

# LAURIE's PRESENTATION

# WHY IS S-O-L NOT MORE WIDELY APPRECIATED ?

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Although we were 'before our time' (1967 on).  
We (Sheila, I and many of our colleagues)

cannot understand why our ideas and  
many books, papers & research reports

have not yet been more widely accepted

# "PRACTICAL PEOPLE !" of all KINDS find our 'NEW LANGUAGE' off-putting

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The senior clients of our research projects  
often start by fearing that our  
Conversation Methodology  
Will lead to 'CHAOS' among their  
subordinates

But end up laughing at these early fears

# TRADITIONAL SCIENTISTS have seen the idea of SELF-ORGANISED as WISHY-WASHY

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Even among our colleagues this idea  
has many different personal meanings

Psychologists are influenced by the many  
studies of 'presentation of the SELF'

Which may have implicit tones of deliberate  
mis-representation, celebrity and media.

# PEOPLE from the ARTS & HUMANITIES shudder at it's CYBERNETIC undertones

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The ideas of feedback as used in Information Theory, Cybernetics and Systems Theory were too 'mechanistic' to be thought of as useful, even with living cells, organs, animals or GHIA

Let alone in understanding we humans.

# BUT 'SELF-ORGANISED' NOW SOUNDS LESS THREATENING than it USED TO.

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So it may be worth your while to read  
at least some of our book(s):

- Self-Organised-Learning' •  
and
- Towards the Self-Organised-Learning Society •  
which is the last chapter in  
***Learning Conversations***

Some excerpts from which follow...

(look under the "C.S.H.L Publications" button  
For a more complete version)

**so**

**?**

# **LEARNING CONVERSATION AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE**

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**S-O-L**  
as a paradigm  
of  
**HUMAN INQUIRY**



# Five Axioms for Conversational Science

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We find that  
the paradigm of inquiry  
is based upon  
what are for us  
five self-evident truths.

# Axiom ONE

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That the elements of inquiry  
are conversational beings  
engaged in conversational  
endeavours.

Human beings are one example  
of such elements.

# Axiom TWO

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Conversation is a process  
in which meaning is negotiated.  
Thoughts, feelings and perceptions  
about the negotiation of meaning;  
cannot be negotiated  
within the explanatory systems of  
traditional (physical) science.  
We need new ways of conceiving  
how one thing influences another.  
'Cause and Effect' is no longer adequate.

# Axiom THREE

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The methods of Conversational Science  
express the Knowing of it.

And

The Knowing of Conversational Science  
is informed by its Methods.

Method and Knowledge co-exist  
in a symbiotic relationship.

# Axiom FOUR

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Conversational Science offers  
fresh insights  
into other forms of scientific inquiry.  
This is because the knowing and  
the methods of conversational science  
can enable other sciences  
(and paradigms?)  
to re-negotiate their meanings  
with themselves  
and with one another.

# Axiom FIVE

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Conversational Science  
offers people  
the means for self-organising  
their own change

Self-organised change  
is the most meaningful  
definition of freedom.

# Stop Here ?

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## The Remaining bits Are Elaborations

You probably need to be really conversing with us, and with yourself, for it to be worth proceeding further here, but you may find the stuff under other buttons more interesting, practical and even useful.

# Commentary on Axiom I

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On the nature of conversational beings engaged in conversational endeavours! Each converser has a unique perspective. All meaning is therefore relative, dependant, upon the perspective of its generator; but, since generators of meaning can converse, all meaning is potentially related. Relative but related meanings are the subject matter (the material) of conversation. Other sciences, e.g. physics, suggest that issues of relativity are illuminated when a proper referent is identified within the subject matter. Examples of this are 'the speed of light', 'action at a distance', 'God', 'life', the 'table of elements', 'Buddha', 'prime numbers', 'Ghia', 'entropy' and 'DNA'.



# Commentary on Axiom I: cont.2

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These have all served as proper referents for clarifying the meaning domains of various conversational endeavours. In studying human activities (including other scientific activities) we would suggest that a proper referent is the conversational being. At different times, in different places and in differing circumstances human beings can become 'conversational' but at other times, in other places and in other circumstances each 'one' may better be seen as a (discordant or accordant) community of inner conversational beings; or occasionally each 'one' becomes a constituent within a more comprehensive conversational being (such as a team, a family, two people in love, Maslow's creative encounter, a research group or a nation under threat).

# Commentary on Axiom I: cont.3

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This proper referent for the study of human experience and behaviour we have designated 'the conversational being' (C-being). C-beings embody two co-existent parallel conversations: one directed inwards, composed among its own meaning generating constituents: and one directed outwards towards its own conversational community. Thus each conversational being is a conversation and can take part in conversations with others. C-beings in action are a conversational endeavour.

# Commentary on Axiom I: cont.4

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One person may become a number of C-beings, each engaged in its own conversational endeavour; and a number of people, nature or with technology (Pirsig with his motorcycle) becoming a constituent in a C-being larger than oneself. This is the nature of art. Another example is the way Brecht sees audiences in the theatre. Each conversational endeavour produces its own Domain of Meaning (e.g. any school in science or movement in art). The domain of meaning of an endeavour defines, refines and confines the quality of understanding that the C-being can achieve. In other words, it influences and is influenced by the quality of modelling, the reflection upon others' meaning (Konrad Lorenz: 'Behind the Mirror'). When C-beings begin to model their own processes they achieve awareness. This is the seed of self-organisation. It endows the Cbeing with Gödel-like open-system properties.

# Commentary on Axiom 2

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Conversation is a process within which meaning is negotiated. We have suggested that personal learning may be viewed as the construction of significant, relevant and viable meaning. Meaning acquires these characteristics if it is continually regenerated in the heat of ongoing experience. We call such personal meaning 'first generation knowing' since it changes in each regenerative cycle. The paradox of conversation is that although it would appear to involve the exchange of meaning, this is hardly possible if meaning is continually being regenerated. This paradox indicates the trap into which strands of human inquiry have fallen, e.g. computer-based 'expert' systems, much education and training in which the expert knows best: and indeed almost all of AI (Artificial Intelligence).

# Commentary on Axiom 2:cont.

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They regard information, pre-digested meaning or nth generation meaning as the coinage of conversation. This is to view pre-digested dogmatic meaning as the coinage of teaching, of learning and of therapy; it is not. This paradox is resolved when we recognise that meaning cannot be transmitted or received; it can only be represented. Representations of meaning can be interpreted through the spontaneous generating of new first generation meaning. Two C-beings each representing their first generation meaning and interpreting the representations of the other are the minimal conditions for conversation, as we define this term. As these processes synchronise and begin to operate iteratively with feedback the conversation comes alive and a new C-being is born. You will recognise this?

# Commentary on Axiom 3

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The methods express the knowing and the knowing informs the methods.

The essence of S-O-L is its conversational method. It is systematic but not ritualised. It is content-independent but always requires specific meaning to be generated. It is reflective upon actual first-hand experience and it is person sensitive whilst remaining pragmatic. This conversational method is intrinsic to the conversational paradigm and the quality with which it operates is core. Tools are recruited into this conversational method as and when they may enhance its quality. Used non-conversationally, the same tools will impede, dismember or even kill the C-being. This has been true, for example, of a lot of repertory grid usage. Like all human experience, the conversational method has a tendency to lose its integrity over time. When this happens it withers away and dies unless refreshed by reflection upon the processes by which meaning is generated and negotiated.

## Commentary on Axiom 3:cont.2

MA(R)<sup>4</sup>S is a model enhancing tool which we invented to be used conversationally. It can be used to enhance a C-being's awareness of the nature of their own conversational processes. It is therefore a means by which the method can refresh the method. Indeed, the method can bootstrap the method into new realms of experience. Thus, the method is the conversational knowing in action, and the conversational knowing is generated through multiple representations and re-representations of the experience of the method.

# Commentary on Axiom 4

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- Conversational Science offers fresh insights into other forms of human inquiry
- It seems to us that most forms of human inquiry coincidentally or accidentally achieve mystification. This is because the real experience of the endeavour, its intrinsic process, is not the form in which its findings are usually reported, nor its 'apparent methods' described. Hence the need for scientists to write non-scientific biographical accounts of how things really happened (e.g. J. Watson and F. Crick, *The Double Helix*) and hence, also, the artists' reluctance to examine their 'creative' processes for fear of dismembering them.



## Commentary on Axiom 4:cont.2

- This comes about because the explanatory concepts of traditional science do not serve to express or represent their processes conversationally. We have found it necessary to progressively discard most of these explanatory devices and to develop new languages, such as the language about learning that we have used in this book to converse about conversation. We believe that we are forging the means whereby significant, relevant and viable meanings can be generated about the processes of learning and about conversation itself.

## Commentary on Axiom 4: cont.3

- As these new languages emerge they reveal a new paradigm of human inquiry. What sustains us in this endeavour is having discovered that many other areas of human inquiry are illuminated by the conversational paradigm. It embraces other paradigms, each of which can then be seen at first to conceal, but later to reveal fresh facets of the conversational method. As each endeavour is further demystified it illuminates the conversational process through which we really learn i.e. create useful and constructive knowledge.

# Commentary on Axiom 5

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- Conversational Science, Self-Organised Change and Freedom.
- As people converse about their own processes they achieve awareness.
- As they begin to experiment with these processes they move towards self-organisation.

## Commentary on Axiom 5: cont.2

- As they reflect on the nature of these experiments they become more aware of the processes by which change takes place.
- As they begin to experiment with their ways of experimenting they become more able to organise change.
- Self-Organised Change is needed if we are to avoid the more dangerous consequences of our non-conversationally driven technological and scientific endeavours.

# Commentary on Axiom 5: cont.3

The Domain of Meaning which is being generated by the various and varied attempts to reflect upon more conversational methods and paradigms, is the arena within which C-beings can pursue truly human-scaled endeavours.

Where the C-beings are fragments of a person we are confronting questions of personal freedom, i.e. the goals of therapy and education.

Where the C-beings are people endeavouring to work together we are confronting the issues of organisation, team building and social freedom.

Where the C-beings are humanity, we are confronting the issues of universal freedom and a healthy world.

# GOODBYE

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Sorry if this bored you

But I hope not.

LAURIE

**THE END**  
of  
**LAURIE'S PRESENTATION**

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