Face-to-Face in a Wired World

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(text of speech, given 4/15/98 as Bateson Lecture at New School, not for publication, or attribution. Lacks graphics.)

Let me say that it is an extraordinary honor for me to be presenting the Bateson Lecture in the Orozco Room of the New School for Social Research. As an artist, my hope is that what I offer you tonight honors Jose Clemente Orozco and the aspirations expressed in these magnificent murals. As a teacher at the New School, my hope is that this lecture also honors Gregory Bateson, who once taught here. This opportunity is especially meaningful for me as it was my good fortune to know Gregory as a mentor, face-to-face.

Orozco's murals offer us a way to begin talking about face-to-face relationships in a wired world. In commenting on these murals, made in 1931, Alvin Johnson, a founder of the New School, wrote "As a Mexican of mixed Spanish and Indian origin Orozco could not accept a League of Nations virtually limited to the white race." As a challenge to the exclusive League of Nations, Orozco tilted the mural in front of you "The Table of Brotherhood". In realistic space, the mural depicts men from many nations sitting around a table face-to-face. This realistic depiction anchors the remaining murals which float about in cubist space. From the violent Bolshevik Revolution on your right, to the non-violence revolution of Gandhi on your left, to the idealized worker family behind you - Orozco used contemporary history and the dynamic tensions of cubism to express human hope for a just, prosperous and peaceful society. Substituting cyberspace for cubist space, my presentation

tonight makes the same assumption that Orozco made. To fulfill human hopes in a wired world, the dynamic tensions of communicating in cyberspace must somehow be anchored in authentic, non-exclusive, face-to-face communication. The question becomes "How?"

Let us look at the human face itself. Just like the face of a clock, there are fixed parts and moving parts. The fixed parts hold in place three organs of perception that gather in the face. Eye sockets, ears, and nose are all fixtures arranged in an oval. The moving parts are the forehead, the eyebrows, the eyes themselves, the nostrils, the mouth and the smiling muscles. Within the constraint of the fixed parts, these moving parts activate perception by such movements as focusing the eyes or sniffing with the nostrils. These moving parts are also used for expression, such as the raising of eyebrows or the formation of a frown.

In a face-to-face relationship, this combination of immobile features and expressive movement gives those engaged in the relationship a fairly reliable image of the affective state of the other person. The shared pattern is very rich. Two sensors we call faces, which look like each other, are sensing each other as they look. Mood is hard to mask. While deception is possible, the limits of how much the face can be controlled in the face of another face make deception difficult. Deliberately manipulating the movements in the face is a craft known as acting.

We do not begin our lives as actors. As newborn we move from our mother's womb to an ongoing face-to-face relationship with our mothers. As infants our immobile faces have no ability to dissemble. Only in the interplay of mutual recognition between mother and infant, do we start learning how to be

expressive with our faces. A whole range of intersubjective expressiveness grows out of hours of unmediated face-to-face contact contact with our mothers, as well as other close relatives. As infants, we learn face-to-face interaction, including the ability to play-act, in this very safe and trustworthy context. Later face-to-face experiences draw on whatever level of trust is established in this primary bond with mother. It is possible to see "falling in love" as a reactivation of the face-to-face intimacy learned in the arms of one's mother.

One colleague of Bateson, anthropologist Roy Rappaport, argues convincingly that this intimate experience with the mother, which he characterizes as "numinous", is the basis for traditional religion. The numinous experience of trust in the mother is transformed into a set of propositions that are never doubted. These unquestioned propositions become the basis for a master narrative that organizes a shared belief system. Believers take this set of propositions to be as complete and consistent as life in the womb. While we now know with mathematical certitude that no system of propositions can be both complete and consistent, this does not trouble believers. The validity of their creed is based on belief, not on mathematical proof. The shared creed creates a community of trust. Mormons communicate well with other Mormons.

Bateson defined communication itself as the creation of redundancy patterns. The word "redundancy" has at its core the word "unda" which means "wave". Imagine the patterns of waves breaking on a shoreline, again and again, always different, always happening. Successful communication creates rich patterns we can rely on, patterns we can trust. Gregory Bateson was profoundly concerned with trust. He argued that as humans, what we care

most about is the pattern of our relationships. Where do we stand vis-à-vis others in terms of such abstractions as love, hate, respect, dependency, and trust?

According to Bateson, the greatest breach of trust in the twentieth century happened with the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I. While Orozco criticized the League of Nations that grew out of the Treaty of Versailles because the League excluded non-whites, Bateson criticized what actually went on at the peace table. In the Treaty of Versailles, the victorious Allies used the peace table to deceive and punish the Germans. After promising a high-minded, non-punitive treaty to end the war, Clemenceau, Lioyd George, Orlando and Woodrow Wilson drew up and signed a punitive treaty. As Bateson puts it, the message "Let's play chess." is not a move in the game of chess. The message let's make peace on such and such terms is not within the same ethical system as the deceptions of war. Treachery in peacemaking is radically different than trickery in battle. With their treachery, the allies made it impossible for the Germans to trust the peace table itself as a sign of peace. This failure to communicate, this failure to established patterns of understanding that could be trusted in the aftermath of World War I, demoralized both the Germans and the Allies and led directly to Hitler and World War II.

After World War II, Bateson became part of the Macy Conferences that spawned a new theory of communications called systems theory or cybernetics. Although Norbert Weiner defined cybernetics as the science of communications and control in men and machines, Bateson never liked the emphasis on control in Weiner's definition. Bateson thought of cybernetics in terms of circuits of differences that make differences. To explain this new way

of thinking in circuits, Gregory often used the example of a blind man walking. In cybertheory, the blind man walking is a self-correcting process. Differences in the pavement make differences in the stick, which make differences in the balance of the man, which make differences in where he steps next, which make differences in where he puts the stick next, which registers new differences in the pavement and so on round the circuit. To understand the relationships involved, you cannot arbitrarily cut off the circuit somewhere such as at the man's hand or the end of the stick. You must have a complete circuit to understand the process.

Bateson saw thinking in circuits as the biggest advance in human thought in the past 2000 years. He thought a judicious use of this new way of thinking about relationships could untangle the confusion in relationships that originated in the Treaty of Versailles and has entangled subsequent generations. Bateson, who lost a brother in World War I, likened the confusion that followed upon the Treaty of Versailles to a Greek Tragedy. In the Orestia cycle of Greek Tragedy, an adultery is followed by the slaying of children served as food at a peace-making feast followed by more murder, more hatred, more violence and more deception, continued down through generations. Bateson saw my generation, the generation that came of age in the sixties, as born in the middle of a Greek Tragedy without knowing that it was a Greek Tragedy. We knew things were crazy, but we didn't know what to do about it. So we thrashed around in a confusing mire of relationships with slogans like "Don't trust anybody over thirty." But we could not untangle our relationships. Bateson thought that by thinking in circuits we might be able to untangle our confusion about relationships and begin to build shared patterns of understanding that we could trust. This talk offers an approach to building trust that grows out of engaging Bateson's work.

It must be said that, ironically, the same cybertheory that Bateson hoped would enable us to reestablish trust has, to date, been used most effectively by electrical engineers to advance the development of a world of wires that more than complicates issues of face-to-face trust. The baby who once knew only the attentive, animated faces of family and friends now is fascinated by the faces of strangers on television. These faces move, but they do not attend. Many families have lost the capacity for conversation and sit together monitoring celebrity faces on TV. Some of us spend more time "interfacing" with desktop computers than with our mates and friends. Through text based multiple user domains on the Internet, we are developing a culture of faceless pseudo-intimacy. An animated face approaching you on a city street is not animated by your approaching face, but by the cell phone alongside the animated face. With electronics, we are configuring an environment that undermines our normal expectations of face-to-face trust.

The Intern-in-the-White-House scandal underscores this erosion of trust as it is compounded by electronic media. Was there a sexual relationship? The President said "No". But the majority of Americans think the President, on the eve of his State of the Union Address, told a boldface lie on broadcast television about his relation to Monica Lewinsky. Can the Bill Clinton generation trust the Monica Lewinsky generation? Can the Monica Lewinsky generation trust the Bill Clinton generation? Can we trust the televised face of our President? Prosecutor Kenneth Starr doesn't. Starr persuaded Monica Lewinsky's "friend" Linda Tripp to secretly tape their "private" conversations and Starr wanted Lewinsky to secretly tape record her phone conversations with the President. At one point, Starr insisted on a face-to-face meeting with Monica Lewinsky so he could learn the truth about her face-to-face

relationship with Bill Clinton. If Starr had his way before the story broke, he might well have sent Monica into the White House wearing a wire. But is Kenneth Starr himself telling the truth about leaks from his office? Who can you believe? The whole thing is an electronic parody of a Greek Tragedy. The media agonize just enough over their role, all the while serving up this undigestible spaghetti diner of video and audio tapes that pile deception upon deception. Our public culture generates cynicism, not trust.

What I want to show you, in the context of our wired world, is a new way to cultivate trust. Let me say that this new approach depends on shared intentions. In other words, this approach in not a formula to be imposed but respects and invites free choice. This approach is not based on religious propositions but on a relational practice. I am using the word "practice" in the sense that sitting meditations, yoga, and t'ai chi are practices. According to cultural historian, Thomas Berry, these practices arouse in Asia at a time when people were losing faith in the master narratives that had guided their societies. They began to question propositions they had never questioned before. They turned to these deeply interior non-verbal practices as a way to withdraw from stories they found inadequate to encode their experiences. The cultivation of these practices created reliable patterns of self-reference and helped provide a new ground for authentic living with new understandings and new stories.

What I am offering is a relational practice that works for three or more people the way t'ai chi or yoga works for a solo practitioner. Just as yoga cultivates the well being of a one person so this practice can cultivate face-to-face relationships of trust among three or more people. Unlike meditation practices that tend to withdraw us from the world, the relational practice can support

our involvement in a contemporary world full of circuits. Face-to-face trust can become resonant with wire-to-wire trust because the relational practice is itself based on a relational circuit. The same relational circuit that organizes the practice of communicating face-to-face can be used to organize the protocols of communicating wire-to-wire.

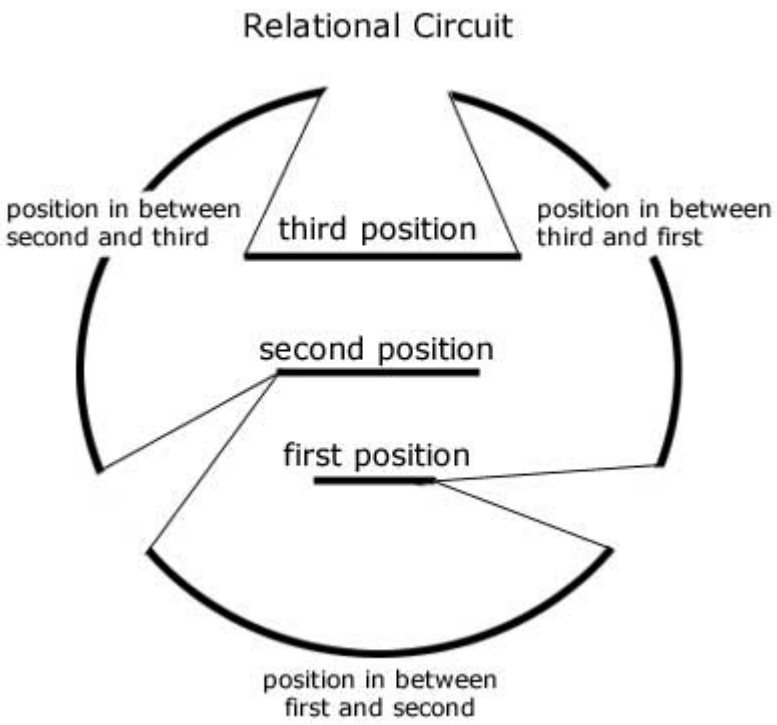
The Relational Circuit

Relationships order differences among people. Trustworthy relationships are ways of ordering differences that can be relied upon. Relationships on which you can rely are relationships in which there is no equivocation about the confidence you bring to the relationship. In a thriving family, the organization of differences is such that children can rely on the parents. There is no doubt. Mom will be Mom. Dad will be Dad. Children can rely on Mom and Dad not to forsake their roles.

Apart from fixed roles in interpersonal relationships, human efforts to order differences unequivocally have their optimal realization in the ideal objects of geometry. A circle is a circle. A square is a square. These objects are unequivocal; you cannot have a square circle. Ideal geometric figures do not carry the ambiguity of language. Let me contrast the equivocacy of language with the univocacy of ideal geometric objects using the term *environment.* Recall that *environment* once referred to *the* all-inclusive context. Now it refers to just one issue among many. Environmentalists are seen by many people as just one more special interest group. The word *environment* is bound to the politics of its use pattern over the last thirty years. The word *environment* metaphorically reached for an inclusive understanding, but only grasped a piece of the whole. It is now an equivocal term.

At the root of the word *environment* is the French word *viron,* meaning *circle*. As we have said, the circle is an ideal object. The reach and the grasp of the ideal circle are identical. Its true sense is in this unity. An ideal circle is what it is once and for all. It is not subject to the shifting contingencies of equivocal meanings. It is not bound by specifics. The meaning of a circle is univocal. Anybody can reactivate the self-evident meaning of a circle. For a group of children today to reactivate the original meaning of *environment* would involve helping them shift through sediments of meaning. By contrast, a circle requires no such archaeological dig. A group of children can all join hands and reactivate the self-evident meaning of a circle for themselves. Guided by the ideal of a circle in their minds, they can enter a realm in which their intersubjectivity is not dominated by language but organized in reference to a completely idealized and objective form. They can join hands and circle round with glee. The objectivity of the ideal figure marks and communicates interdependence among the children without confusion. Only in geometry is it possible for humans to reactivate understanding back to its most original self-evident status. Because the relational circuit is a geometric figure, it is possible for participants at any time to reactivate a clear, unambiguous and self-evident understanding of the circuit. As a geometric figure, the relational circuit has many iterations and many characteristics. Here we are only concerned with one particular iteration and the specific characteristics which can guide a relational practice that builds trust.

Here is a slide of the relational circuit.



Please note that the relational circuit has three unambiguous positions in the middle, labeled first, second and third. There are also three connecting positions. One connects first with second, another connects second with third and the remaining position connects third and first.

The relational practice is based on outlining this relational circuit on the floor. The six different positions in the figure provide the basis for ordering the relationships among three practitioners. We have with us tonight three dancers whom will both demonstrate how the practice works and enact a brief performance based on the practice.

Note: For details of the practice of threeing please see section on threeing on this Web site.

Let me ask them to stand so I can introduce them to you: Jennifer Tsukayama, Erica Murkoksky and Blossom Leilani.

Normally in three-party interaction, the pattern is for two parties to combine against a third party. This pattern of exclusion is based in part on our bilateral symmetry. You cannot choose to look in four eyes at once. If Jennifer chooses to be face-to-face with Erica, she cannot simultaneously be face-to-face with Blossom. Some Chinese counter this tendency in conversation with the following technique: if Jennifer asks Erica a question in the presence of Blossom, Erica answers the question as if Blossom had asked it.

The relational practice precludes third party exclusion by neutralizing the effect of choice on relationships. Choice is exercised not between mutually exclusive partners but between unambiguous positions. The unambiguous positions are part of the circuit. No one is excluded from the circuit of relationships. Practitioners learn the different position and the choreography for moving from one to another. At any time any practitioner has choices open to him or her within the circuit. Choices are made in terms of how to balance the three-part interaction. The relational practice consistently reinforces all three dyadic relationships involved: Jennifer and Erica, Erica and Blossom, Blossom and Jennifer. The practice does not reinforce one dyad at the expense of the other two.

Jennifer, Erica and Blossom will now do a short walk through of the basic moves, demonstrating how this practice works.

Step in and Start a round

Erica goes Face to Face: Blossom to Jennifer, three count

Jennifer goes Face to Face: Erica to Blossom, three count

Blossom goes Face to Face: Jennifer to Erica, three count

Erica goes into First Position

Blossom goes into Second Position

Jennifer goes into Third Position

Hold Positions

In general, a third party can often ease difficulties in a two party relationships, such as when a parent mediates between two siblings. Within this three person relational practice, however, many of the difficult issues of two-person interaction are formally precluded. Let me show you how this works for two specific difficulties.

The first difficulty is with how participants in an interaction often interpret their interaction differently. In discussing a confusing encounter, I may say that the angry look on your face stimulated me to respond to you by walking away, which you reinforced by shouting at me, so I kept walking. You may say that my walking away from you stimulated you to respond by calling out and my continuing to walk away only reinforced your perception of me as angry with you. My walking away from you is seen by you as an initiative, while I see it as a response.

As humans, we seem hardwired to interpret interactive sequences in three parts, which the psychologists call stimulus-response-reinforcement. Often, however, we disagree how these three parts actually maps onto the sequence of events. Bateson calls this difficulty the 'sliding triad'. Two people will both

interpret the sequence in terms of a stimulus-response-reinforcement triad, but each person's triad maps differently onto the same sequence of events. While we seem hardwired to see interactive sequences in terms of this triad, we share no primary outline that would keep this triad from sliding along the sequence and thus allow us to develop a shared interpretation.

The relational circuit provides a primary outline that keeps the stimulus-response-reinforcement triad from sliding. This primary outline precludes the confusion of interpreting a sequence. Each part of this triad is mapped onto an unambiguous position in the relational circuit.

All activity that takes place in the first position can be considered stimulus or initiation.

Ask practitioner in first position to move.

All activity that takes place in the second position can be considered "response" or reactive.

Ask practitioner in the second position to move.

All activity that takes place in the third position can be considered "reinforcement" or mediation.

Ask practitioner in the third position to move.

In the relational circuit, if you change your position you change your relationship to the other participants. A difference in position makes a

difference in relationships. So participants can take turns playing the roles of initiator, respondent and mediator.

Ask practitioners to change positions.

Confusion of Symmetry and Complementarity

The second difficulty of two person interaction resolved by the relational practice is the ambiguity between symmetric and complementary behaviors. Simply stated, if you think I am competing with you and I think I am helping you, pain and confusion will result. Symmetric behaviors are similar behaviors that reinforce each other, such as boxers standing toe-to- toe and slugging it out. Complementary behaviors also reinforce each other, but they are dissimilar, such as nurturing and dependency, or exhibitionism and spectatorship. The confusion between symmetry and complementarity has its genesis in the arms of the mother. A mother looking into the face of her infant is in a symmetric face-to-face relationship but that symmetry is contained within the complementarity of the relation of nurturing and dependence evident in the fact that the mother is holding the child in her arms.

In the relational practice, this confusion between symmetric and complimentary is precluded. All symmetric behavior takes place in the positions that accommodate face-to-face interaction in a pattern not unlike the child' s game monkey in the middle. Each participant takes turns oscillating between the faces of two other participants. All complementary interaction takes place in the remaining three positions and none of it is face-to-face.

Ask practitioners to walk through symmetry and complementarity

and then sit down

In addition to this non-verbal version of the relational practice, there is a face-to-face verbal version that makes use of a tricolor talking stick. In the interest of time I will not demonstrate this conversational version here. Another point to be made, in keeping with Orozco's insistence on non-exclusiveness, is that the relational practice can grown exponentially from three to nine, to twenty seven or more people. This three-person practice can foster non-exclusive networks of relationships that always have at least three hands out. Obviously, more can be said about the relational practice, the difficulties the practice addresses and the social forms it might nurture. Rather than take time to explain more, however, I have asked the dancers to do a brief performance based on this practice at the end of the lecture. After their performance, we will have time for questions. Let us now move to the issue of electronics and trust.

Wire-to-Wire Trust

Given that the relational practice can cultivate trust when we are in each others face-to-face presence, what about communication when we are absent from each other? How can we maintain trustworthy communication over the wires when we are in separate places? Or live in different generations at different times? This is a matter that requires an understanding of signs. Following the American Philosopher, Charles Peirce, we can say that a sign represents an object in some respect so as to bring an interpretant into the same relation to the object. The something that is represented can be absent. If I say to you "The stove inside the house is hot.", I represent the stove

under the aspect of hotness, not sootiness or antiqueness. I ground my sign in a particular character of the object, the hotness of the stove. Additionally the object, the stove is **re**presented by the sign. The stove does not present itself. Finally the sign determines an interpretant, your understanding that the stove is hot and when you go inside you should avoid touching the stove. This three-part relationship between the sign, the object, and the interpretant can be mapped onto the three positions in the relational circuit. Remember we saw how the circuit offered three positions as a primary outline for initiation, response and mediation. Now we see how these same positions can be used to map sign in the first position, object in the second postion and interpretant in the third position.

Whereas in the practice we use the relational circuit as a figure of regulation for practitioners presenting themselves to each other, here we are using the same relational circuit as a figure of regulation for **re**presenting signs. In the face-to-face practice, the emphasis is on the relationships among the practitioners. In the process of generating signs, the emphasis is on the relationships between the sign, the object and the interpretant. Just as the relationships among the practitioners can be kept clear in terms of the unambiguous positions in the relational circuit, so the organization of knowledge in terms of sign, object, interpretant can be kept clear in terms of the unambiguous positions in the relational circuit. The form of the knowledge is provided by the unambiguous positions in the relational circuit. The content of the knowledge is organized in terms of the system of signs generated by Peirce. Any content area can be organized, developed and related to other content areas using this system of signs. Collaborative learning communities can orchestrate their shared knowledge using this system.

In a computer/Internet environment, the relational practice is itself transformed into a set of protocols that enables practitioners to work together building reliable knowledge systems organized in terms of sign, object and interpretant. Participants in such a community would simultaneously be cultivating a coherent understanding of the self. I mention this facet of the approach I am offering by way of contrast with the findings of sociologist Sherry Turkle. Turkle has provided us with two fine studies approaching issues of the self-identity and electronic media based largely on interviews and observations of the computer cultural. In *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*, she chronicles the dualism that develops between the self on the computer and the self off the computer. In *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, she explicates the phenomena of the multiple self now extent on the Internet. The self that is cultivated by the relational practice, both live and in cyberspace protocols, differs from both the alternate second self of the computer and the fragmented multiple selves on the Internet as described by Turkle. The relational circuit is a logic of triadic relationships and, as such, takes up a position in between the two and the many. Psychologically, this means that users of this circuit would be cultivating a tripartite self in keeping with the various traditions that see the self as composed of desiring, willing and knowing. With different emphasis, this triple way appears in a variety of contexts from Saint Augustine through Saint Bonaventure to Gurdjieff, to the American philosopher Charles Peirce. In the systemic approach I am offering, the three aspects of self are interpreted according to the three categories of Peirce: first) desire for quality and imaginative possibilities, second) willingness to struggle with facts and third) knowledge of patterns that connect.

Although this system has an open architecture that can provide routes of reference to any text based data system, the knowledge itself is organized according to a refinements of the positions in the relational circuit. The refinement of positions in the relational circuit follows the classification of signs elaborated by Charles Peirce. I will not elaborate here, but let me say that Peirce's classification is generally acknowledged as the most sophisticated system of signs yet devised. The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze compares Peirce's system to Linnaeus' classification of natural history and Medeleev's periodic table in chemistry. Deleuze himself used Peirce to classify all of Cinema. Rather than burden us with a technical discussion, let me present a web site that exemplifies how thinking in signs according to Peirce can be combined with thinking in circuits to create a trustworthy communications system using the Internet.

The web site is called Johnnie AppleCircuit.

(First Slide of Home Page)

The purpose of the web site is to represent apple growing in the Hudson Valley to the people connected to apples so they will support sustaining the ecosystems of the Hudson Valley Bioregion.

(Slide of six apples)

As I mentioned, knowledge about apple growing is organized according to a refinement of the positions in the relational circuit. Each of these six apples, each colored differently, indicates an unambiguously different position in the relational circuit. Differences in the object, the Hudson Valley, make

differences in the apples that grow here, which make differences in how the apples are represented on the web (the sign), which make difference in how possible stakeholders may interpret the apples. These differences, in turn, make differences in how actual stakeholders interpret apples which make differences in how the community as a whole interprets the Hudson Valley (the interpretants) which makes a difference in how they behave toward the Hudson Valley, which makes a difference in the sustainability of the Hudson Valley, which makes a difference in the apples and so on round the circuit.

Each transformation of difference in the circuit is further subdivided into three aspects, in accord with Peirce's triadic sign system. In the context of the Hudson Valley we have designated those three aspects: vision, fact and sustainability. The understanding here is that we need imaginative visions to move from the facts as they are now to sustainable living. The whole circuit is designed to cultivate an ecology of mind that connects us with the Hudson Valley ecosystem. Through a recursive use of this web site we could create a reliable redundancy pattern, a shared communication system, about how to live sustainability the Hudson Valley. We could create an ecology of mind in alignment with the Hudson Valley.

(Slide of Ecology of Mind)

To celebrate our ongoing connection with the Hudson Bioregion, we will serve some cider from the Hudson Valley, hard and soft, brought to us via the Union Square Market, after this talk.

My choice of the Hudson Valley as an example is not random. This example returns us to our theme of trust. Trust has become critically linked to the

maintenance of our ecological systems. As Bateson reminds us, any species that destroys its environment destroys itself. We humans are now in the process of destroying our environment. The question of trust between generations has shifted from betrayals such as those carried out with the Treaty of Versailles and now turns around the state of the earth that our children are inheriting.

The bald fact is that the lives we are living are unsustainable. A sustainable society takes care of itself without putting future generations at risk. At the Rio de Janero Earth Summit in 1992, convened by the United Nations, participants agreed: modern society, as we know it, is not sustainable. The 1998 World Watch Report indicates that things have not changed. We deplete soil, exhaust fisheries, pollute air, foul waters and warm the planet. To take care of ourselves, we put future generations at risk. To compound the situation, the same electronic communication system that is eroding trust in face-to-face relationships has created a kind of commercial cocoon for consumers that encourages us to trivialize the dangers of environmental destruction. Consumerism itself, of course, fuels the unsustainable.

Our electronic technology is testing our capacity to trust each other. To met this test, I am offering a single relational circuit that can organize both face-to-face relationships and wire-to-wire relationships. Face-to-face relationships can be organized though a relational practice for three or more people that resolves certain painful difficulties in human interaction. Using this same relational circuit, wire-to-wire relationships can be organized that allow for the creation of coherent learning communities with trustworthy relational databases. Since the same relational circuit organizes both face-to-face and

wire-to-wire, both ways of communicating can contribute to new understandings grounded in sustainability.

Unfortunately, most of us never learned about sustainability from our parents and teachers. Generally speaking, our parents and teachers did not recognize the risks inherent in modern society. In America, most parents organized the lives of their children in ways that fulfilled the dreams they had inherited from their immigrant forbearers. In doing so, they gave some order to the relationship between generations. But for us, the recognition that we are putting future generations in jeopardy brings with it the responsibility to reorder our relationship to the next generation. We who do not know how to live sustainability must teach the next generation how to live sustainably. We who have put our children at risk must teach our children how not to put their children at risk. Since the way of life our parents followed unwittingly concealed issues of sustainability, there was an innocence in their gift of life to us. We enjoy no such innocence. Those we give birth to and those we teach are those that our very way of living is putting in danger. The more we deny this reality, the more difficult it is for the upcoming generation to trust our generation any more than our generation trusted the generation that preceded us.

What I am offering is a relational circuit that could break this cycle of denial. The relational circuit can serve as a figure of regulation for building trustworthy face-to-face relationships within and over generations. This same circuit can also ground our wired world in a shared understanding of the ecosystems that supports our lives and the lives of our children.

Thank You.

Before we move to your questions, let us ask the dancers to enact a brief performance of three party relationships based on the relational practice.

Additional Required Resources

1. Relational Circuit 3D
2. Discussion on Threeing (Yoga of Threeing)both located in the **Additional Resources** section of the Web site.
3. www.spiderweb.org