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***RE-INSCRIBING ORGANIZATIONAL WISDOM AND COURAGE:
THE RELATIONALLY ENGAGED ORGANIZATION***

Sheila McNamee, Ph.D.
Chair
Department of Communication
University of New Hampshire
20 College Road
Durham, New Hampshire 03824
Ph: 603.862.3040
FAX: 603.862.1913
email: smcnamee@christa.unh.edu

Courage and wisdom, as terms that might be applied to our understanding of organizational life, present some interesting challenges. They are terms that we more readily associate with individuals. We might, for example, talk about a wise person, a wise leader, a courageous leader, or a series of courageous acts (performed by some person). These terms are deeply inscribed in essentialist talk, that is, talk about a person's innermost, basic qualities. Essentialist talk, refers to our long-standing tradition of locating attributes, motives, intentions, desires, emotions, and virtually all psychological qualities, traits, and characteristics within a person. As this argument is made, persons are viewed as containers (Sampson, 1993). The "container" is the vessel holding the essential features of personhood, and thus, of individuality. To use these terms, then, connects us to a long tradition of attempts to delineate what makes a wise person wise or a courageous person courageous. Others in this volume (Sampson, Gergen and Gergen, most specifically) have provided illustrations of the limiting and even damaging effects of this tradition.

These critiques and other challenges are rapidly growing. Technological innovation expands our concerns beyond self contained individuals because it provides us with ready access to competing "rationalities," ways of living, belief systems, rituals and opinions (Gergen, 1991). Our daily activities, by and large, now require that we acknowledge and coordinate with diverse views. From the mundane activities in which we engage to the broad-reaching implications of organizational activities, it is difficult to ignore news from other communities (both disparate and similar). With satellite television, the Internet, Fax capabilities, teleconferencing, and ease of transportation, our exposure to diversity is exponentially growing. With this growth, our own beliefs and rituals appear parochial in their local focus and thus become more and more difficult to sustain as universally applicable.

Our attention shifts toward our increasing interdependence with different communities, organizations, and cultures. One important implication of this for organizational life is the growing

difficulty of holding on to the view that individuals should be the primary source of decision, action, and organizational life in general. With access to diverse forms of understanding the world, questions of what can be considered a competent, moral, ethical, or rational choice emerge. Our task in organizations is to coordinate our local realities with other local realities, communities, organizations, and cultures.

For example, what good is accomplished by providing leadership consulting, for example, if the community and corporate contexts remain unchanged? What is the benefit of expanding productivity if doing so exploits workers or leaves other communities impoverished in the process? Each local decision or action has broader consequences and it is difficult to ignore them. How do we engage in organizational development that is neither insignificant nor trivial in its mission? Considering organizational wisdom and courage provides an opportunity to consider what is at stake in moving from an individualist focus to one that places emphasis on the relational construction of meaning. Further, it allows us to explore how an understanding of meaning as a relational byproduct might refigure the adoption of courage and wisdom as orienting and enlivening terms for organizational life.

A relational understanding of organizational life is revitalizing. It focuses on micro-social processes -- the interchange of persons in relation -- as they embody broad networks of relations. When described in relational terms, a person's problems are not his or hers alone. Similarly, world crises are not divorced from the ways in which we raise our children, participate in our communities, and conduct our work. With a relational intelligibility in place we can shift our attention to, as Sampson (1993) says, **what transpires between people, not what is contained within them.** This shift revitalizes our sense of community, lends broad social and cultural significance to our very local actions, and provides discursive options that centralize our relational engagement. The

question at stake here concerns what different kinds of social worlds are possible if we move from an individualist tradition to a relational intelligibility?

How might a relational sensibility refigure courage and wisdom? More important, once within a relational reality, do notions of courage and wisdom help us achieve the sort of multivocal, globally engaged organization so necessary to today's world?

The dictionary identifies wisdom as rooted in the verb "to know" and courage is derived from the French word for "heart." Perhaps we should think about organizational wisdom and courage as a "knowing heart" (Srivastva, 1996). Can this image, this theme, move us beyond our focus on individuals in organizations?

The Problem with Individual Notions of Wisdom and Courage

To locate wisdom and courage within persons is to expect individuals to know, to decide, and to problem solve on the basis of their abilities to think rationally. Rationality, in this tradition, places emphasis on a knowing mind. Persons are expected to illustrate their reasoning abilities so that others might objectively determine how well matched reason is to reality. Such expectations -- whether of ourselves or others -- can be quite burdensome. Which is the right answer, the correct technique or method, the proper analysis? And what are we to say if what I think is right, correct, proper or best does not fit with what others' believe? Who will determine the truth and by what criteria? Who will win and who will lose? With these presumptions of individual rationality, the responsibility one carries into and through each social interchange is potentially enormous. And, when one part of an organization is dissatisfied with what is happening, the first move is toward evaluation, reprimand, or repair of the person responsible. Ultimately, when something fails in an organization we are encouraged, in this individualist tradition, to identify individuals as lacking in wisdom and/or courage.

But what if we locate knowledge in the heart of an organization rather than in the minds of individuals? Can a "knowing heart" generate an alternative to this individualist discourse? Can it move us toward a relational sensibility in understanding and living in organizations? A knowing heart, as opposed to a knowing mind, raises all sorts of questions. What is the heart of an organization? Who is to define the heart? Couldn't we expect that our notion of our organization's heart will vary depending on who we are in that organization which in turn depends on who we talk with and in what ways? And "knowing" from the heart....what would such "knowledge" look like? How would we identify a "knowing heart" from a passionate heart or from a cold heart -- or is there not a difference?

There are more questions raised here than ready-made answers. I am hesitant to simply do as my title suggests: "re-inscribe organizational wisdom and courage" in relational terms. I am curious to consider if we need wisdom and courage in organizations at all? Are these terms we want to re-inscribe or would we be better served to move in directions that require no re-inscription and offer, instead, new relational realities, new potentials for action, new venues for global connection; that is, new ways of talking about organizational life?

Let me attempt in this chapter to sketch briefly where I think each of these directions (i.e., the re-inscription of wisdom and courage as well as the crafting of new ways of talking about organizational life) might take us. They need not be seen, however, as separate paths as the latter can serve as a re-inscription of wisdom and courage. Let us, if you will, travel two paths in our exploration that eventually may converge into one.

Deconstructing Wisdom and Courage

Having already identified wisdom and courage within the individualist tradition, the first move toward re-inscription is to deconstruct these terms in an attempt to illuminate their relational

origins.

Drawing on a long heritage of critiques of traditional, modernist understandings of the social world, Derrida (1978) points out that terms used to describe the world (i.e., to "tell it like it is") are not simply reflections of an individual's "sound" observations of the world, but rather, language is a system unto itself. To him, words derive their meaning as they relate to other terms or words within a system. So, for example, courage is not determined by careful observation of persons who might be deemed courageous. Rather, the term courage gains its meaning from contrasting it to other terms relevant within the community. Here, we might come to have a valued meaning for courage if it is contrasted with timidity or cowardice. Within other language communities, however, timidity might well be championed over courage (e.g., it might be more admirable to appear timid when asking for a favor from a superior). Thus, the deconstructive move reminds us that our ways of talking about the world are not to stand unquestioned as objective, stable, or universally rational statements. They are, instead, descriptions that are coherent within local discourses -- that is, the discourses of situated activities of persons in relation. The following is an attempt to explore some of the "less certain" locations of wisdom and courage.

Wisdom

Wisdom, we know, refers to the quality of having or showing good judgement. Someone who is wise makes sound decisions based on knowledge. But who is to say that one's decisions or judgements are wise? Are they, in fact, wise regardless of what others claim? Can I profess my words on this page to be wise without other voices declaring them so? And beyond the affirmation of my words' or actions' wisdom, we must ask from where those words and actions come? I pose this question not in the spirit of locating the precise origins or causes of particular ways of talking or acting. I am interested in exploring within which communities, which networks of relations, a

person's behaviors gain their significance. Here the emphasis is placed on discourse -- our ways of connecting with others -- and discourse is always situated in some tradition, some set of relationships, some historical frame. Thus, to locate wisdom is not to somehow articulate unique qualities but is to draw on the conversational resources made available by virtue of relationships with others.

Does this manager, in establishing close working relations, draw on her conversations with her mentor and manager from her early career, conversations with her spouse, her children, her community groups? How are these relationships brought into the present conversation? Do not these communities provide conversational resources (i.e., ways of talking, acting, and interpreting) that, perhaps, the present situation invites but does not necessarily make obvious? What would it take to bring these resources into the dominant conversation?

We can now describe wisdom, which has been viewed popularly as an individual trait, as a relational accomplishment. A person can not be or act wise if others do not grant wisdom to that person or his/her actions. Additionally, what we take to be behavior born out of individuals' capabilities we can more generatively see as a thread of some other community, perhaps more than one. To introduce this thread into a conversation is to weave together networks of relationships and thus communities of meaning. Wisdom, refigured relationally, challenges our view of knowledge by locating knowledge within communities and within ways of talking and acting rather than within individuals.

This position raises all sorts of questions concerning our lives in organizations. Who are we selecting when we choose someone to lead a project, solve a problem, or work on some venture within an organization? Are we selecting people for their knowledge (i.e., for what they know) or are we choosing them for the communities they bring to and create within the organization? In our

search for organizational life that is marked by wisdom, how do we realize the relational origins of wisdom? How do we create environments that encourage wisdom relationally? What would such encouragement look like? These are questions that I will take up later in my discussion of relational engagement.

Courage

Organizational courage, derived from the French "cour" or "heart," suggests a central, essential, or core to an organization from which life flows. Like blood circulated by the body's heart, courage must course through an organization by alternating processes of dilation and contraction. Openings to conversations and thus to realities where multiple possibilities may be entertained are met by constraints that help shape the particular form of those conversations and realities. What others do or say, the situational and environmental demands, as well as practical demands such as time, distance, and cultural compatibility, all narrow the scope of what any one person can or should do. Thus, as we approach conversations with multiple possibilities, the need to coordinate our actions with others in situated practice necessarily limits our range of options and consequently establishes our lived realities.

In this deconstruction, as in the deconstruction of wisdom, we see the relational aspects of courage. No individual, no single idea or action, takes hold within an organization without the participation of others. The opening of multiple ideas and actions is constrained only in the way in which they converge with other ideas and actions. This metaphor of continual openings and closings that make the organization a living organization provokes an intriguing notion of courage.

Rather than see courage as a quality which allows a person to be fearless or brave (a more standard understanding of courage), our focus on the derivation of the term, itself, provides a more fluid, relational understanding. Our focus shifts to the movement of conversations throughout an

organization that give it life. Yet we must be cautious not to locate this movement as emanating from a core (as we do when we think of a heart). As I suggested earlier, how would we locate the heart of an organization? If it is interchange among members that makes an organization live, then its heart must be omnipresent.

The Relational Re-Inscription of Wisdom and Courage

If wisdom and courage can be understood as emerging from relationships, then how might these terms enliven organizational life? There are several ways. Abandoning the idea that our organizations are lead by individuals who embody courage and wisdom allows us to see our organizations as communities where coordinations of multiple logics, diverse traditions and beliefs, and a multiplicity of goals are accomplished. There are many voices that each organizational member brings to the conversation. Our task is to find ways for these discursive communities - both within and around our organizations - to be voiced.

Additionally, we can appreciate the fluidity with which organizations operate. We can restrain our desire to categorize participants and their skills and evaluate both. We can move from organizational practices that (perhaps unintentionally) generate anxiety, inadequacy, alienation, deficiencies, distance, frustration, and myopia with respect to our own or others' contributions. Instead, we can center our concerns on how participants accomplish the creation of the realities they live together - in their coordinated activities together. This concern is best managed by attending to what we do together. This generates a sense of relational responsibility (McNamee and Gergen, forthcoming) in that our attention shifts toward an exploration of the communal processes through which certain realities and beliefs are created.

The relational re-inscription of wisdom and courage displaces our reliance on correct methods or approaches to life in organizations. It also displaces our reliance on one person or one

organization to take the lead, to solve the dilemma, to chart the course for the future. It disorients us by displacing our tendency to plan, to prepare, to know in advance. Instead, it requires that we act, as Shotter (1993) says, "into the conversation." That is, we come to the interactive moment with plans, preparations and relational understandings (i.e., "knowledge") that we anticipate will be altered, discarded, and re-invented with those with whom we engage. We appreciate the uncertainty of our worlds as we seek avenues towards certainty. We appreciate our vulnerability and learn how that vulnerability positions us in the process of creating with our partners the realities that we live.

This re-inscription suggests some different ways of talking about and doing organizational life. Wisdom and courage are no longer viewed as qualities of individuals nor as qualities of organizations. I would like to suggest that it is our processes of relating in organizations that might be identified as emblems of wisdom and courage. Yet I would also like to question whether these particular terms, as imbued as they are with individualist connotations, provide any generative means for operating in the relationally engaged, global organization. Might we gain further clarification about the realities we create and the possibilities for global connection and cooperation by offering new ways of talking about organizational life?

Relationally Engaged Organizational Life

What would happen if we engaged in interested inquiry where we accepted the notion that any action must have a location within which it makes sense? Rather than confront situations attempting to find the best solution or path, we turn our attention to the various ways in which participants enter into the conversation and how these various ways open multiple possibilities for action.

The notion of relational engagement places emphasis on precisely this process. Attention is directed to the particular modes of interpretation and action by which people create their worlds, in

this case, their organizations. When we centralize the discursive ways in which we engage with others, we must begin to appreciate the idea of multiple rationalities, relationally achieved realities, and indeterminacy. What is valued, what is ethical, what is pathologized emerge out of communal interchange. Thus, to position organizational life -- and its success or failure -- as relational engagement invites us to foster a sensitivity to and respect for the varying constructions about right/wrong, good/bad, effective/ineffective, successful/unsuccessful that emerge within differing relational communities.

Each member of an organization carries a vast network of other relationships, of other communities, and thus of other ways of talking, acting, and making sense. The relationally engaged organization approaches issues, topics, projects and so forth as challenges in construction rather than as objects or problems to be solved, managed, and planned. From a relational orientation we would ask, how is it that what we are doing together here provides the opportunity for success or failure to emerge, gain viability, credibility, sustainability?

There are several implications of this orientation. First, if all actions are situated actions (i.e., born out of relational engagement with others and thus located within communities and traditions of meaning), there is no longer a notion of an ethical or professional competency that is dislocated from those communities and traditions nor from the interactive moment, itself. What we do with others gives life to entire ways of being. These processes can not be abstracted from the multiple discursive communities we inhabit.

There are no specific techniques or strategies that will ensure organizational wisdom or courage. To set out methods, techniques, or strategies would be to privilege one discursive form over others. Yet I do not want to say that there are no means by which we can evaluate, make choices, or declare one way of talking as situationally better than another. These decisions can only

be made relationally. Organizational life, like all other forms of interaction, is situated practice. Its ethics, relevance, value, and appropriateness will be judged differently depending upon how one situates the activity.

When we centralize relational engagement, we orient our understanding of organizational life differently. We begin to examine ways of talking and acting. We become curious about how these ways gain viability and how they are sustained within particular communities - how, in fact, they can be deemed wise or courageous. Our interest in judging ways of talking and acting wanes because any judgement is recognized, itself, as emerging within a particular discursive community. That is, a judgement is located within a relational reality that might be vastly different in its coherence and rationality from the present one.

Judgements, evaluations, decisions and so forth may be (and eventually must be) made. Yet, when we shift our attention to the ways in which participants are relationally engaged, we suspend passing judgement or making "final" decisions until we have made inquiries into or initiated conversation about the communities that grant each action its coherence. This approach (or "technique" as some might call it, although I prefer to use the term "stance") has two possible outcomes. First, conversations of "judgement," "evaluation," "decision making," and so forth look, sound, and are experienced differently because participants' actions have been granted a coherence in some relational network and thus have been "understood" as logical and rational within some sphere. Second, conversations that we commonly know as "judgement," "evaluation," "decision making" disappear. Judgement, evaluation, and decision making take on new meaning as members work together to achieve some form of relational judgement, evaluation and decision making. There is, in other words, a transformative dialogue born out of the different stance we take in the interactive moment. This is what Bateson (1972) calls "the difference that makes a difference."

Case Illustration

I will provide a short case illustration in an attempt to give a more vivid description of what this process might look like in practice. Recently, I was invited to work with the managerial staff of a large, privately funded mental health organization. This organization had a number of locations throughout the state, some quite distant from each other. Each site dealt with a different population, depending on its location, and consequently, employed managerial styles that were as varied as the populations served and the staff employed. Some sites were primarily residential facilities, others offered outpatient services.

In addition to the variety of locations, managerial and work styles, populations served, and missions for each site, the entire corporation was going through a "re-organization." A new CEO had come on line. After an extensive study of the organization that included focused group and individual interviews, he proposed a "flattening" of the hierarchical structure of the organization. He was attempting to create a more "participatory" organization where people were valued for their unique contributions rather than expected to perform within some pre-established standard. While this proposal pleased many of the staff, it also infuriated a handful of "powerful" managers, who until this point had been quite successful in "making" their unit work. I was invited to work with the entire group of managers to prepare them to implement the new plan for "re-organization."

As in any organization, each member saw the re-organization plan as a form of evaluation or judgement about his or her performance. To many, it was a positive evaluation because they saw themselves as "participatory" managers. Yet to a handful, the judgement was negative. It was critical of their mode of operation and of the very principles they had worked so hard to uphold. There was a great deal of jealousy, vindictiveness and hostility between the two groups.

Rather than see my job as focused on detailing how this group should implement its re-organization plan, I saw my job as facilitating a different kind of conversation among these managers. I was interested in providing a conversational arena where they could each tell their stories about work at their site in such a way that others would come to appreciate the coherence of each style and philosophy. This dialogic forum was established by imposing specific rules to which all participants agreed. I have borrowed these rules from the Public Conversations Project devised by members of the Family Institute of Cambridge (Chasen, et al, 1991). All members agreed to give each manager, in turn, time to speak, to tell their story from their own perspective, without interruption. All agreed that they would refrain from casting any negative remarks about others or about the operation of any other site. Once these rules were agreed upon, each manager was given as much time as he or she needed to tell the story of work at his or her site. Each was asked to describe how he or she, personally, understood or made sense of this mode of operation. Once this was described by each participant, a second question was asked: what was central to each specific work site -- without it, the site would not be that particular site? After all had answered that question, they were asked what was a central concern for them in the current re-organization plan and what, specifically, were their concerns about how things were operating at their own location. This is a question that I have found never generates a productive conversation unless asked as a "follow up" to the previous two questions. When participants have been given a chance to outline the coherence of their discursive communities -- of their relational networks -- they are much more comfortable discussing, in a public and potentially hostile forum, their own doubts and concerns about their community.

What happened in this consultation, as in others, is that once participants are given the chance to "tell their stories" in their own terms and articulate their most important issues, those

issues begin to "make sense" to others who are listening. While those others might not agree with their colleagues, they have access to the ways in which their colleagues approach their work. No final results or conclusions can be drawn from this sort of conversation vis a vis the organization's re-organization plan. Yet what can be said is that new conversations emerged. Conversations that had never taken place in that organization began in the process of orchestrating a different dialogic arena. Once members felt that the logic of their work sites had been given voice to their colleagues, the ensuing conversations (that may have been called "judgement," "evaluation," or "decision making") adorned a very different nature. Colleagues were realizing, some for the first time, the ways in which they complimented each other's work, filled it in, supplemented it in novel and useful ways. They began to help each other in talking through methods for more collaboration and cooperation. Transformative dialogue emerged through the simple process of giving voice to the multiple communities present in that room.

Forms of Relational Practice

Engaging in organizational life in this manner can provide the resources for bridging or negotiating different ways of talking. These resources bring us closer to the relational understanding of courage and wisdom. At the pragmatic level, this case offers a suggestion of practices that move us toward relationally engaged organizational life. These practices are general rather than specific and illuminate wisdom as a communal activity that is generatively engendered in the movement of conversations throughout and around an organization (i.e., in courage refigured relationally).

Expanding the domain of participation

We might invite "interested others" into our conversations. Those others might include funding sources, policy makers, legal officials, social communities or neighborhoods, school officials, and other professional groups. Typically, members of all these groups have some

involvement or vested interest in an organization's vitality. The very act of including their voices simultaneously expands the domain of participation as well as the domain of community and global commitment. Who are those typically "silent" others who might have something to say about an organization's effect and its success? By expanding the domain of participation, we can create powerful fora for community and global reform. By bringing these voices together, the community of involved participants might co-construct an understanding of the situation that does not combat the important concerns and tasks of others involved. However, this can only be achieved if conversations are created within a context that respects the coherence of these multiple communities and facilitates dialogue rather than debate.

How might we open the conversation to those who have a vested interest in our projects but who might not otherwise be consulted? As we extend the network of voices involved, we expand the potential for co-construction among broader communities. We can pose different questions such as, What might our organization do for this community, for this particular world problem, for this particular effort? For whom is this a problem?, What would count as a success and to whom?, In what ways, if any, have we transformed others beyond the client(s)?, Who among this extended group thinks our project was effective, transformative, successful?, Who else might have benefitted from this conversation?, What new resources (financial, emotional, practical) might be generated as a result of this conversation? The questions we ask and the conclusions we draw are coordinated within this complex network of relations. From this process of coordination, constraining and potentiating descriptions will emerge.

Expanding our Conversational Resources

Another way to invite relational engagement is to encourage ourselves to draw upon our own multiplicity. Can we ask questions, conduct observations, analyze data, and interpret "results"

from our various identities: manager, organizational member, researcher, curious person, detective, gossip, care giver, scholar, and so forth? Can we invite a multiplicity of voices by inviting others to assist us in our organizational "tasks" - or by inviting those with whom we work to think of themselves as multivocal? Could we, in other words, invite our colleagues or others we draw into our conversations to bring their "internal others" (the voices of their other, less obviously relevant, relationships) into the dialogue?

Honoring Relational Responsibility

Because of our individualist orientation to organizational life, we are quick to hold individuals responsible for decisions, actions, and outcomes of what actually can be seen as relationally accomplished activities. What if we embraced the notion of relational responsibility (McNamee and Gergen, in press)? Instead of identifying one person who will be ultimately responsible for what takes place in and to our organizations, what would happen if we accept what occurs as a joint production? What would we be doing differently? We might, for one, be asking different questions. Rather than inquire into why a project was completed in a particular manner, we might initiate inquiry into the many narratives that could be told about how that project emerged and was carried through. What stories do all participants - as well as "on-lookers" - have to tell about this process? What is central to each story and to each story teller? Where is the confusion for each of these stories, for each of these tellers? These questions, asked from a stance of curiosity rather than from the desire to "get to the bottom of things" generates an understanding that is rich with relationships.

This kind of conversation/inquiry dissolves the need to "know" with certainty and instead replenishes the sense wonder and coherence amidst diversity. Conversations like this facilitate participants in seeing that there is, in fact, coherence and "rationality" in the actions of others. Once

those actions are embedded within stories - stories that embody and construct relationships, communities, and traditions - participants are free to disagree. But the disagreement that emerges from this conversational arena is vastly different from the disagreement that emerges when we enter into conversation with certainty about what counts as right or wrong, good or bad, successful or unsuccessful. All organizational members have their stories of each, but who is to determine which one among all the competing stories is truly right, wrong, good, bad, successful, or unsuccessful?

There is a significant shift from our typical, modernist form of disagreement which is believed to be born out of objective determination. When the coherence of participants' stories has been invited into the conversation, a willingness to engage in processes of negotiation, compromise and transformation emerges.

Any attempt to bring together, in our deliberations and daily interchange, the groups that we represent and the relationships of which we are a part draws our attention to the ways in which we are relationally responsible for organizational life.

Engaging in Reflexive Critique

The practices mentioned above can be encouraged by approaching organizational life from a stance of curiosity or interested inquiry. While we have a professional responsibility to act in ways that are focused, meaningful, and ethical, we must realize that too much certainty or understanding negates the argument for a relationally engaged organization. When we are too certain about our approach, our answers, our analysis, we close out the voices of others as well as our own multiplicity. In addition, we must respect that what constitutes generative dialogue in one community might not secure the same position in another. The rhetorical force of a particular discursive argument can vary dramatically from community to community. In other words, we must be constantly asking ourselves which discursive tradition warrants these particular questions,

observations, and conclusions? Why this discourse and not another? Which community is being represented here and by virtue of its representation, which communities are being erased? This sort of reflexive critique is what relational engagement is about. Here we recognize the possibility of other discursive communities and traditions and through such recognition might grant them voice.

Dialogue as Metaphor

Finally, the relationally engaged organization I am advocating embraces the term "dialogue" both practically and metaphorically. Pragmatically, it is worth pointing out that to engage in dialogue is not necessarily to be an active part of the conversation as we generally understand that term. Here I am referring to the erroneous belief many have that to engage in dialogue is to have everyone talking. Quite often, the "voice" one chooses to contribute is the voice of non-participation. These voices should be respected just as those that are "at the table" should be. To engage in dialogue does not mean everyone participates in the same way. It means that participants engage with each other in the way they feel is appropriate - which might include lack of "physical" participation. Yet this is a very active form of participation too. There is a marked difference between being invited to join and deciding not to, as opposed to not being invited at all.

Yet, dialogue is also used as a metaphor for talking about the relationally engaged organization. As a metaphor it is contrasted to debate which does not attempt to provide participants with a forum for articulating the coherence of their realities. In debate, one only tries to convince the opponent that one's position is correct, true, just. Dialogue, in contrast, attempts to engender a conversational arena where participants become curious about the coherence and rationale of alternative views and garner a genuine respect for those coherences. This is not to imply that participants will agree with or accept another's way of talking about the situation. It is to suggest, however, that their curiosity and respect make possible significantly different

conversations. I would suggest that these different conversations are potentially transformative in that they provide the possibility for coordination among disparate communities. In using dialogue as a metaphor we move away from the goal of winning so readily invited by the debate metaphor. In place of winners and losers, dialogue offers us participants.

Some Closing Thoughts

What does this relational view of organizational life allow us to do? What happens when there is no individual freighted with the responsibility for knowing or acting? Instead, joint action is taken as the source of knowledge. A person's actions are responsive to what is going on, what is being offered in the interactive moment and simultaneously those same actions serve as invitations themselves to certain realities, coordinations, and dances with others. With this emphasis we become curious about the conversations that create the problems, the successes, and the realities lived in organizations.

We face the challenge of fostering organizational environments that invite us to focus on our re-inscribed notion of courage. That is, we must consider how to attend to the movement of conversations in and around our organizations. This is what gives life to an organization. The pulsing of realities in the making is the heart of organizational life. Similarly, we are challenged to explore wisdom, now dislocated from the interior of individuals and re-inscribed within traditions of practice, as a relational achievement. Organizational wisdom and courage, if we choose to use these terms re-inscribed relationally, sensitizes us to the possibilities for joint action. Without a relational understanding of organizational life in particular and human interchange more generally, we are burdened with the impossible task of knowing and acting correctly. Yet how could we or should we "know" or "act" correctly when there are so many different and even incommensurate communities participating? This problem is amplified as we understand the significance of the

global organization in creating possibilities for today and into the future. In our attempts to create effective global organizations, we must focus on giving voice to the multiple discourses present. Perhaps a focus on relational engagement should replace our attention to fostering organizational wisdom and courage.

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