Description
Research into Generative Dialogue worldwide provides empirical evidence for the creative innovation that surfaces when individuals with disparate worldviews learn how to suspend limiting attitudes and perceptions in order to co-create new possibilities in various social contexts.

This workshop will unpack the mechanics of the process so that participants have a sense of how to tap into generative dialogue and deep learning.

Process
Spiral Dynamics

The workshop began with a viewing of the documentary of the Spiral Dynamics model (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7oEa9GN0T34). The model sets out a biophysical-psycho-social-spiritual map of human evolution, based on the work of Dr Clare W Graves, and presented by Dr Don Beck.

From the material presented on the different value systems (memes), we see that our socio-cultural evolution corresponds to our individual evolution – i.e. basic survival needs; a creation of a mythic world and the need for community; rebellion and the assertion of self; order and conformity; spirit of inquiry and exploration; sense of interconnectedness and dissolution of boundaries; spiritual awakening and a new sense of Self. Each evolutionary band has both positive and negative aspects, and the success of the next evolutionary level depends on the successful integration of the previous level. For instance, a stable community cannot be formed if survival needs are not adequately met.

The central insight from the Spiral Dynamics model is that it is unrealistic to want homogeneity (that is, everything must be the same), because even within the same family unit, each individual may be operating from a different meme, that is, from a different value system.

However, our socio-cultural conditioning, in order to give the illusion that we are controlling uncertainty, creates fictions of sameness, so that we create belief systems for predicting behaviour through conformity. But this is only a fiction that is characterised by a culture of separation, not inclusion.

The video points to the fact that where there are multiple frequencies at play in any given context, if facilitated well through genuine dialogue, we then have a real-time laboratory for an adaptive intelligence – that is distinct from conventional intelligence (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ) – that nurtures dynamic creativity, innovation and change. But this is easier said than done!

It is a birthing process because there is always the potential for a meme clash i.e. a clash of value systems (think of a parent who requires obedience and a teenager who wants to do their own thing). So how do we facilitate a healthy inclusion of disparate value systems?
The Mechanics of Dialogue

Facilitating a meaningful Dialogue of deep learning is more of an art than a science. There is no quick fix. But there is one inviolate, observable empirical fact. And that is the layers of identification (conditioning) that each individual carries that potentially creates barriers in true dialogue.

Why is I-dentity potentially negative?

Most forms of identity (physical, social, psychological) always have the potential for great personal and social limitation because it sets up boundaries. While physical boundaries are important for physical survival, we have to deeply question our psychological boundaries to realise freedom. This can be a life-long endeavour for the individual, but Dialogue, if practised well, can help us short-circuit the limitations of holding onto our identities (i.e. world-views, mental models), and not only help us sense our deep connectedness to all of Life, but also creates contexts of inclusion and innovation. We can identify the following pre-requisites for a successful Dialogue:

- **The need to suspend our mental models** (which can be an arduous task given that most individuals cannot separate their mental model from who they really are – ironically the word ‘individual’ means ‘undivided’, and not what is currently assumed i.e. separate and unique).
- **Paying Attention** – to genuinely pay attention we must be alert to what we’re holding on to and suspend our identification with this. Paying attention is not thinking. It is an act of simply being alert and aware, even in the midst of thinking. Our current focus on intellection makes us oblivious of this background awareness, which is the ground in which Dialogue takes root.
- **Embrace Unknowing.** We have an educational system that privileges knowing and demonises not knowing, yet every great discovery and act of creativity begins with not knowing. Obviously, we need to know for practical purposes – how to drive a car, cook, etc. This form of knowing is not a problem. It’s the knowing that says ‘I know how life is’ i.e. our various ideologies, which are based on layers of psycho-socio-cultural conditioning that we insist is the truth – it’s this knowing that is problematic, and which is the cause of most of social conflicts. Why? It’s simple; we believe that the ideology is who I am, and it feels very threatening when it is challenged. So, we respond with war in some form or the other. The solution? Find out who I am prior to my thinking.
- **To see that the description is not the described.** (Here we did a little thought exercise that made participants immediately appreciate how a mental model can instantly arise and block the flow of dialogue and set up a boundary. Each one was asked to say a few times ‘There is no God’, followed by its opposite ‘There is a God’. Some found one of the polarities difficult to engage with – depending on the value system – until it was pointed out that both statements were just a string of words; symbols that actually had no effect on Life itself. The sun still shone, the earth still rotated. The only thing that occurred was a psychological reaction based on some identification. Yet, we can go to war defending this string of symbols because we’ve mistaken the symbol for the thing it’s pointing to. Similarly, in Dialogue, there is often a breakdown in communication because we’re holding onto a position; and not seeing that the position is literally sound symbols in our head and not actuality.
- **There has to be a good facilitator for Dialogue.** A good facilitator is one who is functioning from the present and is not engaged with her own stories of past and future. This takes an immense amount of personal inner work and mindfulness.
Another pivotal insight that was explored is that no individual is separate from Life itself (this is very obvious if we simply shift focus from solely identifying as a separate body-mind to paying attention to oneself as Consciousness.) Dialogue helps us to recognise, at the very deepest level of our Being, our common essence prior to the layers of identification.

References:


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1 An e-copy is available from me.
