Being affects seeing and seeing affects being. Being the magnificence that you truly are leads to a clear vision of wholeness. You see and become the dance called Life as a whole... innocently, silently, completely.

It is at the interfaces of the 'wings' (of the diagram) that a dynamic 'exchange' happens during the course of being in the dance of conversation. It is through this that a new 'intelligence' or the innate human 'magnificence' emerges.

Listening and Expressing, (the horizontal wings) are the gifts of our service... the dynamic exchange that we bring forth in conversation.

Acceptance and Healing (the vertical wings) are the outcomes that happen when we express and listen from our centre.

This centre has many attributes and names:

Creative Intelligence, The field of all possibilities, Magnificence, Being, I Am, Love, Peace, The Source, Allah (All-ah!), Brahman, Mystery, etc. The emergence of magnificence is an uncovering of that which was overshadowed. It is like the sun emerging 'from behind clouds. Conversation dissolves the clouds of illusion and separation, to reveal the sun of wholeness or truth.

Here is something that I discussed with a dear friend, Revati Salunke, who is an extraordinary dancer:

"A movement is a convergence in this moment of many processes, including things that may have begun years ago. Dance is a movement, where millions of processes converge in the moment. It is a celebration of this moment. It is a tribute to the whole from where all these processes came. It is recognition of my connection with Life."

What does this imply about the significance of conversation?

More About Conversation

In one of the many conversations that the authors have had over the past decade, the ideas that the word "conversation" comes from the Latin "con versare"- to turn or dance together, came up.

Conversations are the very heart of life. Life is dance and dance is life. Life is conversation, and conversation is life. If there is one thing which will significantly enable our human species to take its next evolutionary leap, it will be heartfelt conversations on things that matter to us.

There is a lovely metaphor about this from India. It is the metaphor of Lord Shiva dancing. It is said that the whole universe is Shiva dancing. The interesting thing about dance is that you

cannot separate the dance and the dancer. Unlike a poem or a painting, where we can separate the work of art and the artist, in dance the, art and artist are one. Looking at life this way, if all of Life is Shiva dancing, then all of Life is Shiva! There is another creative twist to this story. Another perspective sees all of Life as Shakti... Feminine Creative Energy. Shakti is this magnificently abundant and creative play called "Life". Shiva, pure unbounded consciousness, and Shakti are really one. There is only one dance. One of its many names is "Love."

Others' Ideas On Conversation

Humberto Maturana has provided insight into the nature of our being through revealing that we are capable of far more harmonious living as a species than our current practices. He is a Chilean biologist whose observations are truly emancipating .They provide a firm foundation for treating each other with inherent respect. For he makes clear, as a scientist, that what we choose to notice creates the worlds we live in. If we choose to see 'wholesomeness' in people this influences greatly how we interact and what emerge from our interactions.

Among Maturana's Writings

"Human existence takes place in the relational space of conversation. This means that, even though from a biological perspective we are Homo sapiens, our way of living - that is to say, our human condition - takes place in our form of relating to each other and the world we bring forth in our daily living through conversation."

"Conversation, more than money, makes the world go around."

"Love is the only emotion which expands intelligence. It is a process of granting to others and to oneself, acceptance, dignity, legitimacy, humanity, without them or you having to change, or improve, or be redeemed; to see the redemption they already are. "

Juanita Brown, cofounder of The World Café, speaking for the Power of Conversations that Matter says:

"Since our earliest ancestors gathered in circles around the warmth of a fire, conversation has been a core process for discovering what we care about. It's how we've always shared our knowledge, imagined the future, and created communities of commitment. Innovation and change can often be traced to people conversing informally in living rooms, cafés, kitchens, and church halls. Consider the sewing circles and Committees of Correspondence that helped birth the American Republic,

as well as the cafés and salons that spawned the French Revolution. The U.S. civil rights movement was born through conversation in people’s homes and churches.”

Pille Bunnell, an associate of Maturana’s has this to share:

“Conversations are not just something we do among other doings, they are our human niche. We live in a world formed through conversation. Conversations make one world or another; not only in how we relate to each other, but in how the whole lived world arises around us. What we see, feel, do.... all of it arises through conversation and when nice things happen, we can always find good human relations behind them, and so we are once again encouraged by the quality of humanness, and how we love to be this species, Homo sapiens-amans. [amans is Latin for ‘loving’].”

Heinz von Foerster, the father of second order cybernetics, has said that the observer cannot be independent of what he or she experiences.

Implications of this are:

“We are responsible for the interpretation we place on what we experience.”

“Any moment we are free to act toward the future we desire.”

“If you wish to learn how to see learn how to act.”

“Act always so as to increase the number of choices.”

Potential Significance Of The Ideas In This Article For Practitioners

Arun: As a facilitator who has been into this for many years, I see my work as being like an empty flute where Life plays the music. In India there is this beautiful image of Lord Krishna (who represents divine wholeness) playing a flute. May we be like an empty flute on the lips of this incredible beauty and wholeness so that it plays its music through us.

All of us who are in the fields of Appreciative Inquiry, Attitudinal Healing, Open Space or World Café, need to see ourselves as empty channels of the work of the whole and not as proponents of Attitudinal Healing or Appreciative Inquiry or World Café. We just need to be fully present to whatever Life brings in the moment and we may dance between these

methods. We may play with these four or five colors, the way an artist would make a beautiful painting. These are beautiful colors and I respect the beauty of each color. But life wants us to play and meet with all the colors. In my work I have used the components of Appreciative Inquiry, I have used Attitudinal Healing, but more importantly, I have always been open to what life is calling me to do in the moment.

So, at times, suddenly theatre pops up and singing pops up and music and dance pops up. And then I don't say "Oh! But I was doing Open Space, so how come we are all dancing?" Yes, we are dancing, we are moving, because that's what life wants from us. That's what the fullness of life needs from me in this moment. I say 'Yes' to it. So, my request to all the practitioners is to not get attached to your method, but be empty and pure channels of the dance of the whole.

Thanks to Alan's visit to our home in Pune it suddenly came to me that life is conversation and conversation is life. And so this dance, this conversation, this dynamic movement of the whole... What does it call me to do in this moment? Can I listen to this inner guidance and obey wholeheartedly and be totally committed to this and not necessarily to this method or that method. If the world has to heal, (which it will and it is happening), then all of us facilitators need to transcend our boundaries and gently rest in the wholeness of our being, in the wholeness of the moment, in the wholeness of the heart and express from that space and fullness. Then all of us facilitators can heal ourselves and stop worrying about whether we are doing World Café, or whether we are doing Appreciative Inquiry, or whether we are Opening Space. Just say we are instruments of the fullness of Life. We are one with the fullness of Life. We dance with the wholeness of Life. When we start moving like this and heal our own divisions and our own misunderstandings, we will become instrumental in healing the world.

With reference to coaching, we can take it that a coach 'orchestrates' (in a one to one conversation) the context in which an individual has an 'aha' experience at one or more of the wings.

A good coach is being essence, seeing essence and freeing essence. She is like an "empty flute" through whom the "whole" plays the music.

She is one with the dance of life, and trusts this dance to guide each step. I feel a good coach is a co-dancer with life, a pure channel of love.

She is the conduit through which the orchestra of Life flows on (in the spirit of "Go well"). She is the context and the source. By being whole and seeing whole (seeing the sun behind

the clouds that may exist in the "other"), she becomes instrumental in liberating the magnificence of the other (freeing essence)

This implies that a person who facilitates conversing processes (meaning the whole box of 'tricks' i.e. OST and the others plus dancing, storytelling ... whatever seems appropriate), through co-creating contexts in which 'self organizing' happens, is orchestrating the context in which interaction between participants 'triggers' the 'aha' experiences of people in a group.

There is little sense of "doing" in such masterful facilitation. It is more like being a conduit/medium for the work of the whole. At the same time, it may also involve some doing (but with no sense of doership!)

In posing this question we are becoming 'clearer' about the purpose of 'practitioners' of Open Space, AI, World Cafe and the like when they act together and let their boundaries go. They become instruments and uncoverers of the human essence!

Reflections

Like many others today we feel strongly that, while the problems that our little planet is facing are indeed dire, the resources to address them could be marshaled if there was widespread recognition that 'we are in this together' and that a concerted effort is possible if people world wide feel included in the enterprise.

It is imperative at this point in the evolution of the planet that spiritually awakened people unite and take action together. All 'practitioners' of Open Space, AI, World Cafe and the like need to see the transcendent oneness of our work, and go beyond the boundaries of our own tools, techniques, approaches etc.

We feel the need to become pure and silent hand maidens for love's work. We see the need to be free of all isms and the mental prisms and prisons that they create. It is in such contexts that the inherent greatness/magnificence of participants is expressed once they have experienced and 'decided' to belong together differently.

This can be done by the collaborative actions of people whose business is enabling people to open up/loosen up when they come together to focus on questions that matter. (This is more like a "Play" or a "Dance" rather than "Business". Love loosens up people.)

The scale of this happening depends on how many 'practitioners' decide to collaborate in the enterprise associated with the questions which are the focus.

What would it take to enchant and enable (all) people of goodwill to contribute their passion, resources, expertise and commitment to a world wide enterprise of coming together?

Part of the answer is that the technology exists. For through the internet it becomes technically feasible to 'gather' on a world wide scale.

We see that there are several other prerequisites:

A vision of what is possible, i.e. what this enterprise could lead to.

Widespread realization that we humans are the very creatures to undertake such an enterprise – if we recognize where the starting point is and what can emerge from this recognition.

Appreciating who are we and what we want.

The paper is an expression of what, why and how our human struggles to achieve coherence and collaboration can be achieved.

For we have come to see that there is so much waste of human potential in the way most organizations operate.

And have realized that for the sake of humanity and the ecosystem in (of) which we are an integral part this cannot and must not continue.

There is good work to be done and we wish to draw your attention to how this can happen.

The starting point can be expressed clearly and succinctly. The essence of every one of us is greatness or magnificence. We all have the capacity to play an important part in the evolution of humanity.

Our way of expressing this 'emerged' in the form of a simple diagram.

From which we speculate on how others may find value in using this diagram as a way of creating meaning in what they do and how this connects to larger contexts – scaling up to a vision of what humanity will be once sufficient numbers of people engage in this 'joy and capacity filled' joint enterprise. Besides the numbers, the depth and expansiveness of their consciousness and the richness of their connections will also affect outcomes.

A launching point for such an enterprise we call 'Global Weaving'.

Our Invitation

Arun's Notes:

"All practitioners are doing great work in their own way. I feel that the next natural step in our evolution will be to see the common threads in our work, and to weave them together in obedience to the promptings of the whole. This will require us to become like empty flutes on the lips of Life, of what is present in each moment. The sharing in the article can be a starting point for this conversation and movement."

Alan Adds:

Here are ideas to which we draw your attention with the thought that they may be 'keepers' (something you take away to put into practice) for you:

- The vital importance of taking the initiative to engage with your clients – individuals and groups of any size – in imaginative ways. For your two primary activities of listening and questioning require a great deal of imagination both to actually do and in how you 'execute' them.
- Do you appreciate that every time you use the opportunity to initiate a conversation, at one or more of the four points of contact in the diagram, the emerging 'magnificence' could be mind blowing?
- Whenever we treat each other well good things happen. Something which manifests when people feel secure to express their authentic selves through interacting respectfully with others. No doubt you have experienced signs of transformation, of healing, whenever people feel that they are respected, listened to, included and given the opportunity to express their innate potential.
- While we have subtitled this article 'Uncovering human magnificence through conversation' there is the notion that 'magnificence' is also a co-creation. By this I mean that what may emerge from an interaction between a coach or a facilitator and his or her client(s) is a product of the dynamic; its expression is a new invention. Such expression of innate magnificence can happen in myriad ways in and through the dance of conversation – the One Dance!

We invite you to participate in co-creating this tapestry. We sincerely hope that you come to appreciate the significant part you can play in expanding the ideas and actions which are inherent in this way of seeing conversation. We invite you to dance together to reclaim the highest potential of which our species is capable.

About the Authors

Arun Wakhlu and Dr. Alan Stewart have a friendship extending over eleven years (in 2008). We met at a gathering called Open Space on Open Space, Oz (Australia) in Melbourne in 1997 and have kept in contact through email and visits to each other's homes since then.



Arun Wakhlu, born in 1955 (Kashmir, India) is the Chairman, Pragati Leadership Institute Pvt. Ltd., a spiritually inspired Leadership, Organizational Development and Coaching institute based in Pune, India. An international facilitator and coach, he has worked in the Tata Administrative Service, as a member of the leading Tata Group in India. Arun holds a Bachelor of Technology (Elect Engg.) from the Indian Institute of Technology (Delhi), and a PG Diploma in Business Administration from the Indian Institute of Management (Ahmedabad, India). He has designed and facilitated a number of innovative leadership development programs for leading Indian and international organizations including The Government of India. He has also facilitated workshops or presented papers at international conferences in Australia, USA, Switzerland, France, Sri Lanka, the Netherlands, Mauritius, UAE and Oman. As the author of the award-winning book *Managing From The Heart*, Arun has helped pioneer and operationalise the concepts of "Wholesome Development" and "Wholesome Leadership" aimed at unfolding inner and outer freedom for prosperity with peace.

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Dr Alan Stewart comes from Southern Africa and grew up in what is now Zimbabwe. His training was in biology and he has a PhD from London University in the UK. From 1975 Alan spent 30 years in Australia, the first two thirds of which were in a medical school. In 1994 he took the opportunity to develop a new career as a person whose particular skill is to 'open space' for conversations that have heart and meaning. He is pursuing this in Hong Kong where he has been living since early 2005. From his extensive travels and diverse domiciles he sees himself very much as a world citizen.



Alan is the author of 'Time to converse – at the heart of human warmth' and a coeditor and contributor of "Seized by Agreement, Swamped by Understanding - A collection of papers to celebrate the visit to Australia in August 1994 by Humberto Maturana".

He has been a Senior Fulbright Scholar in Community Medicine at Stanford University in California and a consultant on a project in Indonesia funded by the World Bank. He was a co-founder of the Open Space Institute of Australia and has been named a World Café Pioneer.

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