

## **Gordon Pask**

Some 30 or more years ago Heinz von Foerster and those at the B.C.L. toyed with the idea of self-organization, myself included. At my own laboratory, System Research and at Brunel, these notions enlivened the adaptive human-machine systems, our main preoccupation other than far from conventional computation, into conversation theory and a protologic or protolanguage,  $L_p$ , for the dynamic representation of shared concepts and the process of coming to know. Somewhat later, it became evident that certain tacit assumptions, for example that conversations may, in a very liberal sense, be assigned a "start" and a "finish", the societal and cultural interactions with which Gerard de Zeeuw and myself, even more so our group, the OOC / CICT / Universiteit Amsterdam, deal, in practice may not. For sure, I had sensed this inadequacy of Conversation Theory and  $L_p$  in Montreal, at Concordia and at Old Virginia, with Larry Richards in Norfolk. But the group to which I belong at the moment, with its prolific social and political responsibilities, led to the mandate that a paradigm shift was needed. In principle, this has been achieved, at very least partially achieved, since no theoretical structure worthy of a glance is moribund, rather it continues to evolve, endlessly.

So it was no great surprise when Gerard, who is much better as a mathematician than I am and leads our group, politely demanded an extension of the existing theoretical structures, not only on grounds such as lack of a "start" and "finish", as commonplace, but many other grounds, also. It was gratifying to discover that the establishment of a novel paradigm was in many ways an elaboration of the older ideas, even though it did entail some kind of Kuhnian paradigm shift, hence, a great deal of novelty, as well.

It was surprising, however, although very gratifying, to discover that the required changes of stance tended to bring the principles of theoretical physics, particle and cosmological, both, into correspondence with previously nonexistent or merely neglected theories of social, educational, political and cultural science. Here, it proved of particular value to recognize that cultures (given an architecture of knowledge, or coming to know) are commensurable with the concrete architectures (which they create and inhabit, so become), and that art necessarily coexists with science and philosophy, for they are complementary to each other.

Obviously, we do not mean that the theories in question deal with the same data, not even the same kind of data, encountered in the physical and chemical and biological domains. Neither that, nor that the proper truth functionals are the same, except, perhaps, locally in special universes of interpretation. Our theories, dubbed Interaction of Actors, or I.A., theories are participant, dynamic and dwell upon coherence, for sure, but also distinction. Above all, perhaps, they show that unity is not uniformity. Rather, it is the emergence of coherence and of distinction from a far-from-linear dynamic, engaging the observer as a responsible participant.