

Asynchronicity in Conversation

(in memory of Steve Sloan)

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A **conversation** pits two or more participants in an interaction in language, such that the interactional dynamics moves toward synchronization. A "participant" demonstrates the quality of **organizational closure** – closure in its dynamics of operations. The current language of dynamic closure is the language of **dialectics** – product/process, structure/organization, relations/dynamics, i.e., - any pair of descriptors that appear both opposing and compatible (they need each other). A participant can be as simple as a set of interacting concepts or as complex as an entire society. A "human" participant demonstrates the qualities of biological autonomy, self-consciousness, and a preference for recurring interaction with other humans.

Human participants can hold conversation with themselves, with other humans, or with social entities that meet the criteria for participant. Conversation with oneself describes the process of thinking; roles, perspectives, positions, and points of view (sets of interacting concepts) serve as the participants in these conversations. Conversation among humans ADDS to the dynamics of interaction those particular dynamics of body dispositions that characterize human biology—i.e., emotioning. Conversation with a social entity (or society) entails awareness on the part of the human participants that the interaction in which they are engaged possesses the quality of asynchronicity with the standard interactions of that social entity; in this case, the move toward synchronicity involves changes, current or anticipated, in those standards.

Human participants in a conversation experience asynchronicities as frictions, tensions, disagreements, contradictions, being "on different planes", i.e., being "out of sync" with the other. What qualifies to produce an asynchronicity is any action in a language[ing] that is nonstandard, unexpected, not anticipated, experienced by a potential respondent as new. The respondent to such an action CREATES the asynchronicity by responding to it as such. For the interaction to turn into a conversation, each participant responds to the other in such a way as to support the continuation of the interaction (moving towards agreement, resolution, new alternatives, etc.). Asynchronicities are not natural; they are created. [Nature is what would happen or what happens without creation?] This creative process derives from self-consciousness and thinking. Either participant or the participants together compose these moments of asynchronicity.

The skills of participation, then, include the abilities to recognize potential asynchronicities, to respond to them as such, and to respond in ways that encourage recurrent interaction. Language, thinking, composition, and performance describe these skills. All people who engage in conversation with other people participate in social transformation. Those with skills participate in ways that those without cannot. In particular, skills help participants to orient conversation toward the creation of new alternatives and choices.