



BE NEW

Interview for *Interesting Life* magazine.

By Nat Foamley

We have been limiting ourselves to the concept of Homo Sapiens (Wise, Rational Man) for such a long time, that only now, having reached a breaking point, we are beginning to realize, how feeble our understanding of wisdom and rationality has been.

- from *Another Humanity. Dolphins*, a book by Alexander and Nicole Gratovsky

From the author:

It is when currents of separate events meet at a certain point that something happens, occurs. In my case, first it was the discovery of two books with unusual titles. After you read *The Generator of possibilities* and *The Dolphin Principle* you walk dizzy for a few days – under the effect of new discoveries in yourself and people around. After a while this unusual way of thinking begins to feel more habitual, although it's still feeble, instable, and vulnerable. The thrilling sensation stays in your head, and becomes only stronger.

Then in a little while later here I am, talking to the authors of these books, leaders of international round-the-world expedition *The 30th Parallel*, founders of the Dolphin Embassy, organizers of the Dolphinity World Festival, Alexander and Nicole Gratovsky.

What are the limits of human possibilities? Where does one draw inspiration from? How to find answers to most complex questions? How to venture beyond the boundaries of the usual and expected?

It is also about the journey towards your own self, radically new experiences and sensations altering your habitual mind set.

All this – just as it is written above - I hastily muttered at the start of our conversation.
And things got rolling...

Nicole Gratovsky: Does “walking dizzy” mean that your feet tangle, your tongue’s getting thick and you cannot focus your eyes? We hoped for quite an opposite result. It looks like our books have failed.

Alexander Gratovsky: Alas! See, you have just said that after reading them unordinary thinking becomes a habit. This is terrible, because something either unordinary, or a habit. The trick is that every situation, everything in this world, happens for the first time. It has never happened before. We are not looking for similarities, nor do we drag moldy experiences into “now”, only to make it similar to what has long passed. We eat, work, love, talk, pray habitually. Automatically. And that is why none of this works.

NG: You also said that our conversation is about finding answers to the most complicated questions. But, frankly, we are not particularly concerned about finding answers. Especially, if the questions are “complicated”.

As legend has it, once a man of inquisitive mind came to a zen monk, and asked what was the main hang-up for people. “What do you think yourself?”, the monk asked. “It’s that they can’t find answers to the most important questions”, the Inquisitive Mind said. “As to me, it is that they cannot find the most important questions.”

— Important question is precisely what I have for you. For instance: would you say that you are the authors of your own lives? And surely it was not always that way – what gave you the impulse to change your attitude to life? How did it happen?

AG: Every person is the author of his or her own life, whether they are ready to acknowledge this or not. In fact, that’s what makes all the difference. Someone has observed that responsibility is not at all frightening, it’s simply about putting your author’s signature under your own life. You may sign it or not, it’s up to you, but nothing will change the fact that it’s your life and nobody else’s.

NG: There was no impulse to change our attitude to life, as such. Somehow this cup passed from us. It is pretty much the same now as it has ever been since childhood. Contrary to this, many people, or so it seems, change their attitudes on the verge of adulthood, for some reason. What makes them do it is anybody’s guess. You mentioned “a journey towards your own self”. The problem is that for some reason people are accustomed to travelling away from their own selves for a good half of their lives, and then desperately struggle to get back. We both had it easier, somehow: as kids, we loved to play. We used to be immersed in the process entirely, as any child at play they find interesting. It can never be forced upon them,

it can only be spontaneous, voluntary and engaging – otherwise the play stops immediately. And it's always about playing in the situation of uncertainty, for if the outcome is known in advance, the play is no fun. The magic and excitement wither away. That's why it is always something new, always something creative. So, we have moved into a little different age category, and so have the games we play, but all the more so there is no reason to give up on the playful attitude to life.

— What meaning do you give to the phrase “interesting life”? What makes your life interesting?

AG: We don't give anything, we are quite happy with what is already given. “Interesting” comes from Latin *inter esse* — «to be in, inside». When you are outside as an observer, viewer, it is a show, entertainment, information at best, but not your own life. You can sit in the audience, feel with the protagonists, eat popcorn, text message, and doze off occasionally. But it is not you who is playing on the stage, it is not happening to you, the main part is not yours. The time that passes by is supposedly yours, but it is not you who fills it – with the soldier asleep the service still goes on. Of course, it's a lot less hassle, no wonder many people prefer it that way. But “interesting” is when you write your own part, sketch out its outlines, and play it. Unless you create and perform it yourself, fill it with yourself, fulfill it – nobody else will. By definition, only you can be “in” your part. “Interesting” is when, to paraphrase the title of that thriller, the mission is no longer impossible.

NG: For us “interesting” is synonymous to “present”. Present as referring both to a current moment and to something real, existent, as well as a gift. And all this is about happiness, ultimately. Corporate trainers link happiness to complicity, but it is really about being complete and present when things are happening, now. This is attested in many languages, by the way, e.g. *bonheur* — *bonne heure* in French, *sCHAStye* (happiness) – *seiCHAS* (now) in Russian, etc. If you are present, here and now – you've hit the jackpot! “What makes your life interesting?” – Not “what”, but “who”. You do! There's no one else around at the moment!

— **Have you ever in your life been in situations when you faced the choice: to live like everybody else, or to follow your own path?**

AG: All the time. Most of them were very tempting, very comfy and cozy. One such offer, that promised mountains of gold in the land of milk and honey, set us thinking for a whole day and night how to reject it in the nicest possible way. It is as simple as that really: if you feel what you think, and think what you say, whatever you do will work out all by itself. With these three dimensions (feelings, thoughts and words) in accord you will always be

able to get things going, without twisting and guessing. If, however, you feel one thing, think another, and say something altogether different, choosing a course of action will be so troubling, that sooner or later you will find a boss to do it for you, while you will merely carry out his plans. It will be a very tranquil life. But to avoid tearing yourself apart, you will have to unlearn how to feel, as the least.

NG: As to following your own path and how to do it, the Eastern Orthodox elders used to say: “put your mind into your heart”. Cerebral ramblings on the choice of a life path are mostly about bypassing the main road. The real thing resembles the flow of water. Imagine two droplets of water stopping halfway and starting to discuss which course is more “in keeping with the times”: to the right or left. There’s no room for a dispute, no real choice, the right course is the one that is only possible for the droplets at that moment. It is never resolved by intellectual means, and is generally beyond reflection. It is woven into the shared physics of the droplet and the territory.

AG: How at all can you live “like everybody else”? No doubt, we all are similar enough, and it would be hard to tell us apart if looking down from the height of a few hundred feet, but still everyone has – as a reminder – unique fingerprints and retina.

AG: A friend of ours once told us how one day he got stuck in a traffic jam in the middle of a city. As time went by, he got increasingly irritable, exhausted, and finally felt really miserable about himself and his own life. He was thinking: “Good Lord, of what use is a man like me for you? I am no genius, no good-looker, no great leader. I have no particular talents, do trivial things, like sitting in traffic jams. Of what use am I, Dear God?» Thus he unburdened his heart, then gave up, and turned on the radio. What he heard playing was an unpretentious love song – exactly at these words: “I simply enjoy seeing the world from your window”. And then it hit him.

NG: Imagine seven billion windows. Each offers a view onto a world of its own. What we look at is either interesting, or not. It’s either something real, or an endless reality show. If a great number of screens display the same hopeless content, a little sooner or a little later they will be switched off. But if what is seen through such a window is breathtaking, if something genuine and sincere is taking place, something it was meant and equipped for, with all its capillaries and retinas, then it’s great! Therefore let’s get down to cleaning our window glasses. :-)

— You have created the Ultimate Experience Club and the Dolphin Embassy. The very names compel an unprepared, even a fairly intelligent person to ask questions: what is it all about and what is it these organizations do?

AG: The thing is, we do not really believe that anybody can be talked into doing something entirely new to them. Some verbs just don't make sense in the imperative. It is rather absurd to tell someone: "Love!" Only an immediate experience can have a transformative effect. Love is not a concept, in relation to it lecturing is useless. While as extreme, peak experience are concerned, you can just...make them happen. You can build them. And then not only a particular point, an angle of view, but the entire way of looking at things can be altered.

NG: Some say that when Columbus' ships were approaching the New World they went unnoticed from the land, because the Indians simply did not have any image of ships in their minds. The ships sailed undisguised yet remained invisible. Just like in that Stanford experiment with kittens who had been raised in a space without any vertical lines. Then they were transferred to a normal space, and they kept bumping into chair legs, because the legs did not fit into the kittens' picture of the world.

AG: When any of us receives a piece of new information, we check it against the information that we already have. Like in a bookstore: I will put new books on the shelf that already has information on the same topic. It is about mind set, as you said in the beginning, about setting your mind in a certain way. Often the brain doesn't understand to which "section" to assign a certain information – it does not have a suitable shelf where to put it. Hence such information is often considered wrong and is thrown away. But sometimes we happen to deal with information in unusual way. It is when an individual suddenly becomes aware that the entire warehouse of books in his possession is arranged wrongly. Nothing new can be added to it: items fit to each other so tightly, that nothing new can possibly slip between them. Everything is arranged in squares there, and as we know, it is a very cumbersome thing to do to drive round pegs into square slots. When suddenly your mind awakes to this simple fact, it knocks the bottom out of the barrel. It is very traumatic, since you are at once forced to get rid of a lot of rubbish, familiar and dear to your heart. But the pain is short lived – the sensation of enormous liberation and transparency heals it. The gain is massive: not only the warehouse is rearranged, but also the wall separating it from reality is suddenly completely removed. The word for this is "metanoia". Or, simply, transformation – that brings change from within, unlike information that comes from outside. So, this was about the Club.

— And what about the Dolphin Embassy?

NG: It's an embassy like any other. Representing one nation's life on another's territory.

AG: People spend horrendous amounts of money on the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, and fail to notice that under their very nose, there is an intelligent life native to Earth, albeit functioning very differently from our own. Dolphins are 50 million years old, humans only one million. They are fifty times older, their brains are more developed, their

abilities dash most preconceptions about conventional physic. Yet we continue to profiteer on them, make them jump and catch balls in dolphinariums. They live in perfect harmony with the environment, which, by the way, covers 80 percent of the Planet's surface, and we ourselves consist of it to roughly the same proportion. They know how to be mindful permanently, in every action – they never sleep, their every breath is made consciously. Despite moments of sadness, irritability, weariness, they are joyful. These are the three basic things that are bound to completely transform our lives, if we learn them: to be harmony with the world; to be mindful permanently; to be all about joy. We have organized nearly thirty expeditions, visiting dolphins, living with them for long periods of time in the open sea, and we have established the Dolphin Embassy accredited with the Humankind. It functions for humans and sees its purpose in helping this way of looking at the world and living in it to prevail in people's lives. We call it Dolphinity.

— You are now busy with preparations for the Dolphinity World Festival. What made you go for such a large- scale event? Is it mostly a desire to share you worldview with others, or, on the contrary, to pick up something new? Do you believe that the Festival can help to increase people's awareness? Or is it prompted by a want to gather likeminded individuals around you?

NG: Awareness levels are for trade unions and personal development trainings to raise. Indeed, the humanity has built such a way of life that there is a dead end down the road. Relationships with the world that are based on consumerism and disconnectedness are ALREADY over, we've arrived to a standstill. The imminent leap in to the new is a function of change in the way of thinking. Not a gradual change, but an instant one. Avalanche-like. The human race is an integral organism. As in any other living organism no individual cell can live without the whole. This doesn't mean, however, that every single cell far removed from the brain, even though it still participates in many complex, vitally important processes, must necessarily possess some individual consciousness. This is to say that we have no intention to "implant" the awareness about the aforementioned facts in each and every person. But we are looking forward to gathering, perhaps, a limited amount of people who are ALREADY aware that the obsolete system no longer holds any solutions.

AG: Nowadays millions of people living, say, in a huge city are confused about their real place in it, and hence behave in discord even with their own selves, not to mention the interaction with others. All their efforts are, in fact, mutually destructive. In the meantime, when a number of people gather at the same time and the same place, and their efforts are coherent, the result exceeds the arithmetic sum of scattered individual efforts. In physics this phenomenon is called "interference" – a colossal increase in the strength of a wave. Resonance. So, we want to see what happens if about a hundred likeminded people from different countries gather in one place, in the presence of dolphins and whales.

NG: In essence, it's the first interspecies festival, because whales and dolphins are not some objects, they are makers of what will be happening, without them the event would be incomplete, to say the least.

— What three pieces of advice could you give to the readers that would make their lives more fulfilling, colorful and mindful?

NG: One is enshrined in the slogan of the Festival: follow your love. If you do what you love, there will be love in what you do, and it will be alive. Otherwise why bother – you'll only get very tired, ill, and nothing vivid or joyful will ever come out of it. The second advice is: be attentive. Only the things to which you direct your attention get a chance to develop. Things you focus on come in sharp view. The rest is vague, blurred and indistinctive. Where to direct your attention is only for you to choose.

AG: And the third advice: be new. Only then you are alive. The world is incomplete because it is not completed. It is being created now, as we speak... And the boundary between the things that have already happened and still are only possible, runs through you.