

Communication and Communion

An introduction to the Art of Dialogue

CONTENTS		Page
Why Dialogue	Bohm, Factor & Garrett	2
Perspectives	J Krishnamurti	3
Wholeness, Communion, Communication	Donald Ingram Smith	4
The Future	Dalai Lama	5
Guidelines	Alan Mann	5
Unfolding Virtue	Terry O'Brien	5
Meeting of Minds	Stuart Holroyd	7
Educating and being educated	J Krishnamurti & R Webber	8

**Prepared by Terry O'Brien for the Krishnamurti Katoomba Weekend
February 2001**

Why Dialogue?

Dialogue is concerned with providing a space within which such attention can be given. It allows a display of thought and meaning that makes possible a kind of collective proprioception or immediate mirroring back of both the content of thought and the less apparent, dynamic structures that govern it. In Dialogue this can be experienced both individually and collectively. Each listener is able to reflect back to each speaker, and to the rest of the group, a view of some of the assumptions and unspoken implications of what is being expressed along with that which is being avoided.

It creates the opportunity for each participant to examine the preconceptions, prejudices and the characteristic patterns that lie behind his or her thoughts, opinions, beliefs and feelings, along with the roles he or she tends habitually to play. And it offers an opportunity to share these insights.

The word "dialogue" derives from two roots: "dia" which means "through" and "logos" which means "the word", or more particularly, "the meaning of the word." The image it gives is of a river of meaning flowing around and through the participants. Any number of people can engage in Dialogue – one can even have a Dialogue with oneself - but the sort of Dialogue that we are suggesting involves a group of between twenty and forty people seated in a circle talking together.

Some notion of the significance of such a Dialogue can be found in reports of hunter-gather bands of about this size, who, when they met to talk together, had no apparent agenda nor any predetermined purpose. Nevertheless, such gatherings seemed to provide and reinforce a kind of cohesive bond or fellowship that allowed its participants to know what was required of them without the need for instruction or much further verbal interchange. In other words, what might be called a coherent culture of shared meaning emerged within the group. It is possible that this coherence existed in the past for human communities before technology began to mediate our experience of the living world.

Dr. Patrick de Mare, a psychiatrist working in London, has conducted pioneering work along similar lines under modern conditions. He set up groups of about the same size, the purpose of which he described in terms of "sociotherapy". His view is that the primary cause of the deep and pervasive sickness in our society can be found at the socio-cultural level and that such groups can serve as micro-cultures from which the source of the infirmity of our large civilization can be exposed.

Our experience has led us to extend this notion of Dialogue by emphasizing and giving special attention to the fundamental role of the activity of thought in the origination and maintenance of this condition.

As a microcosm of the large culture, Dialogue allows a wide spectrum of possible relationships to be revealed. It can disclose the impact of society on the individual and the individual's impact on society. It can display how power is assumed or given away and how pervasive are the generally unnoticed rules of the system that constitutes our culture. But it is most deeply concerned with understanding the dynamics of how thought conceives such connections.

It is not concerned with deliberately trying to alter or change behavior nor to get the participants to move toward a predetermined goal. Any such attempt would distort and obscure the processes that the Dialogue has set out to explore. Nevertheless, changes do occur because observed thought behaves differently from unobserved thought. Dialogue can thus become an opportunity for thought and feeling to play freely in a continuously engaging movement. Topics of a specific or personal nature will become entwined with areas of deeper or more general meaning. Any subject can be included and no content is excluded. Such an activity is very rare in our culture.

Purpose and meaning

Usually people gather either to accomplish a task or to be entertained, both of which can be categorized as predetermined purposes. But by its very nature Dialogue is not consistent with any such purposes beyond the interest of its participants in the unfoldment and revelation of the deeper collective meanings that may be revealed. These may on occasion be entertaining, enlightening, lead to new insights or address existing problems. But surprisingly, in its early stages, the dialogue will often lead to the experience of frustration.

A group of people invited to give their time and serious attention to a task that has no apparent goal and is not being led in any detectable direction may quickly find itself experiencing a great deal of anxiety or annoyance. This can lead to the desire on the part of some, either to break up the group or to attempt to take control and give it a direction.

Previously unacknowledged purposes will reveal themselves. Strong feelings will be exposed, along with the thoughts that underlie them. Fixed positions may be taken and polarization will often result. This is all part of the process. It is what sustains the Dialogue and keeps it constantly extending creatively into new domains.

In an assembly of between twenty and forty people, extremes of frustration, anger, conflict or other difficulties may occur, but in a group of this size such problems can be contained with relative ease. In fact, they can become the central focus of the exploration in what might be understood as a kind of "meta-dialogue", aimed at clarifying the process of Dialogue itself.

As sensitivity and experience increase, a perception of shared meaning emerges in which people find that they are neither opposing one another, nor are they simply interacting. Increasing trust between members of the group - and trust in the process itself - leads to the expression of the sorts of thoughts and feelings that are usually kept hidden. There is no imposed consensus, nor is there any attempt to avoid conflict. No single individual or sub-group is able to achieve dominance because every single subject, including domination and submission, is always available to be considered.

Participants find that they are involved in an ever changing and developing pool of common meaning. A shared content of consciousness emerges which allows a level of creativity and insight that is not generally available to individuals or to groups that interact in more familiar ways. This reveals an aspect of Dialogue that Patrick de Mare has called *koinonia*, a word meaning "impersonal fellowship", which was originally used to describe the early form of Athenian democracy in which all the free men of the city gathered to govern themselves.

As this fellowship is experience it begins to take precedence over the more overt content of the conversation (sic). It is an important stage in the Dialogue, a moment of increased coherence, where the group is able to move beyond its perceived blocks or limitations and into new territory, But it is also a point at which a group may begin to relax and bask in the "high" that accompanies the experience. This is the point that sometimes causes confusion between Dialogue and some forms of psychotherapy. Participants may want to hold the group together in order to preserve the pleasurable feeling of security and belonging that accompanies the state. This is similar to that sense of community often reached in therapy groups or in team building workshops where it is taken to be the evidence of the success of the method used. Beyond such a point, however, lie even more significant and subtle realms of creativity, intelligence and understanding that can be approached only by persisting in the process of inquiry and risking re-entry into areas of potentially chaotic or frustrating uncertainty.

Extract from - Dialogue: A Proposal (Bohm, Factor & Garret) The complete paper is available at:
<http://world.std.com/~lo/bohm/0000.html>

.....In a smile in tears

I want to tell you something, perhaps the way to find out what is reality – not the way as a system but how to set about it. And if you can find this yourself there will not be one speaker, there will be all of us talking, all of us expressing that reality in our lives where we are... Truth cannot be accumulated. What is accumulated is always being destroyed; it withers away. Truth can never wither because it can only be found from moment to moment in every thought, in every relationship, in every word, in every gesture, in a smile, in tears. And if you and I can find that and live it - the very living is the finding of it - then we shall not become propagandists; we shall be creative human beings - not perfect human beings, which is vastly different. And that, I think, is why I am talking, and perhaps that is why you are here listening.

J Krishnamurti

Relationship is a Mirror

Surely, only in relationship the process of what I am unfolds, does it not? Relationship is a mirror in which I see myself as I am but as most of us do not like what we are, we begin to discipline, either positively or negatively, what we perceive in the mirror of relationship. That is, I discover something in relationship in the action of relationship and I do not like it. So, I begin to modify what I do not like, what I perceive as being unpleasant. I want to change it - which means I already have a pattern of what I should be. The moment there is a pattern of what I should be, there is no comprehension of what I am. The moment I have a picture of what I want to be, or what I should be, or what I ought not to be - a standard according to which I want to change myself - then surely there is no comprehension of what I am at the moment of relationship.

I think it is really important to understand this, for I think this is where most of us go astray We do not want to know what we actually are at a given moment in relationship. If we are concerned merely with self-improvement, there is no comprehension of ourselves, of ' what is' .

J Krishnamurti

DIALOGUE - COMMUNICATION, COMMUNION, WHOLENESS

One of the great human cries is - "*Understand me. Please Understand me!*"

Then what follows is why can't you hear what I so urgently want to tell you?" - or - "Isn't there anyone who will listen?"- "Hear my cry! Hear not only my cry for help but for you to hear my insight, my story, my song." "Listen Please!"

Such anguish is present in us all. The need to be loved, to be accepted as I am, and to be heard. Love me, hear me, whether I have anything to give, or nothing worth giving or worth receiving. And probably without realizing that until I can listen to you in the very way I desire that you listen to me - openly, generously, freely, following me wherever I go - that until I can so listen and hear, is it possible for another person to be ready and able and willing to receive what I am expressing.

Can I get the attention I cannot give? Can I receive from you what I do not give?

Why do I expect someone to understand me when I am incapable of understanding them? Until I can and do give what I so desire to receive - your full attention and comprehension - it is rather foolish of me to expect open listening from you.

And so we have come to the essence of dialogue - communication and communion.

I must not only listen to others and to what is coming in through the senses - ears, eyes, and nose - but listen to what is happening within me as I speak: To what I am saying, my gestures, intensity, certainty, hesitancy, attitude, my intention to impress you, perhaps to justify my proposition.

In other words, until I am willing and able to be a friendly, understanding listener, what chance is there of finding even one person to hear and understand what I have to say?

Though we talk of sharing, what actually do we share besides information? What about openness, clarity, friendliness - without these qualities can there be any mutual understanding of **anything**?

Donald Ingram Smith

"The past was based on emotion and confrontation, and the future has to lead to Dialogue."

Dalai Lama 1996

Dialogue Guidelines

(as used at Greville Street meetings)

An enquiry not a debate

Questioning not asserting

Allow speaker to finish

Question assumptions

Suspend point of view

Priority of ear over mouth

Group interest before self-interest

Process before content or result

Not-knowing

Unfolding Virtue - a description of the art of dialogue

“Virtue is not the becoming of what is not; virtue is the understanding of what is and therefore the freedom from what is.”

J Krishnamurti - First & Last Freedom 1954 pg. 45

Dialogue is essentially about choiceless self-awareness in communion with others. It includes not just what is said or who is speaking, but more specifically our personal inner reactions and thoughts as we attempt to listen openly to the diverse beliefs, ideas, perspectives, experiences of others, insights and perceptions.

Generally our dialogue is purposeless. It has no ‘set’ topic, no agenda, and therefore no expectations. We are not meeting to debate or persuade, but simply to enquire together, to exchange views, and to understand ourselves better.

No-one person’s point of view has to be agreed on as true or best - it really doesn’t matter who may be right, wrong, close to the mark or way off beat.

A key to self-awareness is to be mindful of the needs of others - to monitor our own input so as not to interrupt, monopolize the time, or attempt to dominate the conversation with intellectual cleverness. It is not a game of ‘one-upmanship’ - at its finest it is an honest expression of the heart.

Dialogue is more about listening than talking- listening especially to ourselves to detect our various assumptions and prejudices as they arise in our thoughts as conditioned reactions. How we then respond will depend on the vitality of our attention.

As we converse together the major key is ‘open’ listening which is more impartial and less intentional than ‘active’ listening. When we listen with effort (or bias) - to analyze, counsel, criticize or argue - we are active listening. ‘If’ or ‘when’ we do listen (ordinarily) we usually have a motive with the emphasis on someone else - their behaviour patterns, beliefs, ideas, etc. When in dialogue though, we simply aim to hear- along with our resistance to what is being heard. Thus the emphasis is more on

'self' and therefore self-awareness. As a consequence, fundamental change (transformation) is a more potent possibility.

As we respect open listening as the essential cohesion feature of the communication we may find that moments of silence become frequent and are a pleasant opportunity for quiet reflection or calm stillness.

Try to be mindful of not preparing something to say while another is speaking - this may help overcome a common tendency to jump in as soon as someone stops talking. If you do, then perhaps look closely at your motive. Genuine listening tends to dissolve preparation, resulting in clarity. Being moved to speak, from a place of depth and substance within, may then result.

Especially watch to see that a speaker has actually finished, as often they pause mid-speech to collect their thoughts. The more space we allow one another, the more coherent can be the flow of conversation and the less frantic the proceedings- a spirit of generosity and consideration is called for.

Try to build on an enquiry from what someone has been saying rather than dismiss it in favour of changing the subject (unless you feel that there is a real need for change). It doesn't serve us to hang on or be attached to a preferred subject. It only hinders spontaneity and therefore creativity.

The more the conversation leans toward enquiry and exploration instead of asserting and defending opinions, the greater chance we may have of gaining insights that can shed new light on a subject at hand. When in dialogue we are 'here and now', which is the only time and place at which truth can happen and thus be realized.

Whenever we challenge someone's perspective we are implying that our own is superior. Perhaps ask first - 'what is my underlying motive for this challenge? Am I challenging to clarify a point or am I trying to dominate another?' When we challenge another, we are probably challenging our own integrity.

Discussion is very necessary in our striving to communicate together. Its nature, however, is fragmentary and discursive. Dialogue is distinct from discussion as the whole from the part. The 'whole' can see the 'part', but the 'part' cannot see the 'whole'. Seeing (truth) is the humble objective of good dialogue.

An attitude of humility and curiosity in the face of what we 'don't' know may open us up to new perspectives on what we 'do' know (or think we know). We need to be honest about our limitations and uncertainties, especially to ourselves.

When a dialogue is truly creative in its enquiry, originality can unfold and 'shared meaning' - communion of understanding and fellowship, come into being. This is the true function of Dialogue as proposed by David Bohm.

Dialogue points to a communion of awareness in which the illusion of separation is dispelled and unity is realized. As we engage in this process we share a brief but intense experience of life as authentic relationship - a living, flowering, loving thing, free of want, open to change.

Dialogue is a difficult process. For our present culture it is a very different way of communicating, at times frustrating. The frustration itself tests the strength of our patience, our tolerance, our generosity, and the sincerity of our compassion. For me, freedom and virtue go hand in hand. In the unfolding of Dialogue, I believe, we unfold virtue. And virtue is the fruit of freedom.

A personal view on the Dialogue process Terry O'Brien

Meeting of Minds, Insight and bringing light.

Dr David Bohm was a distinguished theoretical physicist who held professorships at universities in the United States, England and Israel. He was an author of several textbooks on quantum physics. He started having dialogues with Krishnamurti in the early 1970s, bringing to them a mind aware of both the demands and the limitations of scientific reasoning. Bohm was aware also, as a quantum physicist, of the ambiguities, indeterminacies and seemingly unfathomable mysteries which dispose the mind that seeks to comprehend the ultimate secrets of physical reality towards a view which encompasses mental and spiritual factors as inalienable components of that reality. Bohm's own book, *'Wholeness and the Implicate Order'* is in many respects a development and extension of the Krishnamurti philosophy within the context of scientific theory. It is not a matter of influence, however, but of two minds of very different backgrounds and complexions converging with and cross-fertilizing each other.

It is natural that Krishnamurti, with his aversion to being regarded as an authority or guru, should have preferred to engage in dialogue rather than address an audience. Indeed, when he was talking to a large audience he often tried to create the atmosphere of an intimate dialogue, saying for instance: As a matter of fact there is only you and I talking together..., sitting on the banks of a river, on a bench, talking over this thing.' Good dialogue is a living process in which meaning emerges from the flow and exchange of ideas. It is a process of inquiry and clarification, of 'finding out'. Through interaction, meanings emerge that would otherwise have remained unexpressed. Good dialogue is not debate, not intellectual sparring, it is a meeting of minds, endowed with experience and information but divested of bias, concerned to disclose truth and meaning through their interaction.

This is what happens in the Krishnamurti-Bohm dialogues. The thirteen dialogues published in the volume *"The Ending of Time"* took place between April and September 1980. They range widely and constitute a quite comprehensive summing up of the teaching and, furthermore, developments and explications of Krishnamurti's thought emerge in them that are not so clearly expressed in any other context. What we have in these dialogues is an ongoing thought process in which two minds participate, exploring a familiar territory of discourse in full awareness of the limitations of the method of exploration, which nevertheless yields insights and meanings that would otherwise not be disclosed.

The term 'insight', in fact, is a central one in the dialogues, where it is invested with a meaning more akin to 'an illumination' than an 'aperçu.' Insight, Krishnamurti says, is generated by intelligence, as distinct from thought which generates knowledge. It is a function not of the brain, but of the Mind - the capital 'M' signifying the universal as distinct from the particular. Insight is endowed with energy. It may come 'in a flash' but it is not ephemeral like a lightning flash. It is possessed of an energy that sustains itself, and furthermore that can act upon the physical structure of the brain to effect a radical change in it. Free of the energy-draining activities of thought, insight is the only thing that can galvanise change in the individual and the world. But it is not something that anyone can give us, or that we can get for ourselves by any amount or kind of effort. To whoever has it, it seems a perfectly natural thing, but he may be perplexed to find few, if any, others so endowed: there is nothing much he can do to help except 'bring light'.

Extract from "Krishnamurti - the Man, the Mystery and the Message by Stuart Holroyd"

Open dialogue - Educating and being educated. 3rd March, 1983, Ojai California

Renee Weber: My general question has to do with what one might call a sense of all or nothing in what you say. Take for example, teaching and education. One of the things you seem to say is

that a teacher who isn't completely free from fear, sorrow and all the human problems, cannot really be a genuine teacher That leaves the impression that one is either perfect or useless.

Krishnamurti: I think there must be a misunderstanding here.

RW Hopefully!

K: Because if one says that until one is perfect, or whatever word one likes to use, and is free from certain states of mind, one cannot teach, that would be an impossible situation, wouldn't it?

RW Yes.

K: The student, or whoever is learning from you, will be lost. So is it possible for the educator to say, I am not free, you are not free, we are conditioned, we have various forms of conditioning, let's talk about it, let's see if we can get free of it. That way you can break it up.

RW Don't you think the educator has at least to understand this process better than the student?

K: Perhaps he has read more about it, has studied a little more.

RW: But he may not necessarily know how to do it better.

K: So, in communicating with the student, or in communicating with himself, the educator realizes that he is both the teacher and the student. Not that he has learnt, and then transmits, but rather the teacher is both educating and being educated. He is doing both.

RW You are saying he is not an oracle who delivers. If he is open he is learning and teaching at the same time.

K: That's a really good educator, not one who just says, "I know and I'll tell you all about it."

RW Which means that such a person has to be, I suppose, free from faults such as pride.

K: Those are obvious things. Suppose I am an educator and am full of arrogance, vanity, ambition and all the rest of it, the usual nonsense that goes on in human beings. In talking with the student or with somebody I am learning, learning that I am arrogant, and that the student is also arrogant in his way, so we begin to talk about it. And a discussion like that, if one is honest and really self-critical, self-aware, has tremendous possibilities.

RW: But you are saying that this process can take place between teacher and student even though neither of them is perfect?

K: I wouldn't use that word, I don't know what perfection is - then we go off into something else. But if we could establish a relationship with the student or with each other in which an open dialogue takes place, a free, self-critical, self-aware dialogue of questioning, doubting, inquiring, then we are both learning, are both communing with each other's point of view, with each other's difficulties. So in that way, if one really wants to go very deeply into the matter, you help each other.

*Extract from Dialogue between Krishnamurti and Renee Weber – Professor of
Philosophy at Rutgers University.*