

PATTERNS

ASCD Systems Thinking/Chaos Theory Network/ American Society for Cybernetics

Spring/Summer 2005

From the Editor:

Due to uncontrollable glitches in what we call "Time" we have combined the Spring and Summer issues of PATTERNS. In this expanded issue we highlight the emergence of "new" thinking. True to the natural cycle of life, this new thinking has been germinating seeds that require a time of darkness and are now pushing toward the light of day.

This comes at a time when great fear and turmoil exists; earth's resources are being used without wisdom; viable human relationships are threatened by dominant power-oriented forces; living creatures feel caught in a labyrinth of violence and complexity.

Since January 1996, in an attempt to clarify issues in the field of education, PATTERNS has been the newsletter for the Systems Thinking/Chaos Theory Network sponsored by the *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)*. This past year it also became the newsletter for the *American Society for Cybernetics*. (see: www.haven.net/patterns/)

As we continue our publishing journey, much of our work involves an identity search. Just who are we? As a publication, whom do we serve?

A review of the index of past issues on our website indicates an increasing awareness of the importance of a knowledge of Cybernetics as a new way of thinking. We find excitement and a feeling of hope that engenders a sense of new life as we explore this area of learning.

We agree with Gregory Bateson's observation that *"There is latent in Cybernetics the means of achieving a new and perhaps more human*

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A Reflection on the Schiavo Case from a Cybernetic Perspective

by Allenna Leonard

Allenna Leonard, Ph.D. came to be interested in organization theory and, later, in cybernetics through her experiences working for a university and volunteering with a group promoting quality children's television. This led to the pursuit of doctoral studies at the University of Maryland and a thesis on differing perspectives of US broadcast regulation. It also led to meeting and becoming partners with Stafford Beer, whom Norbert Wiener called the father of management cybernetics, who believed passionately in using this new field to improve the governance of our organizations. Since his death, she continues to live in Toronto, to write and consult, and to facilitate the Team Syntegrity group process he invented. She is currently serving as president of the America Society for Cybernetics.

Cybernetics has had little impact on political science, despite the fact that Kybernator is the root word for governor. While the Watt steam governor is rightly counted among cybernetic accomplishments, few members of the public regard a piece of legislation or a regulation that obeys Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety as an equivalent accomplishment. This is too bad, because only governance measures that have requisite variety will be effective, and conventional political analysis does not provide a rigorous framework to make that determination. Politics by slogan and media frenzy has the opposite effect: it reduces variety and often attenuates or distorts the processes of public conversations.

Gordon Pask's definition of cybernetics as a science of defensible metaphors is particularly relevant here. We have metaphors in abundance in politics, but not all of them are defensible. As I write today, the President of the United States, its Congress and the Governor of Florida have intervened in a family dispute that is being fought out in court. The question is whether to reconnect a feeding tube that has been keeping a woman in a persistent vegetative state from dying for the past fifteen years. Metaphors abound. Is it murder? Euthanasia? Death with dignity? What is the opposite of death here? Is she alive now or not? Political arguments about limits of when life begins and when it ends are in some ways two sides of the same coin. Stem cells from embryos that will not be implanted are not viable systems on their own; nor are persons in a persistent vegetative state (PVS). Neither is conscious nor is there any hope of their becoming so, although, ironically, stem cell research probably offers the best hope of recovery for some PVS patients. Today, politics, medicine and families are grappling with the question of "when

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outlook, a means of changing our philosophy of control, and a means of seeing our own follies in wider perspective."

I was fortunate to have known this giant of a man. Listening to his thoughts was addictive. I could not quite understand them but I "knew" they were important__ so I kept listening. In my experience since that time, I see this same pattern of "knowing" among many who are first introduced to the kind of thinking in the field of cybernetics, particularly in second order cybernetics.

Bateson writes; *"There is something philosophically or theoretically pregnant about cybernetics. There is a kind of seductive mystery or glamour that attaches to it. And the origin of this, I think, is that cybernetics is an instantiation of a different paradigm from the one in which most of us grew up__the reductive, linear, Newtonian, paradigm that still characterizes most academic work in the natural and social sciences (and engineering and the humanities, too)__the classical sciences, as Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers call them. ... It appears to me, though, that historians have yet to get seriously to grips with this aspect of cybernetics."*

The main ideas in Systems Science and Chaos Theory are becoming popular among the educated population and are often referred to as "paradigm-changing." However, as I see it, because these ideas require a difficult shift of perception, they are conveniently absorbed into the traditional intellectual/economic orientation making no real qualitative changes in personal cognition. We are merely pouring new wine into old wineskins.

Bateson pointed out in his book, *Mind and Nature*, (Bantam Books, N.Y. 1979) that *"every evolutionary step is an addition of information to an already existing system. Because this is so, the combinations, harmonies, and discords between successive pieces and layers of information will present many problems of survival and determine many directions*

does life end?"

Within a constructivist approach, metaphors must be defended; not, necessarily from attack, but from misinterpretation and inconsistency. When we say 'there is no such thing as objectivity' we are not saying anything goes. We say that our objectivity must always be in brackets, or that our subjectivity must be able to be shared with others through language. The current debate mixes medical measurements, spousal and parental rights, duties and perceptions, different religious and political perspectives, and dubious connections to civil rights for the disabled, animal rights and the death penalty. The decisions rest with the courts for whom only some of these perspectives have standing. Where are the brackets? Certainly not in the news media for whom no hyperbole is excessive. This Easter weekend, television news programs report comparisons between the suffering of this woman and the Crucifixion of Christ. Governor Bush is being likened to Pontius Pilote for not attempting to go beyond the powers of his office. Such perspectives would permit any extra-legal action to be taken if it were consistent with someone's religious belief. But life and its definitions have long been a part of both legal and religious domains, and are not always incompatible.

Metaphors must be defended from misinterpretation and inconsistency

When I was a freshman at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, one of the questions we debated endlessly was "when did the frog die?" We had seen (with some discomfort) our lab assistant progressively disable a frog and noted that its reflexes remained after it was unable to jump or indeed to react to the lab assistant's touch. For some of us, the frog had died when it lost its ability to behave like a frog - its 'frogness'. For others, it died when it had no reactions at all.

Humans are much more complex. When do they lose their ability to behave like a human? There is a continuum between full consciousness and mere sentience. All of us go some way on that continuum when we become drowsy and go to sleep. Those receiving medical attention go further down that line if they are drugged, anesthetized or in a coma. Those affected by mental illness or dementia may see things that others do not or fail to remember their closest relatives. PVS with the rudiments of sentience is at the very end of that line.

Because Terri Schiavo is incapable of speaking for herself, she and her significance, more than that of others, is interpreted by observers. In her intimate circle, her husband, who wishes to let her go takes a position opposite to that of her parents who do not. Parental love is rooted in the limbic system. The strong bonding that takes place between parents and their helpless infants is a survival advantage. It is not surprising that such feelings would return if an adult child becomes as or more helpless than an infant. Marital love happens, almost by definition, between people who are mature enough to contemplate starting their own families. If one partner is stricken, it invites comparisons to that person as an adult, not as a helpless infant. Although it is far from an easy decision, it is understandable that a spouse may be more willing than a parent to let a person die who will never be conscious again.

But this woman has become significant to many who have never met her who are organized around issues that may have meant little to her in life. The parents' legal challenges are funded by parties that would not normally have standing in court. They include some conservative Republicans and religious fundamentalists, an anti-abortion group and another that opposes rights for homosexuals who see or have appropriated her as an icon representing their values. They seem to see her case as a wedge issue to raise funds and embarrass Democrats in the next election. This may backfire. Public comment has been critical of the attempt to exploit family tragedy for political purposes.

Like any science, cybernetics does not claim certainty. It provides frames for discussion rather than answers. Maturana's description of consensual domains is one such frame. Are we speaking of a neurophysiological domain? A legal domain? A religious domain? A culture wars domain? A psychological domain? What perspec-

tive does each bring, which have salience and how do we integrate them? Questions about when life ends should be discussed in public debate. Terri Schiavo is one of tens of thousands diagnosed as being in a persistent vegetative state. Other families have had to decide what to do in comparable situations, with or without the prior guidance of the person who is dying.

Faith may claim certainty and may even do so heroically flying in the face of evidence; science does not. It discusses theory and evidence in terms of whether they can be falsified and whether they are relevant. Sometimes expressions of faith and of certainty, like parental vigilance, are rooted in the midbrain and the limbic system. Certainty in some circumstances is a survival advantage. Responses to danger often can't wait for deliberation. But to deny complexity and apply the fight or flight response to public policy is likely to cause more difficulties than it corrects. Science seeks simplicity but does not reject complexity. It does experiments and builds models to test assumptions and to reduce variety through selective processes.

Experiments can inform social policy. Warren McCulloch's 1945 paper, *Heterarchy of Nervous Nets*, proved that with as few as three alternatives it was impossible to reach a summum bonum. In his experiments, rats were inclined to choose sex over food, food over avoiding electric shock and avoiding electric shock over sex. 'Life' has been presented as a summum bonum in this case but its boundaries are not clear. Other 'rights' like the right to sell unsafe products or the right not to wear a helmet when on a motor cycle can take priority in others although both may be said to cost lives.

*Like any science,
cybernetics does not claim certainty*

The concept of recursion is useful here. This difference of opinion comes down to a binary choice at the lowest level of social structure – the family. How can or should one generalize from this case to the state or the nation? What effect does it have when executive and legislative branches of the American government become involved in the tragedy of one family? There is an element of randomness here. This case, rather than any of the others, became national, even international news. According to the writings of George Lackoff, one of which was reviewed in the last issue of *Patterns*, the conservative model does not make much allowance for differences between what is right for an individual and what is right for a group. Although they strongly believe in hierarchy, they do not give much credence to recursion or to the shifts in context that occur when moving up or down levels.

In this case, the usual liberal/conservative stances are reversed. The so-called conservatives have taken an activist position and would have the government of the nation override state law to reach down to make a family decision. At the same time the so-called liberals stand back, express their regrets over a sad situation and say let the state level rulings prevail.

Even within the boundaries of this case, there is a high ration of noise to information among many of the opinions expressed. I wonder if the people who are so ardently defending this woman's 'right to life' accept the diagnosis of the medical experts that the courts reviewed or understand that no one in this state has ever recovered. For example, some are asking if the outcome of this case will affect the rights of anyone with a serious disability. That question should not be part of the debate; the notion of a disability implies that there are abilities there to be released with appropriate treatment or equipment. It does not clarify matters when news anchors refer to her as 'severely disabled' or 'severely brain damaged' rather than as someone who has been in a persistent vegetative state for fifteen years. Others say that removing a feeding tube is a violation of the Geneva Conventions. But, those conventions were written to apply to a very different population – one that if sick or injured had a possibility of recovery.

Politics has to set the parameters for the whole society and to weigh its responsibilities to each segment. One of these balances has to be between the good of the individual and that of the society. We find it difficult to think about health care as a

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of change." This view helps us understand our times so that we are open to qualitatively new ways of thinking.

Bateson tells the story of Alfred Russel Wallace, a young naturalist who, in 1856 (three years before the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*) while in the rain forests in Indonesia, had an attack of malaria and, following delirium, a psychedelic experience in which he discovered the principle of natural selection. He wrote this out in a letter to Darwin in which he explained his discovery in the following words: ***"The action of this principle is exactly like that of the centrifugal governor of the steam engine, which checks and corrects any irregularities almost before they become evident; and in like manner no unbalanced deficiency in the animal kingdom can ever reach any conspicuous magnitude because it would make itself felt at the very first step, by rendering existence difficult and extinction almost sure to follow."*** (reprinted in *Darwin, a Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Philip Appleman, W.W. Norton, 1970)

But it was Darwin's discovery which contained the theory of the survival of the fittest that was popularly adopted. It would seem that the occidental world was ready and ripe to receive a theory of evolution that could reflect and justify the ethics of the Industrial Revolution. Bateson writes; ***"If it had been Wallace instead of Darwin, we would have had a very different theory of evolution today. The whole cybernetics movement might have occurred 100 years earlier as a result of Wallace's comparison between the steam engine with a governor and the process of natural selection."***

Our period in history is marked by exceptional threats to human survival. The danger of finding ourselves in an evolutionary cul-de-sac is becoming increasingly evident as we continue to accept the violent act of war as a way of making peace in the world.

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From the Editor (continued)

The advice of Swami Beyondananda is helpful as he speaks of the "Near-Dept Experience; a life-changing event when sufferers of Deficit Inattention Disorder and Military Industrial Complex see the light, and turn away from a dept-end road."

With the help of the internet and the spirit of networking we are experiencing the emergence of a wider range of thinkers and doers.

For example, **Victor Jacono**, <victore@maltanet.net> who is an apprentice performer at the University of Malta with degrees in English and Communication Studies, responded to Australian **David Wright's** article on "The Theatre of the Body" in our Winter 2005 issue of PATTERNS. He shares with us his interest in cybernetics through his work with **Groups for Human Encounters** which "over the last ten years have been performing, addressing conferences and running seminars and workshops in most countries in Europe in contexts where research is the norm." (see p.12)

Readers of PATTERNS are familiar with **Lucas Pawlik** in Vienna, **Alan Stewart** in Hong Kong, **Larry Goldfarb** in the USA and **Anthony Sawrey** in Australia. They are connected in their common interest in keeping the spirit and wisdom of the late cyberneticist **Heinz Von Foerster** alive. In an email to Larry Goldfarb, Lucas introduces himself;

Barbara wrote to me that you are a Feldenkrais practitioner which gives me a feeling of being related to you as I am a Taji and Qigong teacher. Both arts share a devotion to the understanding and use of the relationship between body and mind.

She told me about your interest in having a "Heinz von Foerster Conference" in Santa Cruz, California. Together with Alan Stewart, I have worked out a lot of ideas and concepts for such a conference in Vienna. I think it should be possible to link these two conferences as Heinz linked the German and English language world. In fact, I feel the need for

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whole and to confront the fact that there are life and death outcomes for many implicit in our choices. They include the fate of the tens of millions without health insurance, and the greater number who are one paycheck away from losing theirs. It would indeed be ironic if people who come to be in a persistent vegetative state because they lacked appropriate primary care could finally be sure of access when they were beyond recovery.

Legislation has to be one size fits all and cannot have requisite variety for all cases. This is why courts have discretion and priorities are given to family members on the basis of their relation to someone who cannot make decisions for themselves. Typically, parents make decisions on behalf of minor children (and there can be court cases when they disagree), and spouses make decisions for each other. If the priority is not abundantly clear, the prudent person will have provided that someone who knows their wishes has power of attorney. The important fact here is that when such decisions must be made, the choices are made between alternatives that are both legal. It is legal to remove a feeding tube when recovery is not possible and it is legal for it to remain.

Those of us coming from the perspectives of cybernetics or systems can only wonder at where we are going. The world as a whole and the large scale questions of health care (closely linked to the well-being of the natural and social environments) seem to be too difficult to address. Instead, an overriding public question is the fate of one woman in a persistent vegetative state. If this obsession were occurring in an individual's life, we would say that person had become dysfunctional and would seek to gently expand their view of what they could address and control. Perhaps the concepts of cybernetics could be applied to making people who so fear complexity that they 'don't want to know' a little more comfortable. Stafford Beer was fond of saying "The purpose of a system is what it does." If some in media and politics are distracting public attention from broader challenges with high profile atypical cases, then this is part of their purpose. Part of ours could be to open small windows to these challenges, being careful not to overwhelm our audience with variety so that they shut down.

Warren McCulloch (1945) 'A heterarchy of values as determined by the topology of nervous nets' as printed in The Collected Works of W.S. McCulloch, Rook McCulloch, ed. Salinas CA, Intersystems Press, 1989.

George Lakoff, Moral Politics: how liberals and conservatives think.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002

From Stuart Umpleby, The Research Program in Social and Organizational Learning. George Washington University, Washington, DC 20052, USA.

Here is another thought, the result of a lunch with Alisa Oyler. The minister in the church where she went this past Sunday said something like this:

*"God is another explanation for mystery, for what we do not understand or cannot explain.
Mystery requires faith.*

*Faith is, therefore, quite compatible with doubt and uncertainty.
The opposite of faith is not doubt but certainty.
Certainty can be dangerous."*

Circularity in Nature and Political Decision-Making

Gleanings from the Internet by Barbara Vogl

The Canary in the Coal Mine: Power plants burn coal, which releases mercury pollution into the air. From there, it rises in the atmosphere and returns in the form of polluted rain, which accumulates in lakes, bays, ponds and rivers. Scientists have long known the poisonous effects mercury pollution has on fish (and, thus, people who eat fish.) In fact, 45 states currently have do-not-eat warnings for certain fish that have been contaminated with mercury. But the environmental effect is even more widespread than previously thought. A study last week unexpectedly found toxic levels of mercury in birds living on mountaintops in Vermont. Biologist Kent McFarland called the surprising new finding a "wake-up call" about how much mercury is pervading the atmosphere. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A25236-2005Mar10.html>) For more, check out this editorial by John Podesta and JohnMonks.)

(<http://www.americanprogress.org/site/pp.asp?c=biJRJ8OV&b=393193>)

Forgetting the Children: Mercury is a powerful toxin that can have serious neurological effects, especially in kids. Mercury directly harms the nervous systems of infants and children, causing birth defects and serious learning disabilities.

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/>

[14politics14mercury.html?ex=1268542800&en=c5b2dcc816096d3f&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/14/politics/14mercury.html?ex=1268542800&en=c5b2dcc816096d3f&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt))

According to an EPA analysis, 600,000 babies born in the U.S. every year "may be exposed to dangerous levels of mercury in the womb." The Los Angeles Times points out that even the EPA's very own Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee reported last year that the industry-friendly EPA mercury rule does not sufficiently protect our nation's children. A member of that panel yesterday criticized the new rules, saying, "This rule flies in the face of the best science, and the best experts and the public." She also revealed the committee "repeatedly had asked the EPA to do additional analysis on the rule and to address 'hot spots,' but the agency had failed to do either."

(<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-mercury15mar15,1,1811310,print.story>)

Letting Industry Write the Rules: The EPA's mercury emission rules are so industry friendly that they were even partially drafted by the very energy companies they're supposed to regulate. In April 2003, a group of eight power plants reviewed the administration's plan and submitted a "wish list" of changes to weaken regulations. The Washington Post last year found that, in a side-by-side comparison of the rules and the power-plant memo, at least "a dozen paragraphs were lifted, sometimes verbatim, from the industry suggestions."

(<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A64630-2004Jan30?language=printer>)

Playing Games with Science: The EPA's own inspector general and the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) have sharply criticized the EPA for by passing scientific ethics and willfully distorting analysis while creating the mercury emission rules. Last month, the EPA inspector general reported the White House had pushed EPA scientists to ignore scientific evidence and instead "find" predetermined conclusions the Bush administration needed to justify the polluter-friendly cap-and-trade plan.

(<http://highstratednews.orb6.com/stories/latimests/20050204/epafaultsfindingsonmercury.php>)

Last week, the GAO also slammed the EPA for twisting analysis to falsely make

Bush's plan seem superior to other plans which would actually clean the air faster and better. Both the EPA's inspector general and the GAO demanded the EPA conduct additional — and real — analyses of the mercury rules before issuing the new rule.

EPA spokeswoman Cynthia Bergman yesterday, however, confirmed that hasn't happened.

(<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A15244-2005Mar7.html>)

(<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35072-2005Mar14.html>)

Editor's Note:

For those of you who keep track of time it is obvious that the Spring issue of PATTERNS is long overdue. One of the many reasons is that we are in the process of re-thinking the scope, format and context of publication. We are developing an Editorial Board and an Advisory Board and are looking forward to an expanded publication.

For this time only we have combined the Spring and Summer issues. We welcome any suggestions, comments, and encouragement you may wish to send us. Please check the index of past issues on our website:

www.haven.net/patterns/

to familiarize yourself with the scope of this publication.

ASC members should note that if you are not receiving occasional emails from ASC, your spam blocker may be eliminating them. If you're not receiving email, please go to your browser and specifically enable reception of emails from

rmartin@truman.edu.

Yearning Disability: Inability to imagine a better future, caused by too much TV and not enough tell-a-vision.

War on Terra: The ongoing pursuit of wealth at any cost that has overmined, and consequently undermined our planet.

Swami Beyondananda

(continued in next column)

*Re-Generation Lounge:
two steps and a bite*

by Lucas Pawlik

It is one of the finest and most elaborate perspectives to perceive the world as that which comes forth through our actions, through our perceptions, through our ways of communicating. Viewing the world as such, it becomes clear that our world is not a mere place, our world is a happening. The following is dedicated to this perspective.

Step One: Realizing there is less to be done

Looking at the world, one easily gets the idea that something should be done immediately. Whether it is your laundry, your job, your relationship, your country, the environment; everything in this world seems to call for action. Then again, we experience that if we indeed do more, this rarely leaves us with less to do; more often we recognize through exactly this little bit we did that there is even more that should be done. Trapped in a vicious circle, we try to hunt down the moment when we can relax, let go, and regenerate, while at the same time we always bring up new tasks we have to perform before we can allow this moment of regeneration to happen. I have watched myself acting this way for quite a while, trying to improve myself, trying to better the world, trying to change what in my view had to be changed. Some things did change, and, after all, I have not given up hope that other things that I wish for will eventually happen. Still, a step back and a little time-out from my daily routine have led me to a very important insight.

If everything in your life seems to call for action, it can be safely assumed that you have already done too much.

This insight has proved very valuable for my understanding of the world. It led me to a simple, but intriguing thought:

*If the world seems to be a mess and this mess is created through our doing,
it is advisable rather to do a bit less than to do a bit more to achieve a higher degree of order.*

These were my thoughts when Barbara offered me the wonderful possibility to write a regular column in PATTERNS. Whenever I read PATTERNS I have the impression that this feeling of both love and concern for our world underlies everything that is written in this journal. For me, the journal is part of a serious attempt to create different structures, to offer different patterns of acting, of re-organizing, of improving a world which strongly needs improvement. I would be glad to add my thoughts to this undertaking, and it is clear to me that a re-organization of ourselves and our world cannot be done in a traditional scientific manner.

The traditional way that scientists have tried to do this so far always evokes a very uncommon picture of Helmholtz's locus observandi within me. As the idea of this imaginary place guided the way most traditional scientists viewed themselves and their doing I would like to share my own personal story of this place with you now.

Step Two: From the peephole.....

For centuries, scientists have gathered around one peephole at the locus observandi in order to get an "objective" look at the world, thinking that they would get a better understanding of the world. In the beginning, this was a highly ordered affair with only a few scientists around, who got a look, articulated their arguments, withdrew for internal negotiations, and presented the results to the public as "Laws of Nature."

However, after a while, things got out of hand, as more and more scientists crowded the locus observandi trying to get a look through the little peephole. Standing in line, some scientists got impatient and decided to construct their own peepholes. These peepholes, reserved for specific groups of scientists, are now known as disciplines.

Through the multitude of disciplines and peepholes the problem of communication became more and more severe, partly caused simply by the fact, that someone looking through a peephole gets only a very restricted view of the

world. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to communicate with someone else while looking through a peephole.

Consequently, the problems and arguments of the scientists could no longer be solved in private and had to be taken to court, where the public discovered that what was presented to them were not so much laws of nature, but human arrangements.

As these arrangements strongly influenced the public, restrictions on the peepholes that could be looked through were called for, so that the public would no longer have to accept the results of the negotiations as laws of nature. It was also decided that it was too late and generally not enough if those matters were only discussed at court as the effects arising from some of these "scientific observations" proved to be too dangerous.

The public got the idea that the observations were confusing a lot of things, sometimes brilliant, sometimes disastrous, sometimes both at once and sometimes they were simply tedious. The idea that these observations were neutral, was increasingly hard to believe.

....into the lounge

Within the systemic or cybernetic movement I see an understanding that the whole procedure of acting and thinking has to be altered because a mere restriction will not result in the necessary changes.

Cyberneticists, looking not so much through peepholes and the narrow picture that can be seen through them, but at themselves and the world they live in, have begun to change the entire process of scientific self-organization.

PATTERNS is a journal that takes such an approach, as it actively participates in both a re-invention of science and a re-invention of ourselves.

Thinking about how to join those re-inventions, I realized that I would like to create a pattern of continuous re-generation within those PATTERNS that connect us. In this pattern we could bid farewell to the Locus observandi and allow our minds to create a place that is more appropriate for coming together and creating a world, such as a lounge, a re-generation lounge.

Conversations in cafes or lounges have a strong reputation of changing our reality as those are the places where we feel comfortable. For what really matters does not happen because we specifically stress its importance, but because it is the outcome of a self-organizing process in which we are totally involved. And therefore, it happens naturally when we let go of our momentary issues and take time to regenerate. We become aware of our own self-organizing processes; we realize how to participate in these processes, and, as everything within us works in this direction, it appears to be relatively effortless.

If we as a group immerse ourselves in such a re-generation process together, it builds and reorganizes our social and organizational structures. It happens naturally if we let it happen.

A bite in an Apple that connects

Of course this sounds like a dream, and indeed, the subject of dreaming is closely related to re-generation, as both of them restructure us if we provide space and time for this to happen.

In this way our path is partly created by ourselves, partly it comes forth, just like Alice's path through Wonderland, through every step we take. For the concrete procedure I suggest that we use a mixture of storytelling and conversing, whereby we can read stories, and can post comments or have a virtual conversation at a website related to our project.

I myself will provide new stories and patterns of re-generation each month, by means of which I would like to offer means and stimulations for a systemic and organic perspective of how we generate this world. A perspective within which, as Alan Watts puts it, we experience that we are not strangers born into this world, but grow out of it. "Just as the apple tree apples, the earth peoples!"

Or maybe even one step further; when we understand through our own participation that we generate this world just as the apple generates an apple tree. Through the story of Alice it is well-known that miraculous things can happen if one takes a bite of such an apple.

Which reminds me of the story of one famous gardener of the ancient orient who could, so it is said, create a whole apple garden out of a single apple – but of course this is just one of the many things that could happen., if one dares to take a bite.

To be continued.....

(Thus begins the becoming of the New PATTERNS. We invite you to respond by taking that first bite. Let us know what it feels like by contacting: <lucaspawlik@gmx.net>)



**AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR CYBERNETICS
2005 CONFERENCE**

The George Washington University, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

OCTOBER 27 – 30, 2005

THEME: The Many Applications of Cybernetics

Are You a Cybernetician?

Many people have been, knowingly or unknowingly, using ideas, models and tools from the transdisciplinary science of cybernetics, such as circular causality, feedback, systems and boundaries, constructivism, multiple realities or perspectives, dynamic simulations and activities that build upon the possibilities and limitations of human and other information processing capabilities.

Papers, Panels, Workshops and Playshops are invited that address the application of cybernetics to any complex system, such as:

aesthetic systems	family systems
anthropological systems	health systems
biological systems	information systems
business systems	organizational systems
community systems	peace and conflict systems
communications systems	philosophical systems
economic systems	political systems
educational systems	social systems
environmental systems	transportation systems
	value systems

Proposals are invited from both people whose work is central to cybernetics and those whose work overlaps with it or utilizes its concepts to explore dynamic relationships.

Please send proposals and abstracts of one hundred words or less to [<allenna_leonard@yahoo.com>](mailto:allenna_leonard@yahoo.com)

Proposals should include: Name and affiliation of presenter(s)
Title of Presentation
Type of Presentation
Complete Contact Information (including e-mail)

August 5 Deadline for Abstracts and Proposals

September 1 Completed Papers due

A rudimentary 2005 Conference webpage is in place on the ASC website.

<http://www.asc-cybernetics.org/2005/index.htm>

For planning purposes, we would appreciate early notification of your intent to attend one or both conference events. If you intend to attend, or have any questions, please contact the Conference Coordinator: [<umpleby@gwu.edu>](mailto:umpleby@gwu.edu)

The ASC Bookstore is the Society's channel for offering historical and hard-to-find cybernetics materials to the public at a modest price. Past President Pille Bunnell currently operates the Bookstore from her home in Vancouver, Canada. Contact: pille@interchange.ubc.ca

Here are a few titles available:

Krippendorff, K. 1986 A Dictionary of Cybernetics

Pask, G. 1969 The Meaning of Cybernetics in the Behavioural Sciences

Günther, G and H. von Foerster 1967 The Logical Structure of Evolution and Emanation

von Foerster, H. 1969 What is Memory that it may have Hindsight and Foresight as well?

von Foerster, H. 1971 Evolution of Community: Preface to Shape of Community

Video: Truth and Trust: Three Conversations between Heinz von Foerster and Humberto Maturana

The video consists of three conversations between Heinz and Humberto, of approximately 25 minutes each, on the following 3 themes:

* Truth and Trust: What are we doing when we verify and when we validate a statement? Does verification establish truth? Is there a role for trust in science?

* Future to be Determined: The biology of cognition reveals that the student learns the teacher. If this is the case, what must the teacher do to teach well? What matters in education nowadays?

* The Matrix that Embeds: We may look at objects or at the relationship between them, but either implies making a distinction. What is the ground from which we make distinctions?

Stuart Umpleby writes;

At the ASC conference in October, we would like to display recent books and journals -- sample copies and order forms. If you have something you want to display, please send it to me or send me the information needed to obtain it -- title, publisher, etc. I'll then ask my research assistant to arrange the display of these materials.

Thanks,

Stuart

See www.asc-cybernetics.org/2005/index.htm.

Cybernetics & Human Knowing

a journal on second order cybernetics, autopoiesis and cyber-semiotics.

The journal is devoted to the new understandings of self-organizing processes of information in human knowing that have arisen through the cybernetics of cybernetics, or second order cybernetics and its relation and relevance to other interdisciplinary approaches such as semiotics (cyber-semiotics). This new development within cybernetics is a nondisciplinary approach. Through the concept of self-reference it tries to explore: the meaning of cognition and communication; our understanding of organization and information in human, artificial and natural systems; and our understanding of understanding within the natural and social sciences, humanities, information and library science, and in social practices as design, education, organisation, teaching, therapy, art, management and politics.

Scientific endeavour in the post-modern age is becoming increasingly complex and transdisciplinary. Researchers and practitioners in the arts and the natural, medical and social sciences realize that the sharing of knowledge is both desirable, necessary and possible. Our focus is on the need for change in the basic concepts of ourselves, our cultures, world views, values and views of what "genuine" knowledge is, and on the call for a new exchange between theoreticians and practitioners. *A basic feature of this work is the attempt to integrate scientific thinking with ethical and aesthetic perspectives in both theory and practice, in an attempt to bridge what C.P. Snow called "The Two Cultures".*

Because of the interdisciplinary character, articles are generally written in such a way that readers from other domains can understand them. Authors from a wide range of disciplines, write with a sensitivity for language that make their ideas clear and their subject fascinating. The lay-out and illustrations of every issue is done by an artist, whose contribution is an integral part of the journal.

Within this frame, embodying the creative with the (multi)disciplinary, the journal has a high scientific standard and integrity - following Gregory Bateson's model of rigor AND imagination.

Editor: Søren Brier <sbr@kvl.dk>

Publisher: Imprint Academic

www.imprint-academic.com/C&HK

(Continued from p. 4)

something other than a conference which has crystallized for me in the words "A Gathering of the Non-trivialized."

I think this expression immediately speaks to the heart and mind of everyone who knew Heinz and his philosophy. I feel that Heinz was a living eigen-system of his concept of the non-trivialized machine. His way of living showed how ethical and practical his systemic thinking/behaving was. And nothing expresses this thinking/behaving more than the concept of the non-trivial machine. His life showed that the individual person, the human being, the scientist, and the thinker are inseparable. Many conferences around the world have proved that (separating) categories like these must fail to grasp the whole. Only if we meet as humans and converse as humans, can we capture or evoke what was inseparable in Heinz's life.

This doesn't mean that such a gathering/conference must be a private meeting. No, everything should be integrated if possible. And even if it takes on the form of a tea-party, it should be a scientific or, to be more exact, a systemic tea-party.

I consider it a socio-cybernetic secret how Heinz brought these spheres together and thus made his life transdisciplinary. Heinz's life and presence were phenomena within the cybernetic movement, as it were. He linked a heterogeneous thinking community which constitutes a far wider circle than just the cybernetically oriented thinking community. I believe that this is a wonderful phenomenon to be acknowledged. So far, I've missed this acknowledgment in conferences dedicated to Heinz von Foerster and his work.

Thinking how joyful Heinz's lectures, conversations, and stories were, I feel that I do not only want to practice but also to celebrate this way of researching and teaching. Those who didn't laugh or didn't learn anything from his way of thinking/behaving or think it's not serious enough don't have to

(Continued on next page)

Community Conversations...

The Coffee Klatch of the New Millenium!

by Cynthia Jordan

For anyone 50 and older, the scene was a familiar one... a group of neighborhood Moms gathered around the kitchen table, or talking over the back fence, coffee cup in hand. The conversation started with laundry detergents but progressed to the more serious issues: children, spouses, health, finances. Shared experiences and advice (in present day lingo "problem solving") ensued. The coffee klatch ended with promises to continue the conversation, same time, same place, the next day.

Those were the days before (most) moms had to work outside, as well as inside, the home... the days before the two-income family became a financial necessity. Life was simpler then. The nuclear bomb was owned and operated by only a few "civilized" nations. There was no hole in the ozone layer. Violence was not a theme of popular music. TV was "Queen for a Day" and "Leave it to Beaver". You couldn't tell the difference between a Democrat and a Republican because their shared ideologies were still focused on the greater common good of the country. Schools got the money they needed and PTA meetings were standing-room-only. The extended family took care of the grandparents. And everybody's "God" was good.

Fast forward through the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, the gay movement, AARP, numerous wars, two-digit inflation, violence in all neighborhoods, nuclear proliferation, SUVs, melting ice caps, corrupt elections at the highest office in the USA, the end of the Cold War, the beginning of the Terrorist Wars, the building of the Internet, the launching of the World Wide Web, and finally... the birth of the World Café, aka Community Conversations... the Coffee Klatch of this new millenium.

The birth of the World Café/Cafe Conversation took place in the Mill Valley, CA, living room of Juanita Brown on 27 January 1995. It was a rainy day and 20 people were descending on her home for a conversation of global proportions. The topic was intellectual capital and the attendees were pioneers in this field. They came from seven countries for a collaborative venture with Skandia Corp. of Sweden. Using TV tables covered with easel sheets of paper (in lieu of the kitchen table and grandma's stitched tablecloth), these 20 pioneers broke into smaller groups and sketched their creative ideas on the paper tablecloths.

*The Café process had somehow enabled us
to become more aware of our "collective knowing"
at increasing levels of scale."*

Juanita Brown recalls this day on an internet article entitled "The Birth of The World Café": "It was almost as if the intelligence of a larger Self - greater than the individual selves in the room - had made itself visible to us through the café conversations. The Café process had somehow enabled us to become more aware of our "collective knowing" at increasing levels of scale." (copyright 2000 by Juanita Brown & Whole Systems Associates)

The World Café has morphed into other shapes and sizes since its genesis in Ms. Brown's living room. Internet Chat Rooms provide an infinite-sized living room for conversations. What these cyberspace conversations lack in the face-to-face exchange of ideas is more than made up for in the endless query of 'round-the-world chatters and the diversity of their backgrounds.

A smaller, intimate-scale version of the cyberspace conversation is the "Community Conversation". The goal here is to bring together a group of people who have a common interest or problem, encourage them to respectfully ask questions and receptively listen to each other's answers, harvest ideas from this interaction and create a master plan for resolving the problem.

(Continued on next page)

I like to think of the Boston Tea Party, 1773, as the original and consummate Community Conversation. Imagine 5000 townspeople gathered in a local Boston meeting house to discuss the Tea Act, recently passed by the English Parliament. They pleaded with the governor to return the tea-laden East Indian Co. ships to England. The governor refused. A master plan was hatched: sixty American patriots stormed the ships (dressed as Mohawk Indians - not at all appropriate) and dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. Unfortunately, this resulted in retaliation on the part of England. One dispute after another ensued between the colonies and the parent country. Ultimately, the American Revolution took place, a master plan if ever there was one!

Santa Cruz, CA, where I live, uses Community Conversations as a staple of life for discussing/resolving community problems. (Note: in this internet-speed world we live in "community" = "world".) What began as a way to discuss/resist the war in Iraq has become the tool for assessing and addressing local issues... how to transform city-owned land into an art center; how to improve the plight of foster children and repair the local and state Foster Care System. On a monthly basis, a local organization called Women Rise for Global Peace hosts a Community Conversation for the sole purpose of engaging strangers (the attendees) in conversations with other strangers. Getting to know one's neighbor, even though s/he may live at the other end of the county, is the ultimate coffee klatch.

The organizational structure of Community Conversations is deceptively simple: take a large room, pretty it up, add flowers and food, small tables strewn about with comfy chairs, present the topic and stand back. But in reality, the form, function and outcome (the harvesting for the master plan) requires a skilled hand. In Santa Cruz, the Community Conversations have been facilitated by Hina Pendle, Ph.D. Hina is a principal in UsPartners, a training group specializing in organizational development. She is also a social and political activist going back to the great 'ol days of the genre - the late '60's, early '70's.

Dr. Pendle on the triumph of Community Conversations: ***"Community Conversations is a grassroots, small "d" democracy; local, immediate and transformational. Community is where many "I's" come together to become "we." Conversation is the key pathway for human interaction. Democracy is a process, a context, a container to participate in designing community life together."***

When we meet in Community Conversation, we have the opportunity to listen deeply, openly and respectfully to each other - welcoming each perspective, knowing that it is informed by a life of experiences, beliefs, assumptions, expectations and strategies for survival. We have the opportunity to learn from our cumulative wisdom, concerns and needs. When we open to each other, our consciousness is expanded leading us to more choices than we may ever dream of alone. True Democracy is enlightened and fueled by asking bigger questions than we have asked before.

Community Conversations is a very powerful forum for finding solutions to the most perplexing problems. It is an opportunity to dissolve the barriers between us by connecting with the humanity behind every position. People report that Community Conversations can be empowering, practical and life-changing."

We've all heard of the concept of fight or flight: it is said to be the remnant of our days as cave dwellers, hunters and gatherers. I prefer to think of these vestiges of long ago as tribal knowledge. Some where, buried deep in all of us, is the tribal knowledge of how we are supposed to treat each other. When something overwhelming happens, it sparks old memories that force their way out of the recesses of our brain, into our awareness, and out of our mouths as action. Facing fight or flight, we find our tribal knowledge once again. Community Conversations are the tribal knowledge of eons ago. They can be used to assess and address the local, national and international problems of the sad, not-so-brave, old/new world we live in these days. Tribal knowledge is embedded in each of us. Pull yours up and out. Have a seat at the table. Pour yourself and your neighbor a cup of coffee and host a Community Conversation!

From the Editor: (continued)

come.

I am convinced that there are lots of people who would love to study and work this way and love to meet and to organize themselves. And I am convinced that they just wait for an opportunity to do so. I am certainly one of them, and I am sure it would be serious fun. Deadly serious, as when Heinz was asked:

"Heinz, every scientist wants to liberate mankind from one kind of horrible death threat - from which death do you want to liberate mankind?" Heinz replied, ***"From collective brain death! Most certainly, from collective brain death. I want to liberate humanity from the threat of collective brain death!"***

Cheers!

Along with the first hand experience of **Cynthia Jordan**, housewife, mother, Master Gardener and Silicon Valley entrepreneur, who recently convened a Conversation Café to bring together people interested in the failing Foster Care system, we review the recently published book, ***The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter***, by Juanita Brown, David Isaacs and the World Café Community. (see p. 14)

***Together we can be wiser
than any of us can be alone.
We need to know how to tap that
wisdom.***

Sharing new thinking across boundaries of time and space is one of our most important goals. In the May/June 2004 issue of PATTERNS we described the beginning of an enterprise which brought together traditional elders, youth, and grandmothers of the sovereign Lakota nation, along with a group of women calling themselves WomenRise for Global Peace from Santa Cruz, California, and sustainable housing developers of the California Central Coast.

Last summer was spent learning together, building relationships and a

Book Review

***Dark Hero of the Information Age:
In Search of Norbert Wiener,
the Father of Cybernetics***

by Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman

ISBN 0738203688
Basic Books (January 2005)
Hardcover: 441 pages
\$27.50/\$38.50 (CAN)

In the middle of the last century, Norbert Wiener, ex-child prodigy and brilliant MIT mathematician, founded the science of cybernetics, igniting the information age explosion of computers, automation, and global telecommunications. Wiener was the first to articulate the modern notion of "feedback." His work heavily influenced legends of twentieth-century science and society: computer pioneer John von Neumann, information theorist Claude Shannon, anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, and labor kingpin Walter Reuther. Wiener's best-selling book, *Cybernetics*, catapulted him into the public spotlight, as did his chilling visions of the future and his ardent social activism to safeguard "the human use of human beings." Yet today, the man, his work, and his prescient warnings have been virtually forgotten.

Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, journalists and communication researchers, set out to rescue Wiener's genius from obscurity and to explore the many ways in which his revolutionary ideas continue to shape our lives. Based on a wealth of primary sources and exclusive interviews with Wiener's family and closest colleagues, the book reveals an extraordinarily complex figure, whose high-pressure childhood, manic depression, and troubled relationships had a profound effect on his scientific work. Conway and Siegelman also uncovered secret government documents that show how the FBI and the CIA pursued Wiener at the height of the Cold War to thwart his social ac-

E-MAPS

European Masters Programme
in Performer Studies

by Victor Jacono <victore@maltanet.net>

In 1995 Dr. John Schranz, with over 30 years experience in theatre making, launched a brain research programme together with Professor Richard Muscat, Neuroscientist at the University of Malta, and with the late Ingemar Lindh, Swedish director-pedagogue and founder of the Institutet for Scenkonst, and Herr Bernhard Plassmann, a German theatre operator and researcher who at that time was in Malta to work in my group. The intention behind the research programme is that of allowing scientists to focus their attention on the empowerment that takes place in the brain of the performer as a consequence of the sophisticated training regimen of contemporary theatre, thus enabling them to open serious investigations into Memory Systems, Learning Processes and Creativity.

xHCA, the brain research programme, has now opened out further, when in January 2004 Brussels approved a proposal John made for an Erasmus Curriculum Development Programme, which has now set up a network of five universities (Paris XIII, Roma La Sapienza, De Montfort Leicester and Adam Mickiewicz Poznan, with that of Malta being its organisation base). The aim of this programme is to design a new European Masters in Performer Studies (E-MAPS) which is then scheduled to be launched in October 2007. The Masters will be in five disciplines: Cognitive Neuroscience, Cognitive Psychology, Philosophy, Performer Studies and Sports Sciences.

Its Mission Statement and its Aims and Objectives can be found online in its newly launched website, whose address is <<http://projects.um.edu.mt/emaps/>>.

E-MAPS is a European Masters Programme in Performer Studies with a totally unique nature and dynamic. On the one hand, E-MAPS is not a Masters degree programme in history or theory of theatre or Sport. It is not a practical study-programme aiming to teach students the fundamentals of acting and performing, or of any particular discipline of sport.

E-MAPS, on the other hand, is an invitation to would-be researchers to start considering the highly complex training process which contemporary performers undertake (be they active in theatre, dance or sports) as a locus for research in the fields of Learning, Memory and Creativity. Academics in the five proponent universities – Malta, Roma La Sapienza, ParisXIII, Leicester De Montfort, and Poznan Adam Mickiewicz – are converging their separate, ongoing research into a unique programme that will offer tuition in the following five disciplines: Cognitive Neuroscience, Cognitive Psychology, Philosophy, Sports Sciences and Performer Studies.

The Rationale behind E-MAPS

The Performance phenomenon is fundamentally autotelic – this means that a true Performer finds his greatest reward in his own performance, whether it be theatre, dance, music or sport. This sense of joy in creativity transcends by far the utilitarian aspects so often attached to Performance. As a result of this, Performance provides the ideal locus for investigating one of the Human Being's finest attributes – Creativity, and the sense of fulfilment which creativity generates in the person engaged in it. This is even more so where creativity is at its most primary level, that is in Performance, in those fields where the creative person creates with nothing but himself: in theatre, dance, singing, sport.

The Creative Performative act, however, is ephemeral and evanescent – it leaves no lasting product for the Performer to carry out a self-analysis with the aim of improving his capabilities. In order to refine one's skill, therefore, one must necessarily depend exclusively on Memory Processes.

Studies and research being carried out in various disciplines give evidence that the Memory and Learning Processes of Performers are constantly potentiated as a result of today's sophisticated training. Such potentiation appears to be dramatic—even

occurring in brain functions that seem to be totally unrelated to performance. This phenomenon seems to be rooted in the astonishing potential of the brain's motor-programme, which seems to provide the foundations for most of the brain's functions.

The E-MAPS European Masters Programme will guide students to study this need to be Creative, a need it considers to be innate, a need shared by all Human Beings, with no divisions of gender, race, creed, language, status, a need that is manifest in contexts that encourage and/or inhibit it.

E-MAPS' nature is multi-disciplinary and multi-national. As a consequence:

- 1. It will immerse students in the complex realities of international and multi-cultural activity, thus equipping them better for a changing world.*
- 2. It will provide a wide-ranging preparation for students aiming to work in fields that are the concern of the EU's transversal policies, such as the struggles against social and personal insecurity, against injustice and discrimination, and those for language skills acquisition and the promotion of life-long learning.*
- 3. It will prepare students for higher research in the cognitive sciences, sports science, the performing arts, cultural theory and globalisation studies.*
- 4. It will provide wider and more advanced perspectives and capabilities whereby students who are already teachers in sport and in the performing arts could develop their work.*
- 5. In the face of a growing concern about social inequalities, cultural deprivation, and economic marginalisation, the multi-disciplinary aspects of E-MAPS will create opportunities for fresh insights and innovative practices, in the areas of social, educational and cultural development.*
- 6. By insisting on the fundamentally non-competitive nature of sport and on the collective nature of the performer's creative act, E-MAPS will foster the emergence of collaborative strategies and deny the inevitability of confrontation.*
- 7. It will provide stimuli, across many intellectual and academic fields, for radical reappraisals of teaching goals and methods, pedagogies and curricula*

From the Editor (continued from p. 11)

memorial wall out of the clay-heavy earth of Wounded Knee to commemorate all indigenous people of the world in an attempt to "mend the sacred hoop of humanity." Thanks to the incredible faith, courage and perseverance of all involved, we begin the second summer together. **Johanna Parry Cougar** <t-rain@msn.com> and **Corrina McFarlane** <corrinacorrina@cruzio.com> send an invitation to alternative builders and peace activists from around the world to come and vacation with a purpose. (see p. 16)

We are especially pleased to welcome **HB Gelatt** as a regular columnist to the new PATTERNS. He brings a grounding wisdom to the sometimes heady diet of new thinking offered in these pages. (see p. 14)

And finally, on pages 8 and 9, we have news of the **American Society for Cybernetics'** up-coming conference in Washington, D.C. in October, 2005. The latest news is that **George Soros** will be a keynote speaker.

Book Review: Norbert Wiener
(continued)

tivism and the growing influence of cybernetics at home and abroad.

In an epilogue, the authors bring Wiener's concerns up to the moment. They describe the flawed "smart" weapons that have caused the deaths of American soldiers and innocent civilians in Iraq and throughout the Middle East; acts by terrorists who have turned America's own technologies back on us abroad and at home; the debate over off-shore outsourcing of industries and technical services to China, India, and Eastern Europe; and promising new digital and analog technologies, biotechnologies, and nanotechnologies that may enhance human life or, in some scenarios, extinguish it. These technical advances, which Wiener foresaw decades ago, promise immense benefits, but they also pose greater perils today than they did in his time. *The authors reaffirm Wiener's message that people, enterprises and nations today must make their first priority, not technology for technology's sake, nor for the power and profits it may bring, but to use the new knowledge and technology wisely and responsibly for the betterment of all humankind.*

Mary Catherine Bateson of the Institute for Intercultural Studies and author of *Willing to Learn: Passages of Personal Discovery*, comments that this book "is doubly fascinating for the drama of Wiener's erratic personal odyssey and the way in which each episode expands our understanding of the benefits and perils of contemporary technology. Conway and Siegelman weave a user-friendly narrative, written for non-experts who want to understand where we are now and how we got there, yet I believe the experts too will find themselves surprised into a new thoughtfulness."

*What is meant by light?
To gaze with undimmed eyes
on all darkness.*

Nikos Kazantzakis

Book Review

The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through

Conversations That Matter

by Juanita Brown with David Isaacs
and the World Café Community

Berrett-Koehler, Inc., S. F., 2005

Reviewed by Barbara Vogl

In our world where problems have become so complex and fearful that ordinary citizens seek solace in the false comfort of their livingrooms, increasingly addicted to the pabulum fed them by the mass media, *The World Café* is an antidote offering a seemingly simple process for bringing people together to recapture the age-old sense of what it means to be a fully functioning social being.

I am struck by the pattern that connects Juanita and David's book to **Jessica Lipnick** and **Jeffrey Strong's** book, *The First Report and Directory Networking Book*, published in 1982 by Doubleday, Inc., Garden City, N.Y. I met Jessica and Jeffrey at the first American Society for Cybernetics Conference I attended. I was impressed by their reference to the network process as the foundation of society, referring to the feminine, generative quality of sharing favorite recipes over the back fence. There is the same sense of strength-through-sharing in this book describing the World Café experience weaving together a new global society.

This pattern also seems connected to the 1972 **Report to the Club of Rome** by **Donella and Dennis Meadows**, titled "*The Limits to Growth*" in which the use of **Jay Forrester's** computer relational systems encouraged us to "see" the imbalance developing in the natural/social world of competitive, corporate-induced growth and prompted us to "do" something about it. This perspective helps us see the depth and breadth of the simple act of coming together consciously sharing our experiences in conversations that rediscover the age-old wisdom that is generated by the "collective" understanding of the need for balance.

(Continued on next page)

In Search of Ignorance

by H B Gelatt

"Genuine ignorance is profitable because it leads to humility, curiosity and open-mindedness."

John Dewey

A lot of people are working on the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Not many people are even discussing Genuine Ignorance (GI). Perhaps that is because in our culture we believe that intelligence is a good thing to have, even if it's artificial, and ignorance is a bad thing to have, even if it's genuine. But if we could promote genuine ignorance as being profitable, it might catch on. In America, being profitable is at least as popular as being intelligent.

It is well known that humans have a need to know. One definition of intelligence is the capacity to acquire knowledge. Ignorance is defined as lacking in knowledge. But here comes the paradox. Knowing sometimes is the antithesis of learning. That's because what you already know often prevents you from learning something new. Mark Twain once said, "It ain't what you don't know that gets you in trouble, it's what you know for sure that ain't so."

Humans not only have a need to know, they have a need to know for sure, a need to be certain. We want things to be perfectly clear. We want to know that this is this and that is that. It is so much easier and comfortable to be certain. Today, the so-called "new sciences" are based on things like the uncertainty principle, relativity, complexity, and chaos theory. Being certain may have become a thing of the past. In today's world, to know for sure may not be intelligent behavior.

*It ain't what you don't know
that gets you in trouble,
it's what you know for sure that ain't so.*

Positive Uncertainty, a strategy for making decisions when you don't know what the future will be, (link) is of some help here. Its second paradoxical principle: "Be aware and wary about what you know," warns you about being certain. Positive uncertainty is somewhat like genuine ignorance, which is to honestly experience your ignorance, free from hypocrisy or dishonesty. To acknowledge that what you know may not be so, and being positive about that uncertainty, will be considered intelligent behavior in the future. Genuine ignorance will be profitable in the sense of being advantageous and beneficial. Advantageous because others, less in touch with reality, are still seeking certainty. Beneficial because, unlike being certain, it leads to new learning. It will be very hard to be humble, curious, and open-minded while being certain.

In the future, those who answer the questions will be less helpful than those who question the answers. Being wary of what you know will be as important as being aware of what you know. If humility, curiosity, and open-mindedness were good things in John Dewey's day, they are even better in today's age of rapid change. Open-mindedness is the best teacher when constantly experiencing change. Curiosity is like the Zen concept of having the beginner's mind. Humility is actually part of being wise, as explained by Socrates: "I am the wisest of all Greeks, because I alone know that I know nothing."

The goal of artificial intelligence is to produce intelligent computers. The goal of genuine ignorance is to produce intelligent humans — if we redefine intelligence as the capacity to learn rather than the capacity to know. One way to make sure know-

(Continued on next page)

ing doesn't prevent learning is to employ "Positive Uncertainty." If learning could gain equal status with knowing, then genuine ignorance might become popular — and part of being wise.

*The greatest obstacle to discovering the shape of the earth
was not ignorance,
but the illusion of knowledge.*

Anonymous

Postscript:

Donald Rumsfeld was awarded the "Foot in Mouth" Award for the most baffling statement by a public figure in 2003. Here is what he said:

"As we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns — the ones we don't know we don't know."

To me, the statement may be considered baffling; but I believe it is true

- there are some things we know — (known knowns)
- there are some things we don't know — (known unknowns)
- there are some things we don't know we don't know —
(unknown unknowns)

The most problematic of these, of course, is the things we don't know we don't know. This is where genuine Ignorance and Positive Uncertainty can help.

HB Gelatt

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www.gelattpartners.com

Book Review

Swami for Precedent: A 7-Step Plan to Heal the Body Politic and Cure Electile Dysfunction

by Swami Beyondananda

WakeUpLaughing Press, Santa Rosa, CA 2004

This is serious humor for serious times because, as the author keeps reminding us, there is something funny going on. If you are feeling the lingering effects of a Big Iraq Attack; if Mad Cowboy Disease has put you into a state of cattlepsy and herded you into the bewilderment; and if you are tired of Depressed Press Syndrome, this book is a must read. Ask yourself, does your body politic suffer from irony deficiency and truth decay.

The author's campaign for a new precedent gives us something to vote for — government of the people, by the people, for the people where our government does our bidding not the bidding of the highest bidder.

- Let's start the American Evolution this November by firing the first Big Shot.
- Let's invest in A-Bun-Dance instead of buying into Scare-City.
- Let's cause enough levity to rise to heal the hole in the Bozone Layer.
- Let's forget the war on drugs — improve reality instead.
- Let's go for heaven on earth — just for the hell of it.

Swami Beyondananda, uncommontator and political guru, is the alter ego and brainchild of **Steve Bhaerman**. he can always be found in virtual reality at

www.wakeuplaughing.com

The World Café (continued)

This is the genius of the doctoral research of Juanita Brown which has set in motion the social movement described in these pages. Acknowledging that "It takes a village to raise a child," the authors include The World Café community of inquiry and practice as the true author of this book. They see themselves as but "hosts to our mutual learning."

Although this book describes a prescribed format in which participants sit in conversation at small café tables and periodically move from one to the other, carrying the essence of the previous conversation so that by the end of the experience there is a "harvesting" of the total group's thinking, the World Café is not just a technique. "*It is a way of being with one another that is already part of our nature.*"

Readers are reminded that "To engage in great civilization we need to ask questions that matter." In telling their stories, World Café participants from all walks of life speak of their profound learning experiences. "Intrigued by the lines of inquiry that the new sciences are revealing and the questions they raise for the theory and practice of dialogue," this book is a real find for the growing number of us who sense that to make things work we need a different way of thinking. It introduces key insights such as those of **Umberto Maturana and Francisco Varela** that in human systems we "bring forth" the worlds we experience through "our social coupling through language in the network of conversations in which we participate as part of the ongoing flow of our lives." This book is a "recipe," lovingly shared, through which we discover that the self-organizing and emergent properties that occur in all living systems are experienced personally when ordinary people get together to ask meaningful questions. These questions function as the "attractor" that activates a space for the possibility of bringing forth a world together — a cohesive sense of balance and harmony of the individual and the collective. This book is a very "attractive" gift for all of us who care.

Grandmothers Village Project; Wounded Knee, South Dakota, Pine Ridge Reservation

by Barbara Vogl

This project is unique in its ability to provide an opportunity to experience personal and collective self-organization in an evolutionary manner. Given the diversity in personal and cultural orientation, the challenge is to recognize that the number of possible realities—the multiverses as Humberto Maturana might say—can be constrained by communal living, by consciously creating a history of shared interests together. Looking back, I can see that this was demonstrated by the remarkable people involved in the shared experiences during the initial phase of the project last year. (see PATTERNS May/June 2004, p.8)

In a dialogue taken from the recently published book: *From Being to Doing: The Origins of the Biology of Cognition* by Humberto Maturana and Bernhard Poerksen, excerpted in *Cybernetics and Human Knowing, Vol.11, no.4, pp. 63-71*, Maturana reflects on the need to reduce complexity, narrow our focus and rely on specific expectations in order to be capable of acting at all. But that is not the problem. *He writes, "The central problem for me is whether one is prepared to give up one's certainties when something unexpected develops. Disappointing experiences need not necessarily lead to deep frustration and anger but may, quite undramatically, open up new perspectives. One realizes that one's expectations are not fulfilled and, without great excitement, decides on a new orientation."*

This can only be learned by DOING—by exposing oneself to the experience. For myself, I learned how burdensome subtle judgements, unexamined beliefs and certainties can be during my experiences living in the mountains of Mexico with the indigenous Huichol. This kind of learning took place last summer at Wounded Knee and provides the groundwork on which participants build this year's activities.

Creating an Avenue of Healing Alternative Builders and Peace Activists invited to Wounded Knee

Mending the sacred hoop of humanity

• *Timeline: June 1-September 30, 2005*

Report from Johanna Parry Cougar light-rain@msn.com

In June we set up a summer building camp at the site near Wounded Knee. Food was available to all who came to visit, watch, help, learn etc. After engaging a week long mini-model house planning, we began building the results of our planning.

We constructed together the foundation trench, fill, and primary wall with cement block foundation. It went up 2 ft in rock and almost three feet of cob or earth wall. The wall extended from doorway to doorway in a 1/4 circle.

International helpers and Wounded Knee residents all participated. **Leola One Feather's** family will show the house which serves as a model for **Family Cluster Villages** that cost as little as possible to construct using shared recycled materials. Leola One Feather is respected in the community and her family alone generated a big crowd of builders.

Primary materials needed for the walls are clay-rich earth, sand, straw or dried prairie grass, and water. The white gypsum plaster makes the interior walls beautiful and cost effective.

These homes with materials available can be built for as little as \$500. We will support the planning and construction of any other project an informed family submits for guidance.

This means those with land can learn while building on their own land, with limited support from the building camp instructors if they provide their own labor and materials.

Building closes for the season on September 30.

Plans for project continuance will be reviewed at that time.

Contact: Johanna Parry Cougar light-rain@msn.com

A Bit of History.....

Wolakota Foundation is the outgrowth of the annual World Peace and Prayer Day (WPPD) celebrations begun in 1996 by **Chief Arvol Looking Horse**. When Arvol was twelve years old, he was designated as the 19th Generation Keeper of the Tradition of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe. People of the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Sioux Nation believe White Buffalo Calf Woman appeared to the tribes hundreds of years ago, bringing instruction in sacred ceremonies of how to live in balance with all life, and leaving behind a sacred bundle containing a sacred pipe of peace. She left prophecies about a time in which she would return again. The 1994 birth of a white buffalo calf is believed to be the sign that these times were now at hand.

Following spiritual guidance, Arvol committed to a series of ceremonies at sacred sites to join people together in prayers and to share the message of his Tradition with others who shared concerns about peace and the destruction of the Earth. The initial objective was honoring the four directions with four annual ceremonies. The first ceremony took place in the West at Gray Horn Butte in Wyoming following a horseback ride from the Wahpeton Dakota reservation in Saskatchewan. Tradition holds that it was near this site White Buffalo Calf Woman first appeared. For this ceremony, over 2,000 people joined together, mostly drawn by word-of-mouth. In 1997, Chief Sundown of the Joseph Bighead Reserve in Canada hosted the ceremonies for the North. In 1998, the gathering moved East to Pipestone, Minnesota, another traditional sacred site.

Chief Looking Horse decided on Costa Rica as the site for the 1999 ceremonies. By bringing together native people of North and South America, it is also believed that this event fulfilled prophecies concerning the uniting of the eagle and the condor. Costa Rica is the home of the University for Peace established by the United Nations and, thus, World Peace and Prayer Day first gained international recognition. The original journey of WPPD was completed when it came back to the center for a Thank You Ceremony to the "Heart of Everything That Is"—the

(Continued on next page)

History (continued)

Sacred Black Hills of South Dakota in the year 2000. Believing that the initial effort was complete, Arvol asked the Global Community to continue the ceremony at their sacred sites whether it is at a place of worship or at a significant geographical site their Nation or Faith identifies as greatly important. This handed back the responsibility of continuing the prayers and activities to the local people in each community and country.

After the 2000 ceremony, two English representatives approached Arvol with a request to conduct a similar series of ceremonies to further strengthen the message of Peace at a global level. This time, the journey would be around the world to the remaining four continents with a Thank You Ceremony back at Turtle Island (Americas) in five years.

This global journey commenced in Ireland in 2001, lending support to a country whose "troubles" are beginning to seek resolution, a country with a long tradition of Summer Solstice celebrations.

In 2002, WPPD traveled to Durban, South Africa working with the coordinating assistance of Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi. Many thousands responded to this event in a show of peaceful solidarity, celebrating their cultural and ethnic diversity.

In 2003, WPPD joined the Aboriginal tribes of Australia, honoring their most sacred site of Barumbuk, while bringing attention to the need for healing of their 'lost generation.'

In 2004, WPPD traveled to Mt. Fuji, Japan, to honor their indigenous connections to this famous sacred site.

2005 will bring us back to the Black Hills for a final "Wopila" - the thank you ceremony. Here again, the responsibility will return to the people.

The vision for this new organization is that it will continue the World Peace and Prayer Day celebrations through 2005 while building a center with programs for sustaining traditional teachings of the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Nation as well as researching and demonstrating practices for sustainable, ecologically-balanced living, and sharing this wisdom with the world.

Learning Journeys with the Berkana Institute

Design a Learning Journey for your organization

Berkana works with organizations and communities to design custom learning journeys. We define a leader as anyone who wants to help, who is willing to step forward to make a difference in the world. We know that the world is blessed with an abundance of these leaders. We work with any community of people who call themselves "leaders". This includes both for-profit and non-profit organizations, foundations, fellowship and alumni programs, associations, networks—and even self-organizing circles of friends.

Visit us online or contact learningjourneys@berkana.org to sign up.

November 2005 Journey with Meg Wheatley to Africa.

Last November, 15 people from the United States, Canada and Ireland participated in a Berkana Exchange Learning Journey to South Africa and Zimbabwe, hosted by Meg Wheatley and Kufunda Learning Village founder Marianne Knuth. The journey was so successful that we're going back to do it again October 31 to November 11, 2005. On this journey, we will meet and learn from extraordinary pioneering leaders who are helping communities develop the skills of self-reliance.

Contact: debbie@berkana.org

February 2006 Learning Journey to India.

"Swaraj", or rule over oneself, is inspired by Gandhi's call for people to lead and create their own models of development that are holistic, sustainable, collaborative and socially just. In this Berkana Exchange Learning Journey to India, we will explore how pioneering leaders are creating new ways for communities to care for themselves. Our hosts are the founders of Abhivyakti and Shikshantar, two learning centers that are part of the Berkana Exchange network.

Contact: debbie@berkana.org

March 2006 Women's Journey to Africa

Meg Wheatley and The Berkana Institute invite you to participate in a Learning Journey to South Africa and Zimbabwe to discover the extraordinary contributions that women leaders are making to the future of southern Africa. We offer this life-changing experience to woman leaders to support your own strength and resolve as a leader. We know that you will be inspired, challenged and revived, able to lead in new and powerful ways. Contact: iana@berkana.org.

<http://learningjourneys.newworkspaces.net>

A New Age of Peace

An interview with Deepak Chopra by Lisa Schneider

The title for Deepak Chopra's latest book was inspired by a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way." Chopra, a practicing MD and the author of more than 40 books on spirituality and health, believes world peace will be achieved when enough individuals decide to make peace a part of their spiritual practice. The mission for Chopra's Alliance for the New Humanity, launched in December of 2003, is to create a "global community of peacemakers" and counts among its supporters many prominent business leaders, spiritual thinkers, celebrities, and artists. We spoke with the author about his hopes for peace in a "New Age."

Lisa Schneider is a Beliefnet editor. <http://www.beliefnet.org/index.html?rnd=68>

Lisa Schneider: You write that we are on the verge of a global shift in consciousness that will lead the world toward peace. One indicator you cite is that one third to one half of Americans accept some form of New Age values. What are New Age values?

Deepak Chopra: New Age values are conscious evolution, a non-sectarian society, a non-military culture, global sharing, healing the environment, sustainable economies, self-determination, social justice, economic empowerment of the poor, love, compassion in action, going beyond religious fundamentalism, going beyond nationalism—extreme nationalism, culture.

LS: The first thing you mentioned, conscious evolution—what is that?

DC: Well, evolution is a process in the universe that is ongoing; otherwise, our children wouldn't be smarter than us, which they are—and there wouldn't be any progress in the world. So the universe is constantly moving in the direction of higher evolutionary impulses, creativity, abstraction, and meaning. Conscious evolution is the ability of human beings to consciously participate in that process; we are a species that is conscious of our consciousness. We can actually accelerate the process through meditation, through the ability to find stillness through loving actions, through compassion and sharing, through understanding the nature of the creative process in the universe and having a sense of connection to it. So that's conscious evolution.

LS: There's been a lot of talk about the influence of conservative values after the presidential election. Do you believe that this New Age movement is a sort of silent majority?

DC: I hope so. If it's not, it will be soon. You need a critical mass of connectivity for that to happen. So it could be a majority but unless you get to that critical mass of connectivity, it may not really take that jump.

LS: Americans have just re-elected a president who took the country to war. What signs do you see that make you hopeful the world is moving toward peace?

DC: Well, first of all, whenever there is a faith transition in society, the forces of inertia and resistance also come forth as we rise in consciousness; our shadow also rises to meet the challenge. So I would say, just like water boils into steam, we have the same thing happening. There's a lot of turbulence. I would interpret this turbulence and the actions of our president, and [the] fear of our collective psyche as part of the transition. We're seeing the dying carcass of the old paradigm.

LS: At the same time that we are seeing the rise of alternative and New Age spirituality, we are witnessing a surge in religious fundamentalism. How would you convince the fundamentalists to join this New Age movement toward peace?

DC: You can't convince anybody. Consciousness operates in mysterious ways. One of those ways is that the old paradigm suddenly starts to die. Just like when the Berlin Wall fell: it reached a critical

mass of collective consciousness that [removing it] was no longer a terrible idea. And boom, it happened, and that's the way this will happen. You cannot convince somebody against their will—what's the expression? "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

LS: So you believe there will be enough people moving toward peace to render the fundamentalists irrelevant, that the movement will reach critical mass without them?

DC: Yes, and this type of fundamentalism is also an expression of deep insecurity and fear.

LS: You write that the world peace movement must start with a spiritual transformation at the level of each individual. How would this type of personal transformation lead to peace on a global scale?

DC: Our most important task is to transform our consciousness so that violence is no longer an option for us in our personal lives, that understanding that a world of peace is possible only if we relate to each other as peaceful beings, one individual at a time.

LS: Some of the movements you consider "a higher vision for humanity" include environmentalism, human rights, and "Eastern and New Age religions." Can you explain why you single out Eastern and New Age religions? One can certainly point to examples of violence committed by Buddhists and Hindus in the world.

DC: There is some—yes. I should not have said Eastern religions—Eastern thought process perhaps. You know, religion itself, Eastern and Western, is divisive and quarrelsome anyway.

LS: Do you think that Western religions can contribute to the peace movement as well?

DC: Yes, I would take exception to my own statement there.

LS: Let's talk about a real-life example. No matter what one thinks of the war in Iraq, most people would consider the recent election there a good thing. Is there a way this could have been achieved peacefully?

DC: There are many things here that are very important to address. One is: Does the means justify the end? We read every day in the newspaper about how many Americans have died, but have you ever heard an estimate of Iraqi deaths in our media? The answer is 'No.' And that's a shame, absolutely. If you go to the Internet and find estimates that in some cases—for example from *The Lancet*, which is a reputable medical journal in Britain, over 100 years old, estimates go to about 100,000 Iraqi deaths. Does our claiming success in an election justify the sacrifice of all these people?

The second point is that if we as a nation are so interested in democracy and say that elections are a good thing, then why don't we do that in Pakistan? And the reason we don't do that in Pakistan—we know that public opinion is so against the dictator over there—is because the dictator over there follows our instructions. He does what we tell him to. So in our own self-interest, we don't want elections in Pakistan. Self-interest always overshadows and overwhelms our de-

sire, or rather, our so-called desire [for democracy]—it's total hypocrisy.

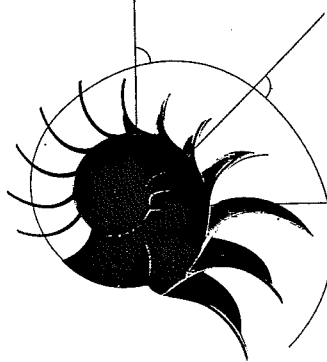
LS: There's been war as long as there have been humans, but you don't believe that violence is innate?

DC: It is part of our nature for evolutionary reasons; because of it we survived when we were in a dangerous and predatory environment and yet our evolution says that we're now in a different stage. Dr. Jonas Salk said we are in a stage he calls, 'meta-biological evolution' which means, evolution beyond our biology. The evolution of our consciousness and with that, the dominant impulses become compassion, understanding, meaning, purpose, love, creativity, insight, imagination, understanding the part of intention, intuition, these are the evolutionary impulses that will overwhelm the violent impulses.

LS: One of the obstacles toward peace you refer to is the uneven distribution of wealth. You point out that 5% of the world's population uses one third of the world's resources. It seems to me the New Age movement is based in this 5%. How do you motivate "the richest and most comfortable people in the world" to make a personal transformation toward peace?

DC: I think it will start with self-interest. Right now, the way technology is moving, weapons of mass destruction can be miniaturized and made inexpensively. And that will render the military irrelevant. You could be sitting somewhere, in a remote part of the world with a computer and shifting electrons to basically destroy a city by cutting off its electricity and poisoning the food chain and interfering with the water supply and air traffic signals.

So if we understand that there's no way to fight stateless terrorism, then we might start to spend some significant amount of energy and effort and resources in understanding human behavior, in making friends, in understanding other people and cultures, in understanding that economic factors or disparities in social justice are all part of this tangled hierarchy. If we do that, then we could hope for a more secure and safe world. Right now, we have a myth of security and that myth says that security measures: nuclear shields, anthrax vaccines, and military make us secure. But we have all of that and we're still very insecure. In fact, the more we have, the more insecure we become.



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Humankind has been dreaming the impossible dream, and it's worked.
We've become impossible.
Now it is time for us to dream the possible dream
and create some new possibilities.

Swami Beyondananda