

I am a human being and I talk with other people every day. Having a chat often seems so trivial that I don't think too deeply about it, except when something that's said triggers strong emotions – anger or fear or a warm feeling of gratitude. But the words are not trivial and every chat has consequences, both for the individual and for the community.

We live in a relational space that is created by networks of conversation – most obviously, by the words we hear and use. Here I am using the word, conversation in the broadest possible sense, to include the language that is broadcast through mass media and all of our online interaction (text, images and sound), along with letters and written statements such as contracts and agreements. When it's face-to-face it includes gestures, tone of voice, and other non-verbal elements that have significant effects.

There is good reason to distinguish between the relational space that is purely social and the relational space at our workplace. Work relations entail some agreement about the meaning of words, the goals that are set, and what constitutes success or failure to achieve those goals. There may still be misunderstandings, but the workplace requires these to be resolved in conversation.

This is not as straightforward as it sounds, because it is not without emotional involvement. In fact, we can't even consider conversation without its inseparable component, running in parallel, which Maturana called emotioning – the flow of our emotions. All parts of our body, especially the inner regions of our brain that are the oldest, in evolutionary terms, are flowing with these forces of life – biochemical processes that shape who we are and what we do. We know this from our feelings, which we derive from our emotions.

It's easy to forget, with left-brain rationality, that no thought or utterance occurs without an emotion attached to it. Left-brain attention emphasises what we call, objectivity, which we utilise, quite deliberately, to make what we say sound convincing. Objectivity is a useful tool to keep the personal opinions of the observer somewhat separate from what is being observed, but in Real Life it's impossible to achieve, even with the aid of scientific instruments, because these are also human-designed and operated.

The relational space we live in was made by observers – each one of us – and spoken into existence in our conversation. We Co-Create 'our world' (and ourselves with it), so subjectivity is intrinsic and essential. In fact, that is how we evolve, creating new selves and a new world, little by little, every day, so we need never be stuck in a relational space that is not working for us.

The online component of our conversation is so important and my experience of it so limited that I can say nothing about it. I am heartened by massive projects for thousands of young people such as *Generation of Peace* ('networks of conversation grounded in love') and I imagine that sensational news about anti-social behaviour does not properly reflect the overall goodwill that exists in online communities. The biggest threat seems to be from the deliberate lying (disinforming) that spreads. Once again we combat that with our Intelligence.

Given that Creativity is our great asset and we are responsible for where we put our Attention, especially in conversation, the consequences of either a 'narrowed mind' or an 'expanded Intelligence' will play out, for young and old, in the years ahead.