

An Interview with Ralph Kilmann

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RV: After a writing hiatus of 5 years you've come out with a new book called **Quantum Organizations**. What inspired this work?

RK: Starting in the Seventies, I was writing a lot of articles and a book every few years. I was on a clear trajectory to continue enhancing my approach to organizational change and improvement. In the mid-Nineties I reached a plateau where I realized I was just embellishing more of the same. I recognized that I had to examine my own paradigm. I had the sense that I was missing something. So I just stopped writing for the first time in almost 30 years and began reading everything to expand my mind. There were things that I had always wanted to read but never took the trouble. I read about cosmology, the evolution of universe, the evolution of consciousness, quantum physics, relativity theory, evolutionary theory, neuroscience, anything that was different and expanding. I purposely did not write during this period.

Then I had an urge to put it all together. Some people might call it a mid-life crisis or a consolidation of my life, but there was this need to take all this knowledge and put it into a form. By nature, part of that form would be a book. I began writing very intensely, every day, morning and night. It was a labor of love. It was self-identity and self-expression. Quantum Organizations was the result.

RV: One of your theses seems to be that there is a shifting paradigm, or a need for a shift in the paradigm around organization change and around life in general. Is that correct?

RK: Yes. The basic premise is that the current view of organization is rooted in a notion of reality that is false. This comes from the whole Newtonian paradigm that objects move through the universe and bounce off one another. There's nothing about life, consciousness or people. The understanding of today's world was largely an outgrowth of the industrial revolution and the original economics.

Freud referred to himself as the Newton of the mind. I found this limiting. What expanded my horizon particularly were quantum physics and cosmology, the very small and the very large, and the evolution of consciousness. I realized that we are imbedded in so many of our current views of organization and we are not seeing reality as it is.

The basic premise that unfolded was organizations and people are an outgrowth of the same evolutionary process in the universe. To really understand people and organizations we have to have a more accurate view of the very small, the very large and everything in between. The new paradigm evolves to say if the nature of the

very small and the very large is about quantum dynamics, relativity theory and the evolution of consciousness, isn't this what we have to truly understand to work with people and organizations and to help people improve their organizations? This is really what the new paradigm is about.

If you look at our educational system, our communities and our families, you find that life is not being addressed that way. People are not learning about consciousness, the evolution of consciousness and quantum physics. Most people who are working in organizations are still carrying around a very outdated view of reality. And that's why we need to shift our paradigm.

RV: What is the nature of this shift?

RK: The first premise of the Newtonian model is that there is this inherent split between mind and matter in the universe. This follows from the initial work of Descartes as further elaborated by Newton and his mathematical principles and laws. He said basically that we should keep the mind out of the universe. We can study the universe without having to worry about studying the human mind. There is an objective reality out there and we're just going to find it.

That's a very different premise than in the new paradigm that says that there's an interplay of mind and consciousness. Mind not only is where consciousness is partially located, but mind then forms material particles and sets the universe in motion. The whole universe can be thought of as one thought, one great thought, an evolution of consciousness. None of this has any consideration in the Newtonian paradigm. Mind matters, as opposed to we can sort of forget about mind and just hire people's hands.

RV: Mind matters and consciousness is the ultimate building block for the entire universe?

RK: Absolutely. In our Newtonian organizations, initially through the industrial revolution, there were actually signs in Britain that said "Hired hands, hands for hire." Eventually we brought more of the person into the organization. We realized they were social creatures. They had needs to be accepted. They had needs for achievement and power. They were a bit more complex.

Most recently we recognized that they have a lot of knowledge and this is the knowledge worker. There isn't just the blue collar and the white collar. There's also the knowledge worker.

With the new paradigm we can say that the essence of people is their consciousness. You might ask how can a person possibly make good decisions about himself and his or her organization if they're not fully conscious? When we talk about developing our human assets, developing our people, the bottom line is to develop their consciousness. This is not something that is considered in most organizations.

RV: Consciousness development is a bottom line issue?

RK: Right. The new paradigm really highlights that there is an evolution of consciousness from light to nuclear particles to atoms to inorganic molecules to

organic molecules, plants to animals, and then to people. In evolution people became self-aware. As they became self-aware they began being able to reflect the whole evolution of the universe. We can ultimately talk about not just ego development but what the East talks about in terms of spiritual enlightenment where we eventually find ourselves returning to the source. We are the essence of everything that began. This is a different view of life and reality and ultimately of organization.

RV: One of the themes around the new paradigm has to do with mind and consciousness and it's manifestation. Another one has more to do with the notion of uncertainty in self-organization. Can you comment on that?

RK: Part of the Newtonian model is a theme of determinism, that ultimately we could have mathematical models that can explain everything. If we don't understand something we just haven't studied enough yet, but there will be a physical law that explains it all to the nth degree. Everything has a precise answer.

With the quantum view we recognize that there is not only uncertainty, but we can never know all. And to know something about one thing means you won't know something about something else. Instead of having mathematical formulas, we have probabilities and statistics. A wave, for example, is a probability fog, if you will. It's a potential for showing where different particles might appear at any time, but you can't be precise. You don't know where the electron is going to be at the next moment. You don't know what orbit it may shift out of. You have a wave, and it's going to be somewhere in that wave, but that's the best you can do. The rest is uncertainty.

The drive towards precision, certainty and knowing the right answer not only is embedded in Newtonian organizations, it's embedded in our educational system. You can look up the answer at the end of the book. The quantum and cosmological views would recognize that we will never know all in precision. It is all about probabilities and statistics. There are wave functions. There are strange attractors. We have to accept the inherent uncertainty in the universe. There is mystery; there will always be mystery. This is a different worldview.

RV: What are the implications for organizations?

RK: Well, an implication is that gaining market share, embarking on a new strategy or creating change in the organization has inherent complexity and uncertainty. It has probabilities. The way you unfold these is by getting all the particles, the people, involved. You have to allow it to unfold. You have to trust that you cannot control it. You have to set it in motion.

There can be wave equations, but statistically you'll never know exactly what is going to develop. The mind set is so different because so many times people in organizations don't feel comfortable acting because they don't know it all and they still want to control it all. They want to control people. They want to control outcome. They want to control competitors. They want to control themselves. That's fantasy.

RV: Ralph Stacy, in England, who has written quite a bit on complexity and chaos theory in relation to organizations, has formulated what I would call a process application of ideas of chaos and complexity. He suggests that flow of information

across boundaries and access to influence are critical dynamics in keeping organizations from spinning out into chaos.

RK: All over the world people are approaching the topic of life in organizations and the meaning of complexity and chaos. They are coming up with similar perspectives having to do with working across the boundaries.

Boundaries are very permeable. We have to recognize that information can flow and we don't have to feel out of control. There is an inherent order in the universe. Strange attractors bind things together, not with determination or complete precision. But there is a pattern; there is an order out of the chaos.

RV: You have this admonition in your book: "Keep this in mind: the transformation of inert object people into self motion monads mandates the establishment of effective quantum infrastructures before self-transformation of systems and processes can possibly succeed." And you suggest that if we don't honor that statement that we will fall right into the traps of why most change efforts in organizations fail. Could you elaborate on that?

RK: According to the Newtonian paradigm the universe is basically a theory of billiard balls bouncing and interacting with one another. You can see them, touch them; they're tangible. That's much like the formal systems in an organization. There has been so much effort to improve organizations by changing the immediate things you can see or touch: the strategy, the structure, and the reward systems, for example.

What I speak to is the concept of the quantum infrastructure. This involves the invisible waves that surround people in organizations. The invisible makes people uncomfortable. They don't want to think about how to talk about, manage, or grab hold of these invisibles. It's just easier to draft up a new strategy and send it out to people or restructure the organization, come out with another design, merge, acquire or just create a new incentive program. That will be the answer.

The hidden waves are categorized into three tracts. The first is the hidden cultural nuance: the rules of the game, the unwritten. The do's and don'ts like don't share information with other groups; don't take chances; don't speak openly if the boss is present; keep things to yourself; protect yourself; don't really commit or you're going to get hurt. If these kind of hidden waves exist throughout the organization, it's going to be most difficult to improve anything.

There's a lot of fear. How do you get a hold of fear? You can't touch it. You can't see it; it's invisible. Yet, if there is a lot of fear and mistrust in the organization, what does it mean to send out a new strategic plan and think that somehow people will just grab hold of it and proceed as indicated. It just doesn't work that way.

There's also a set of skills about dealing with complexity. Do people understand the nature of the world, the nature of reality, what it means to define and solve a complex problem? Here we get into another hidden wave called implicit assumption. Behind every plan, every action, there is a set of assumptions about what all stakeholders are like and what they need to do to support the plan.

Rarely do we surface these hidden assumptions to see that we are living by assumptions that may have been relevant 10-20 years ago but are absolutely false now. That's scary to look at. Again, it is not something you can see and touch directly, but it's part of these hidden quantum waves.

The third stream is what I call the team track. That has to do with group process, another hidden force. There's so much that takes place in groups: within departments, task forces, committees, projects, improvement teams. Yet there is little understanding of what makes a group effective. How do you take a group of diverse experts and have them develop synergy? What has to be going on so that the group can truly be more than the sum of its individuals?

People are more likely to report ineffective, frustrating group meetings, talking about the same issues with no resolution. Six months later we still haven't figured this thing out. Sometimes there's anger. There's bitterness, grudges that are held. There's a lot of dysfunction that goes on in groups, just as it does in families. Yet so much of organization life is dealing with other people in groups and teams. We have to find a way to understand the hidden quality and profits of the group.

In a nutshell, we have to find and look at and deal with the hidden cultural wave and the set of skills that allow people to see the world and deal with complexity, order and chaos and everything in between. They need to understand what it means to work with diverse others so that the knowledge that is inherent in each person can come forth and people can build on one another. If you don't have that quality in your organization it makes no sense to try to have a conversation and implement new strategic direction, to reorganize, to come up with new rewards systems or to try to implement T.Q.M. and reengineering. It makes no sense at all.

RV: One of the things that is really fascinating about your work is the moving from ideas about consciousness into culture and organizations through a path that you've outlined in a very interesting way. You've referred to cultural skills in teams, the first three tracks. You just referred to strategy, structure and reward systems as the next two tracks. You've alluded to the gradual process and radical process tracks. I'm not quite sure you've mentioned the learning process track...

RK: The first three deal with the hidden invisible waves in the organization. If you don't attend to them, everything else is really a waste of time. You'll be running into brick walls trying to implement new strategic directions or any kind of organization improvement. The culture, skills and team tracks make up that quantum infrastructure. We have to address that early on, otherwise all other efforts are futile.

RV: Then strategy, structure and reward systems are a different set of tracks.

RK: Right. I call them the system tracks, because they deal with formal systems. These are what you can see and touch. Organizations do need documents, whether they're on paper or electronic, because there are limitations to human memory. People need to formulate some collective sense of where we're going, how we organize to get there and what do we get for helping out (the rewards system). Those are the formal systems. If you do the first three tracks well, then you can get people really involved effectively, to dialogue, to communicate, to participate in creating the strategic document, the structural document and the reward document.

RV: The last three tracks are the gradual process, radical process, and learning process, and these are a different set?

RK: Right. Those are the process tracks. Think of the first three as the infrastructure, the next two tracks, 4 and 5, as the strategy structure, which is one track, and the reward system which is the second system track; those are dealing with the formal systems in the organization. The last three tracks, gradual process, radical process and learning process deal with the processes that take place within the structure, within the system.

RV: Your prescription for change is that by taking care of the culture, skills and team tracks, you lay a foundation that allows you to effectively mobilize your system tracks which in turn allows you to institutionalize your process tracks. Is that right?

RK: Yes. There is an inherent sequence here. It's not that you can't go back and forth and revisit earlier tracks, but there's a basic principle. There's a commandment that we first have to make sure that the infrastructure is supportive of all kinds of other discussions, developments and issues. First, we develop an infrastructure where people are able and willing to talk freely and openly, they have the skills, the culture supports it and they can have these open discussions in teams and groups, within departments, across the boundaries, wherever.

We can then start developing the formal systems: where are we headed, how we organize to get there, what are the incentives for going along, how we will divide the rewards, what is the reward based on and so forth. Once we have those systems together we can do improvement to those systems. This is continuous improvement much like T.Q.M.

Then there is radical improvement, much like re-engineering, where we also can look at how information technology impacts the organization. Lastly, the learning process track is about what knowledge has developed from all of this. How can we continue to improve faster and better each time and be very much a learning organization?

There is a sequence here. I think that is very important, because if you try to become a learning organization you have to recognize that the organization may not have the infrastructure for this. The systems are out of whack. They're not rooted in reality held by the current stakeholders, so the strategy is pointing people in the wrong direction. What does it mean to be a learning organization if it's not clear who we are and where we are headed? First things first. That's the importance of the sequence.

RV: How have you related to Ken Wilber's work in this process? I noticed towards the back of the book there's a chapter called "Critical Success Factors" in which you quote him and generate some models that reflect his thinking.

RK: There are a few people who extended a great effort and oftentimes with great success in trying to integrate a lot of knowledge that flows across the East and West, that flows across philosophy and science and all the various disciplines. Ken Wilbur is one of those who have tried to put a lot of knowledge together, particularly across East and West. In terms of understanding consciousness and the development of consciousness, Ken Wilbur has some very good ideas to offer.

I make use of a couple of his frameworks because he is trying to integrate some of the ego development of the West. He elaborates and develops stages for how egos form, from being very egocentric to socio-centric, ultimately to world-centric, where the ego can embrace the entire world, if not the universe. The Eastern world looks at spirituality and spiritual development, in which the mind transcends the person, the ego. This gives higher stages of consciousness and a higher sense that we are all of one, the unity of the universe. Individuals unfold. It involves understanding the evolution of consciousness in every person, let alone the universe.

RV: You've laid this out in terms of the interior and exterior, individual and collective as in a holarchy. When you talk about the four manifestations of spirit in the upper right hand quadrant you include the brain and behavior. What we see is both the physical manifestation and action. Is that correct?

RK: Right. Those are both observable. The brain is essential and can be studied as a brain, as an organ. It's material, if you will. And behavior is also something that is witnessed and can be looked at by others.

RV: Another concern is self-awareness, consciousness in the upper left and the brain and behavior in the upper right. What do you see as the dynamic that manages the relationship between those two quadrants?

RK: They're both individual in that we speak of the self-awareness of the person. The kind of behavior we observe in that person is as an individual entity. In the lower quadrants we recognize that there are collective dynamics going on. That's where we bring in what's going on in the organization, both what's hidden, what is interior, like the infrastructures, and what is visible and observable, which of course would be the formal systems and the processes.

I use the Wilber model and there are others. Arthur Young has done a fantastic job of integrating the evolution of consciousness. He does it in a very different way, but a lot of the messages are the same as Wilber. If we understand the four manifestations of spirit, we're going to approach organizations with greater reality.

One way of seeing that we haven't been in touch with reality is to note approaches that only look at one quadrant. We try to improve an organization by just focusing on the observable systems and processes or by focusing on the culture. Or we try to improve organizations by doing training programs to improve individuals. Each one of these is inherently limited.

When you see the four quadrants and the four signs of spirit, you can say we have to develop approaches that are rooted in reality. I chart out how eight developmental tracks fit across all four quadrants in Wilber's model, saying they do address all manifestations of spirit.

RV: A way of thinking about the relationship between upper left and upper right is the application of developmental psychology. Keegan, for example, has his notion of shifting from subject to object as a developmental path. What are the methodologies for self-management of the individual in terms of growing consciousness from having it being simply interior to manifesting it in an aligned way in the world?

RK: Adults spend most of their waking lives in organizations. Whether they are schools, hospitals, communities, business organizations or government, we spend most of our waking lives in some organizational setting. We do this not just to produce products and services. This is the environment for human growth and development.

One way that people can develop is being part of an organization that actively encourages their self-development. An organization can be enlightened enough to create infrastructure systems and processes such that individuals are drawn to look at themselves, develop themselves and to evolve. If we can create that kind of environment for individuals to grow and evolve, we will have people who are further along in terms of their self-understanding. Therefore, they can contribute more of themselves to the organization.

A popular phrase is that people are our most valued asset. Across the board organizations will say that, but what does that really mean? What is the organization doing to allow people to find their inherent essence and allow that essence to be fully expressed in the organization as creativity, innovation, involvement and commitment?

Our organizations are not allowing and enabling people to use that setting to continue growing and evolving. That cuts across the individual side of the Wilber model as well as the collective side. Organizations are really the core. That's why I've chosen to focus my life on organization as the leverage for human development in our organized life.

RV: This has some implications for thinking about leadership in organizations, What is your notion of leadership?

RK: Leadership, just to put it in context, is one of the most discussed topics in the last 100 years. There originally was a belief that if we had a great leader, all our problems would be solved. We still have that hero myth about leaders: if you find the right leader with the right traits, the right abilities, the right disposition, this will save us. I think there still is that fantasy.

Based on my understanding of the new paradigm, the issue for me is if we embrace what we know of reality through quantum physics, cosmology, neuroscience, the evolution of consciousness, and we take that all very seriously. What does that say about the notion of leadership?

I come out two ways on this. First, everyone can be a leader. There can be shared leadership and servant leadership throughout the organization. I am not perpetuating the myth that this is one person on top who gives orders and the rest are supposed to follow like a well-oiled machine. That's the Newtonian model. Leadership is more about adults' responsibility in today's world and today's quantum paradigm.

What is this person, leader if you will, doing about his or her own self-development? There seems to be a need for a special responsibility to develop oneself. I can't be a good role model. I can't impact other people effectively. I can't help other people grow. I can't be involved in creating functional and healthy systems and processes if I don't know who I am and if I haven't done my work in growing and evolving. So

there is a very inherent need for people, if we want to call them leaders, to develop themselves because they are in special situations, special roles where they can touch upon the lives of others. My question for leaders is what have you been doing about your own development, growth, spiritual enlightenment and your own sense of self. In other words, what work have you done in developing your soul and developing your spirit?

The second feature is do leaders understand the nature of systems in today's world? Do they understand infrastructures, systems and processes? Or do they have an outdated worldview of what is an organization and what is reality in today's world? It's not enough just to develop yourself, whether it's through meditation, therapy, or enlightenment. No, that is not enough! We also have to understand the context, the environment of our world. That means leaders have to know some of the things I talked about earlier: that there are these hidden quantum waves in organizations that have tremendous impact on what people see and what people do. We need to help people participate in self-designing and self-managing strategy, structure, reward systems and all the processes and improvements, if we are going to make full use of people as well as providing opportunities for people to self-develop. That's a two way street.

Organizations are for products and services. But organizations are also the setting where adults spend their lives and therefore are fertile ground for helping people to continue growing and developing, knowing their true essence and expressing their true essence in everything they do. To what extent have our leaders been trained and are aware of the complexities of organization? Are they just equipped to deal with marketing or finance or accounting? To what extent are they aware of systems, processes and infrastructure? Are they in touch with the way reality has unfolded?

RV: Jack Walsh at GE said that one of the most important things he did as a leader was to select and develop people. Is that your proposal?

RK: Well, it has to be system-wide. And what does it mean to select and develop people? What are you selecting and what are you developing? If you appreciate the quantum worldview and the evolution of consciousness, we have to select and develop people to learn more about themselves: to grow, to evolve to greater levels of consciousness and enlightenment. That's the key.

This is not just about picking people with good math and English scores. This is not just about people who have gone through MBA programs and learned the various functions of the business. This is about what kind of self-work and self-development is taking place. Are these people eager and anxious to learn more about themselves, their essence and how that is expressed on the job and in all their interactions with other people?

We have to make sure that the kind of systems, processes and infrastructures that are in place will support that, will encourage that and will enable that. Then it's a win-win. The organization can draw out all the qualities in people to come up with the best products, services, the greatest care to the community and the world. At the same time it can support the functional family to continue growth and development and understanding of one's essence, and how it is expressed to reach some form of fulfillment, enlightenment and personal need.

RV: Is there an assumption that moving to higher levels of development means that you're going to be happier?

RK: Happiness is one of those variables that as you learn more about it you change how you view it. When people have been suppressed and you allow them to participate in decisions about when they take their coffee break and you ask them then, "Are you participating in this organization?" they say, "Yes." They think their voice is being heard in things that matter.

As participation unfolds and people are actively participating in impacting strategy, structure and the rewards systems they may be frustrated because they have to work with many others. They don't always see what impact they're having. When you ask, "Are you participating?" they say, "Yes, but it could be a lot more." Of course when you compare it to choosing coffee breaks, they are on a very different stage of development and involvement.

I do think that ultimately people can attain a certain state of bliss where issues of happiness pretty much dissolve and standards sort of become irrelevant. When people have reached the state where they are at peace with themselves, and you ask them are you happy, they say, "Well, I'm just in a state of bliss. What do you mean happy?"

Sometimes in earlier stages happiness would have to do with material things or would have to do with other things that are fundamental changes. The key issue about people being happy has more to do with being fulfilled. Can I be myself? Do I have personal meaning in what I'm doing? Am I finding an outlet for who I am? Can I engage with and love other people? Can I be at peace with the world and with myself? That is where people who evolve seem to be headed.

RV: In large or medium corporations we have people who are in formal leadership roles. Sometimes we have distributed leadership. I think leadership is always distributed in one sense or another. Bales developed his model of functions of behaviors in groups. I think there's an equivalent to Bales' work in terms of leadership.

People who ask questions, who provide information, etc, those are all leadership acts. From that perspective leadership is always wide spread. In today's world of constant and rapid change, the almost chaotic pace of change around strategy, markets and technology and so forth. There may be a need for some specific kind of leadership that is more highly centralized, as well as a decentralized kind of leadership. Would you comment on that?

RK: I think what is evolving is from the old Newtonian styled organization. As I mentioned earlier, there would be this leader on top of the hierarchy and others would be followers or employees or associates, or whatever. In the new paradigm and moving toward this quantum organization, it's less clear how we use the label of leadership and leader. What leadership is becoming is a model of evolving adults. A leader is not only developing him or her self, but making sure that he is understanding the complex infrastructure systems and processes around him.

On a regular basis there are acts of leadership, where the person participates to enable other people to grow and develop and find and express their true essence. If

everyone is acting like an evolving adult, sensitive to one's self as well as to the complexity of the systems, I don't know if we're going to need the concept of leader.

The old Newtonian model is that all the knowledge, all the wisdom is on the top and the rest are really just cogs in the wheel, in the machine. I think we're still growing with that concept of leader and leadership. The future may say that that term has become irrelevant. We're trying to evolve. We're trying to encourage systems and processes to evolve. Leadership is something that is done everywhere and needs to be encouraged everywhere. It's only a question then of what different things people do and contribute to the organization. But we're not going to be thinking of who is the leader and who are the followers. That sounds very Newtonian to me.

RV: So then, what is the implication for the idea of hierarchy?

RK: Hierarchy has been used as a matter of control, controlling people, costs, and the environment. With the quantum view we recognize we can't control things anyway. We have to create forms where things can evolve into new packages, ideas and understandings. As a result, hierarchy may be replaced by a network or a network organization. There you don't think of a hierarchy as such. You think of a number of relationships among people.

There may be some hub of this network where there is more centrality or ownership of assets and where there is more face-to-face interaction. Other parts of the network may be driven more by electronic connections and arrangements, ventures and partnerships. But it's going to look very different than the old hierarchical organization. I think networks may be the key and hubs or parts of the network may have more centrality or connections with other parts of the network. But that's a very different concept than who's on top and who's on the bottom.

RV: Is leadership is going to be moving more towards what Block called stewardship.

RK: Stewardship can occur at any place in the organization. We have hierarchy still embedded in our minds where we have this box on top and there are a couple of boxes underneath and each one of those boxes has a bunch of boxes reporting to it and it cascades down. If you show that picture of the classic organization chart to most people in society they would say that looks like my organization.

I have these pictures in the book of a network that is on top of the planet Earth, and the connections around the globe. They show that hubs and parts of the network are no more than how many other parts of the network they are connected with. It's a very different worldview; it's a different paradigm.

Then we ask what is leadership? Within each of those networks there may be a form of hierarchy. I think there is shared leadership. More people rise to the occasion, depending on their wisdom and expertise. There's going to be less and less of this designated leader who has control of certain resources and other people need to get approval; that's the old world view.

RV: I could imagine some people might react to this idea with some fear: if we shift to this more network orientation there's going to be loss of control. With loss of control there will be vulnerabilities. Someone in a hierarchically organized system will

control power that would undermine our capacity to continue to thrive in a network environment.

RK: There are a lot of fears out there; there is a lot of mistrust. There are a lot of people who have not been given the opportunity and encouragement to look at themselves and to grow.

Let me give you a little picture of this to see what we're dealing with. This relates to the Buddhist notion of attachment. What are people attached to? The story concerns a conference room where there is this beautiful rectangular table. At the head of the table is a soft comfortable leather chair. Around the sides of the table are metal seats and that's where the subordinates sit. Everyone knows who's going to sit in the soft comfortable leather chair. People have been striving to get that leather chair. That's what they have been working for. That's what they are attached to. That's why they went to school. That's why they've worked so hard.

When I talk about the new network or quantum organization, they say, "I spent all my life working for that leather chair and now you're going to tell me they're going to take it away and we all have to sit in a circle. Our participation will be based on what we know, how we contribute and how we can add value to the organization? That's not why I am here. I don't know if I'm ready to detach from material symbols and objects telling me that I'm valuable and who I am and begin relying on my sense of self and how I can add value to other people's lives."

Think of what evolution has to occur in each person to detach from all the trappings that we've been socialized to focus on to define what is really important: the evolution of my own soul and spirit and how I can enhance that in other people. That's a very different world deal. The people who have the most trouble with the new model have most at stake with what they may lose, based on what they're attached to. What they're attached to is really not functional for their own development or for other people's.

RV: We need to be able to move from our immediate sphere of connection to a connection with the ecology and the universe?

RK: Yes. The question is where does that process begin? Some people have said if we can create functional families where all children would be encouraged to value themselves, accept themselves, love themselves, and to be encouraged to unfold in their own unique way--their soul, their spirit--that they would be prepared for life and they would be prepared to be a part of, contribute to and self design a healthier organization, whether it is a community or where they work. But how do you reach the 90% or more of dysfunctional families that are out there today?

Next step, what about our schools? We can't reach the families. We need to develop schools where education becomes defined as developing the self, preparing people for the future and enabling them to understand the complex systems around them. But if we continue to concentrate primarily on math and English scores and just cognitive aspects of things and we exclude the emotional and developmental sides of people because we say that's the responsibility of the family, then we keep passing the buck along.

Then in organizations we find people who come from dysfunctional families, have been part of educational systems that have only passed on a very narrow part of what it means to be fully human. They are feeling very comfortable in Newtonian organizations, but are very frustrated at the same time.

For me and this is my choice and everyone can make their choice differently, I think that if waking adults are spending most of their lives in some form of organization that allows you to reach tens, hundreds, thousands of people, and if organizations can recognize that by allowing and encouraging people to develop themselves and their understanding of complex systems, then that's the point where we can begin.

These people will come back home and relate to their spouses and their kids and their extended family in a very different way. When they participate in school meetings with teachers and administrators, they begin talking about what we need to change in educational systems to help the process along. All of the burden is not on the organization, because the sooner we reach people to help develop and encourage them to learn and grow in the ways of soul and spirit and understanding complex systems, the sooner we develop a more functional society. But where do you begin? It's got to begin somewhere. I've chosen to begin with the formal organization.

RV: Are we going off on some kind of Utopian path?

RK: I'm not sure what is meant by Utopia. There may be a sense of fantasy, or this is unrealistic, or we're searching for a paradise that can't be. For me, we're asking what is the essence of reality, what is the place and the evolution of people in that reality? Can we zero in on the essence of the unfolding of the universe and help move it along? While people are here on this planet in their particular vehicles and their souls struggle through life in their search for the spirit, we can facilitate that process so more people can experience that and at the same time contribute to the lives of others. That requires a lot of hard work. That requires a lot of pain and struggle. That requires the agony of really looking at yourself and seeing what you have to deal with and to have the strength to face the mirror, to face yourself, and go through your own pains and struggles and develop. That's hard work. I don't know about Utopia, but it's not all bliss. It takes a lot to get there.

RV: It's hard work--and getting older helps?

RK: I'll tell you about the most beautiful thing I have seen. I spent time going to various retreats about soul and spirit; I don't just read books, Mine has been an exploration about my self, various forms of therapy, group encounter and workshops that are meant to ask important questions and provide forums for answering. The beauty is that in these workshops you often can find people in their mid to late seventies. What a joy to see that these people have not given up; they have not stopped. They're continuing, eager and excited about opening up new avenues.

The other end of the spectrum is some people in their late teens and you say, "My goodness, is that not beautiful to see someone at that age already looking at and exploring these issues? How wonderful!" There is joy in the people that keep at it, no matter what. There is joy in seeing that some can start so much earlier. You don't have to be old before you start asking these questions.

RV: Recognizing that each of us have our own path, has there been a particular type of work that has been most useful and powerful for you?

RK: I couldn't single out any one thing. I've always exposed myself to many different ideas and many different methods. I have been on my own journey. There are times I wish I had reached certain understandings and discoveries of myself much earlier in life, because that would have changed my outlook and all kinds of decisions that I've made, but that was not my path.

I think you have to hold sacred and honor what is your particular journey, the "soulfulness" of your life here. Then when you are engaging with a spiritual quest, whenever that happens, whatever your journey is, you are able to experience the entity of the all and what you have in common with the entire universe. There is a unique path for everyone. Some people don't like writings about developmental stages because that makes things very rigid as a certain step-by-step process you're supposed to do as you climb the ladder. If you really appreciate soul you say that there is no real hierarchy, there is no real ladder, there are no real stages of development. We all muck around in the jungle of life and we honor and hold sacred what our path is. We celebrate as we are more aware of ourselves and ultimately can see the unity in everything.